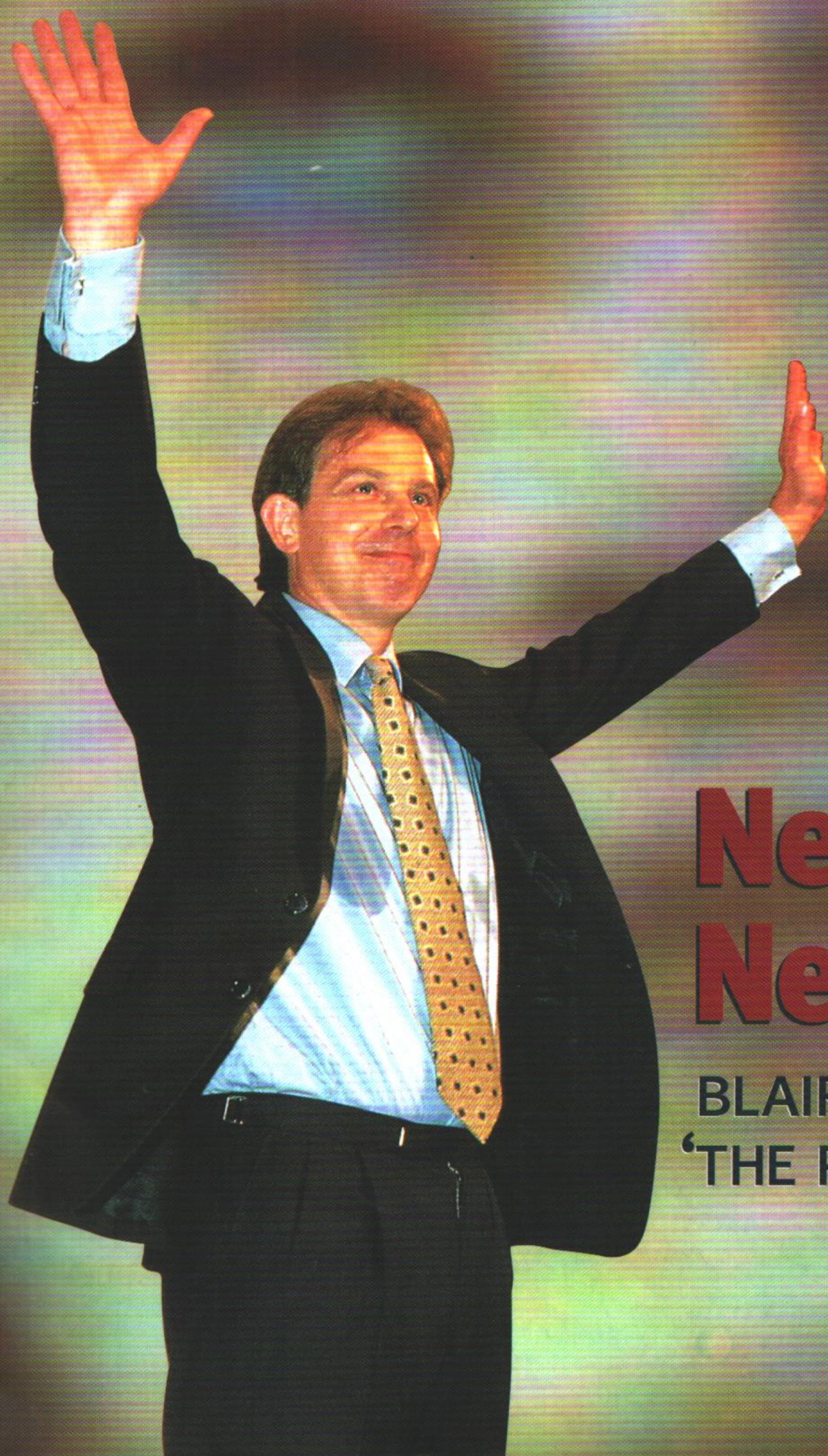


LM105

The mag ITN wants to gag



New Diana, New Danger

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'THE PEOPLE'S PRINCE'



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NO ORDINARY LIBEL CASE



ITN has raised the stakes again in its libel case against *LM*. The news corporation's latest legal submission accuses the magazine of 'express malice' — a charge which carries the threat of punitive damages if accepted by the courts.

Helen Searls argues that ITN's latest move not only threatens to close down *LM* magazine and bankrupt its editor and publisher; it also represents an ominous new use of the libel laws to impose yet further restrictions on free speech

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MICK HUME

Editor



NEW DIANA,

THE DAY AFTER TONY BLAIR'S SPEECH to the Labour Party conference in Brighton, the *Sun* printed a full-page editorial in praise of 'the People's Prime Minister'. It might have been more appropriate for the new toadies of the ex-Tory press to go the whole hog and proclaim him the People's Prince.

With the spirit of Diana, People's Princess, infusing his conference vision of Britain in the twenty-first century, Blair has now assumed the Di-given authority to impose his new moral order almost by royal decree. Next time the Queen says she feels too tired to rule in the modern world, somebody should tell her that Blair has more or less packed her off to bed already.

After the party political conference season, Blair could claim to command an unheard-of degree of support, or at least acquiescence, across British society. A well-publicised 'private' Labour Party poll gave him an approval rating of 93 per cent. An independent Mori poll put him at 75 per cent—10 points up in the month since Diana's death, and fully 16 points above the previous highest-recorded approval rating of 59 per cent, for Margaret Thatcher after her victory in the 1982 Falklands War.

Such levels of public support are normally reserved for dictators who stuff ballot boxes and bury their critics. But Blair is no self-serving tyrant. He is a churchy, caring professional filled with all the values of Britain AD (After Diana): compassionate, giving, community-minded and claiming a special feel for the emotional will of 'the People'. And that is what makes his new status so dangerous.

Like Diana did before her death, Blair has ascended into the heavens above the moral high ground, looking down on the insect-life scurrying around in the sordid world of politics below. 'I am not a political figure, I am a humanitarian', Diana would say when cynical Tories accused her of meddling in politics with her campaigns against landmines. That

might have sounded fair enough for a fairy tale princess, but Blair has now adopted a similarly high-minded line, giving him the distinction of being the first prime minister effectively to reject party politics.

Blair's great success has been in separating himself from the Labour Party. Despite the feverish media attempts to resurrect the threat from the old, dead left, this year's Labour conference confirmed that Blair is under no pressure from his party. He is not in any sense accountable to the trade unions, the constituency activists, the MPs or even the rest of the New Labour cabinet. He does not need them, so he will not heed them. The threatened

British elite. It is the near-universal acceptance which Blair has won from the erstwhile enemy camps of business, the media and the state machine which has allowed a New Labour premier to win public approval ratings that no old Tory could ever dream of.

It is now deemed blasphemous for anybody in Britain to whisper a criticism of Diana. Blair has not quite reached that state of grace, but he is not far short of it judging by the lack of any serious criticism of his actions to date. 'Blair is doing a good job' has become, like 'Diana did so much for people', a mantra of our times, one which you can hear repeated unthinkingly all over the country by people of all persuasions.

**'BLAIR IS DOING A GOOD JOB' HAS
FOR PEOPLE'**

conference floor revolts, over issues like fees for university students, were not so much crushed as simply waved away with a flick of the leader's regal wrist, while Blair's big speech was clearly directed over the party delegates' heads to the world outside the conference hall.

Having divorced himself from his party, Blair is better able to act as the anointed conscience of the nation, as when he spoke outside his local church on the morning of the princess' death. 'Think of it', says *Newsweek*, 'as the Dianafication of Tony Blair'. Or the investiture of the People's Prince.

From this elevated position it has been possible for Blair to bring the entire British establishment behind him. With the fear of the left vanquished, Blair can present an image of firm ethical leadership for all those who feel they have been cast adrift by the collapse of the Tory Party, traditional flagship of the

And just as every public figure wants to walk in Diana's footsteps or claim some association with her spirit, so the rest of the political world is now desperate to be seen to be emulating the admirable Blair. The political conference season this autumn showed that there are now really three New Labour parties competing in parliament.

FIRST ON WAS THE LIB-DEM NEW LABOUR Party, with leader Paddy Ashdown acting as Blair's friendly warm-up man. Then came the main act, the New Labour Party itself, whose conference was the sort of slick performance you would expect from the star of the seaside show. Finally came the Tory New Labour Party, with William Hague doing his impression of Tony Blair, and Michael Portillo trying to sound like Peter Mandelson. Hague's fumbling attempt to distance himself from the 'dinosaurs'

NEW DANGER

and blue-rinse brigade of the Tory Party membership, and to speak instead to the new elite in the Blairite language of compassion and 'inclusiveness', paid a big compliment to the way in which the People's Prince has redrawn the political and moral map.

ONE CONSEQUENCE OF THE POST-DIANA mood in politics is that Blair can get away with almost anything at the moment, can do pretty much what he likes without facing any opposition. Nobody who hopes to be taken seriously will accuse the worthy Blair of protecting special interests or of selfishly abusing his power. After all he is simply being compassionate,

has now taken on a new dimension, as Blair increasingly bypasses the established electoral-political process altogether in favour of running things with a few hand-picked courtiers, even allowing Ashdown of the Liberal Democrats and possibly a Tory like Ken Clarke access to his inner circle.

Yet despite the autocratic fashion in which the Blair regime is pushing through its measures, the prime minister has avoided being held responsible for anything. Instead Blair insists over and over again that he is the servant not the master, and that the government is 'yours' not his. Like Diana, his claim to public authority rests upon the notion of a special

a blank cheque that his government can fill in as it goes along.

The cult of 'the People' which began with the funeral has since reached some bizarre lengths. When Marcus Harvey's controversial picture of Myra Hindley was attacked, the Blairite *Mirror* front-paged the story under the headline 'Defaced by the People in the name of Common Decency'. It seems that even an act of petty vandalism—not normally what you associate with Blair's 'Zero Tolerance' of crime—can now be justified, so long as it was the invisible hand of 'the People' which threw the eggs and paint in what is officially deemed a righteous cause. However, if any real people were to take their apparent new power seriously, and demand higher wages, better roads, more adult humour on television, or the right to smoke in public or swear at the football, they are likely to find that they are given short shrift by their self-styled servants in the government.

S BECOME, LIKE 'DIANA DID SO MUCH
E' A MANTRA OF OUR TIMES

doing what is Right for all of Britain, acting upon the will of the People.

This consensus gives Blair's government apparently limitless opportunities to introduce the kind of measures which, in a different context, might have provoked fierce criticism.

As examined elsewhere in this issue of *LM*, by presenting his latest law and order campaign in the fashionable packaging of anti-racism, child protection and parental responsibility, Home Secretary Jack Straw can introduce more repressive measures than anything his predecessors tried. And by calling for people to unite in the new Dianaesque spirit of 'a giving age', Blair can get a standing ovation for demanding sacrifices in living standards of a kind which, 20 years ago, got the last Labour chancellor booed at his own party conference.

The long-term trend for political power in Britain to shift from parliament to the cabinet

relationship with those he truly serves, 'the People'—a phrase he used almost 50 times in his conference speech.

Amid the general media euphoria following that speech, some of the more seasoned commentators made the obvious point that, whenever a politician invokes the authority of the people with a capital 'P', something authoritarian is likely to be afoot. Blair is not talking about *demos*—the concept of the people as the basis of real democracy. His 'People' is a stage army of atomised individuals, constructed and orchestrated by the prime minister and his media managers, which can now be called upon to legitimise just about any measure of regulation or censorship, or to force any dissidents into line—as even the Queen found out when she was made to bow to 'the People's demands' around Diana's funeral. Blair's contract with 'the People' is

FROM HIS LOFTY PERCH ABOVE THE hoi polloi, the People's Prince can look down upon his New Britain with smug satisfaction. With the holy ghost of Diana at his shoulder, he has already rewritten the rules and language of politics and gone some way towards establishing a new sense of order and authority in society, at a time when the old institutions and values are in disgrace. We can be certain, however, that Blair has only just begun, and that much worse is yet to come: more calls for sacrifice, more moral decrees about how we should live our lives. The 'giving age' is going to cost us plenty.

Everybody agrees that the current state of affairs cannot last forever, that Blair cannot keep riding so high in the popularity stakes once political and economic problems start to mount. But if imitation Blairs like 'Huggy' Hague and 'Tolerant' Portillo are the only alternative on offer, the People's Prince seems set to lord it over us for some time to come.

MOURNING SICKNESS

I did not like Diana in life, and do not pretend to like her in death. But the comments made by Peter Ray ('The lonely crowd', October), like so many other sad, 'unfeeling' people (and I use that word cautiously knowing that a reaction such as his derives more from insecurity than coldness), provoke only disgust in people like me. If a nation mourns, there is NO ARGUMENT!!! This woman was loved, and I for one am proud of the British nation for showing emotion.

LOUISE HARVEY

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On Dr Michael Fitzpatrick's warning that we 'Beware the rampant id' (October): is he suggesting that group displays of emotion are always bad? Does this extend to the irrationalism and infantilism celebrated regularly at football matches? It is one thing to say you disapprove of the behaviour of some of the people who choose to get together over an event that personally leaves you cold (my feeling about football, his about Diana), and quite another to say that it is a symptom of dire social malaise. I imagine most of the people who enjoyed the emotion of Di's spectacular end have forgotten it in much the same way as Germany's win over England, and are getting on with life as usual.

HEATHER RUTLEDGE *King's Heath, Birmingham*

Thank you Mark Ryan, for your thought-provoking 'Tyrannical new religion' (October). Three days after the Paris crash, the thought struck me that all the late Diana needed to do was come back from the dead. Saint Diana would have become bigger than Jesus and John Lennon put together.

CHARLES KEMP

Brentwood, Essex

THE PICTURE THAT FOOLED THE WORLD

The question is not whether or not the camps in Bosnia were concentration camps ('camp where political prisoners etc are detained', *Oxford English Dictionary*).

The question is: what happened in these camps? And which side of the barbed wire fence the ITN reporters were on is irrelevant since what was happening on the other side of the barbed wire was what mattered.

There is overwhelming evidence of the violations and atrocities committed by the Serbs in Bosnia against civilians. This was recorded not only by journalists but also by diplomats and the representatives of various international organisations, some of whom personally witnessed these shocking events.

I was a member of the United Nations Protection Force to the Former Yugoslavia based in Sarajevo for two years. The UN's policy of neutrality meant that Unprofor officials could not speak out publicly. But this does not mean that we were blind and deaf.

There was every reason for the constant comparison of the Bosnian war with the Nazi holocaust. International peacekeepers were all that stood between the Serb ideal of a Greater Serbia and the total annihilation of the Croats and Muslims in the region. Prior to the deployment of UN peacekeepers some 200 000 Croats and Muslims were killed in Bosnia. But tens of thousands of international witnesses made it impossible to commit genocide on the scale of the Nazis and get away with it. You seem to find the fact that almost 300 000 people were slaughtered in Croatia and Bosnia acceptable. Do six million people need to be killed before the international community is justified in stepping in and bringing the perpetrators to justice?

A M DU PREEZ BEZDROB

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Thank you, LM staff, for your courageous efforts to defend objectivity as the fundamental standard of journalism.

Unfortunately, we in the USA do not have any comparable organisation that is willing to examine what political leaders are actually saying, instead of accepting government and press propaganda without a murmur.

There was a time when government pronouncements were viewed critically, but that has

changed dramatically. Now the press in this country sees its role as public relations agent committed to defending everything the Clinton administration does.

If there was a George Orwell award for the news organisation that most clearly identifies the contradictions and dishonesty of governments and the press today, ie 'Newspeak', then your magazine would certainly be the winner.

TOM KARST

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THE CASE AGAINST KIDS

I used to admire Ann Bradley as someone who would uphold the principle of adults as active, public subjects. She seemed to be a consistent advocate of abortion on demand and recreational sex. I tried to remain loyal while articles became scattered with references to her son. But this latest piece ('The case for kids', October) is too much to bear.

Childcare is about filthy nappies and sleepless nights. For all but the very richest, parenthood is an experience which destroys rational, adult life, and severely reduces access to public, political activity. I am startled at the glossing over of the key role which 'motherhood' has played in ideologies of capitalism and patriarchy which have imprisoned women for centuries. I am curious to know whether Ann Bradley has abandoned any interest in advocating low cost childcare for all, and I am alarmed that Bradley is advocating domesticity and the retreat into nuclear families as characteristics of a progressive, confident society.

CRESSIDA COULSON *Edinburgh*

I agree with Ann Bradley that pessimism about the future can manifest itself in some women staying 'childless by choice'. Low expectations and self-doubt are, however, not the defining features of why women are postponing having children.

Changes within the sphere of work have had a significant impact on the perceptions men and women have of the family. Burdened with the financial commitment of childrearing

as they take on increasing responsibility for supporting the family, women now see motherhood in the way that men used to see fatherhood. Also in contrast to the past, women now see being in employment as a lifetime commitment rather than a temporary stage in their life. Research by the Confederation of British Industry shows that women are achieving senior positions at a much younger age than their male counterparts, which would indicate that women are quickly establishing themselves with an employer or in a career so they can take time off to have children later on, in the knowledge that they can return to work afterwards.

A woman's decision to postpone having children is not necessarily an indication of self-doubt or lack of commitment. Nor is it liberatory, leaving women to take more control over their lives. Instead it suggests a pragmatic response to the insecurities of work.

LIZ MALONE *London*

For a piece of thought-provoking rhetoric, Ann Bradley's article was reasonable enough. But it was dressed up in the guise of a social attitudes survey. The statistics were used as a backdrop to a pre-determined conclusion. Regardless of the fact that I probably agree with the thrust of the article, it would be equally valid to draw opposite conclusions from the facts presented. My agreement has more to do with my own personal prejudices than with the force of her arguments.

Bradley argues that 'it would be wrong to suggest that the world is divided up into the adventurous who reproduce and the unadventurous who do not', and then proceeds to ignore her own advice. Reduced levels of childbirth are a sad reflection on society, she says, because they symbolise 'reduced commitment'. Not necessarily! It is an interesting proposition, but, as indeed Bradley recognises, deciding not to have children could equally be a rejection of the 'pettiness of family life'. Who knows? The article did not get us there logically; it just jumped to conclusions.

AUSTIN WILLIAMS

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

GENES AND INTELLIGENCE

I have come to expect a high standard of perspicuity from James Heartfield. It was disappointing, then, in his riposte to Dr Stuart Derbyshire ('A fool's errand', July/August), to read an argument which was facetious in tone and in substance wrong. Subsequently, Michael Lester and Suke Wolton have compounded his errors (letters, October).

Lester complains that nasty people might use genetics to naturalise social differences. Yes, Michael, such is the wicked world we live in! Wolton informs us that genes and intelligence, 'cannot have a relationship because human consciousness develops in opposition to the realm of instinct and predetermined behaviour'. It is remarkable that the editor of a book on Marxist theory should make 'in opposition to' mean 'have no relationship with'. In fact opposition is, and can only be, a form of relationship. Yes, human society, and hence human consciousness, develop in opposition to nature, and precisely for that reason must always have a relationship to their natural foundations.

Intelligence, whether primitive or sophisticated, is predicated on a natural sub-stratum, colloquially, 'grey matter'. This humble cerebral tissue does not explain intelligence, but without it intelligence cannot be explained. Indeed it cannot occur in the first place. Karl Marx made the point thus: 'Since the reasoning process itself proceeds from the existing conditions, and is itself a *natural process* [Marx's italics], intelligent thinking must always be the same, and can vary only gradually, according to the degree of development, including the development of the organ by which the thinking is done. Everything else is drivel.'

It is for scientists like Derbyshire to investigate 'the organ by which the thinking is done'. And it is for social critics like Heartfield to adapt to scientific discovery, not to high-handedly dismiss such discovery when it fails to conform to their preconceptions.

LOUIS RYAN *London*

I find myself 'hung' between Dr Derbyshire's call to faith in scientific progress, and the reminder James Heartfield provides of the political context of this debate. But it strikes me that the issue is not all that important.

I have often had people attack my view that society could be changed for the better on the grounds that 'we're not all equal, are we?', to which my answer is usually, 'so what?'.

Maybe, as Dr Derbyshire supposes, we will find that we are all bound by genetically predetermined limits, and we should not be afraid to find some medical fix to this. Maybe, as James Heartfield points out, 'intelligence' is such a slippery eel that any attempt to pin it down scientifically becomes more ideology than science. In the end, yes, we should attack capitalism's claim to be meritocratic; but, no, we should not oppose the idea of differences in human intelligence with a broad claim that we are all the same really.

PAUL MORRIS *Tlalpan, Mexico City*

BACK TO THE HOOLIGAN SEVENTIES?

Although I can see Carlton Brick's point that football is being made respectable ('Using our religion', October), I do not see anything wrong in having family areas where parents, grandparents etc can take children to watch a game in 'non-adult' surroundings. When my three sons were young in the seventies I could not take them to matches because of the uncertainty of violence breaking out. Do we really want to go back to those days? I think not.

I am concerned, though, about big money clubs having control over policy decisions concerning the game, ie Manchester United (Martin Edwards) advocating the re-introduction of standing areas when the Taylor report would not agree to this. At Old Trafford, Man United fans are allowed to stand

while visiting supporters are not, and are ejected when they persistently do so. I saw this in action on 4 October when I was there supporting Crystal Palace. The thugs in smart dress did throw out a United fan—for gesturing 2-0 at half time to the Palace crowd.

At England games, in complete contrast, the jingoism and racism that is allowed to go on is disgusting. Some sort of control over unacceptable behaviour at grounds is needed, but some happy medium must be struck which allows for the expression of feelings while not returning to the hooligan era of the seventies.

JACKIE SMITH *West Norwood, London*

Given that visiting football fans are always pushed around by the local police (and usually blamed by the media for any resulting unpleasantness), why was there such an outcry over the events in Rome? Because, with football the newly-respectable national institution which Carlton Brick describes, the Olympic Stadium was packed with middle class corporate hospitality types, politicians and celebs who objected to being treated like the old-fashioned football riff-raff they despise, and could not believe it when the cops confiscated their mobile phones, expensive make-up bags and, in one case, a £150 Armani belt. Wankers. New Labour, New 'Soccer'—No Thanks.

FRED THE RED *Manchester*

ELITE EDUCATION

Brendan O'Neill cites examples where working class students were tested on equal terms with everyone else, regardless of class ('Second class students', October). But for the vast majority that has never been the case. The 11+ was supposed to be an avenue for the brightest to a better education, but it was ironic that the 'passes' always corresponded with the limited number of places at the

local grammar schools. Once at secondary school it did not matter how well you did because by then it was too late; it was obvious you were getting a second rate education and you were there because you did not pass a certain exam. Nobody at my school went on to sixth form because their parents would not let them (there were jobs available in those days), so university was out of the question.

Brendan is not endorsing the old system, but I think he is giving it far too much credit. Not only was it a feeble attempt to get the best brains out of the pit, it gave out the message that only a handful of working class kids had any, and so what was the point of wasting a decent education on the rest?

LINDA PAYNE *New Ash Green, Kent*

PIG'S EAR

I was quite astonished by Dr Michael Fitzpatrick's article on 'xenotransplantation' ('A pig's heart: go for it', September). As a medical historian, I find the assertion that 'the histories of medicine record the heroic achievements of the great men of science' anachronistic. This view takes no account of the social and political forces that shaped medical progress. Advances in medical science were not achieved by a few lucky men who happened to be in the right place at the right time.

Secondly, I feel your support for 'intense personal rivalry' frankly naive. It is well known that science and medical research is full of fragile egos, but much of what drives this competition is the medico-industrial complex that ruthlessly pursues profit rather than humanitarian aims. Lastly, I would like to point out that the real barrier to xenotransplantation is the technical difficulty of overcoming antigenic difference. This problem will remain long after the subject has been intellectualised.

DR D J McKEON, MBBS, BSC
Cornwall

WE WELCOME READERS' VIEWS AND CRITICISMS

Write to The Editor, LM, BM InformInc, London WC1N 3XX fax (0171) 278 9844.

Letters may be edited for clarity and length

TABOOS

As the debate over the pros and cons of the 1967 Abortion Act warms up again, Ann Bradley asks why we need a law on abortion at all

ABORTION NOT 'ON REQUEST' BUT WITHOUT RESTRICTION

October marked the thirtieth anniversary of the legalisation of abortion in Britain, an occasion which prompted another round of debate about the shortcomings of the 1967 Abortion Act. This time around, those who argue that the Act is too restrictive outdid the anti-choice lobby who complain that it is too liberal. And rightly so. On paper, the legislation which regulates the termination of pregnancy is an affront to women. The 1967 Abortion Act does not give women the freedom to end unwanted pregnancies, nor was it intended to. The Act confirms that abortion is illegal and then outlines quite strictly defined circumstances which are exceptions to this general rule.

Unlike in most countries, where abortion in early pregnancy is available at the request of the woman, in Britain, abortion is permissible only if two doctors agree in good faith: (a) that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman, or risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated; or (b) that there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

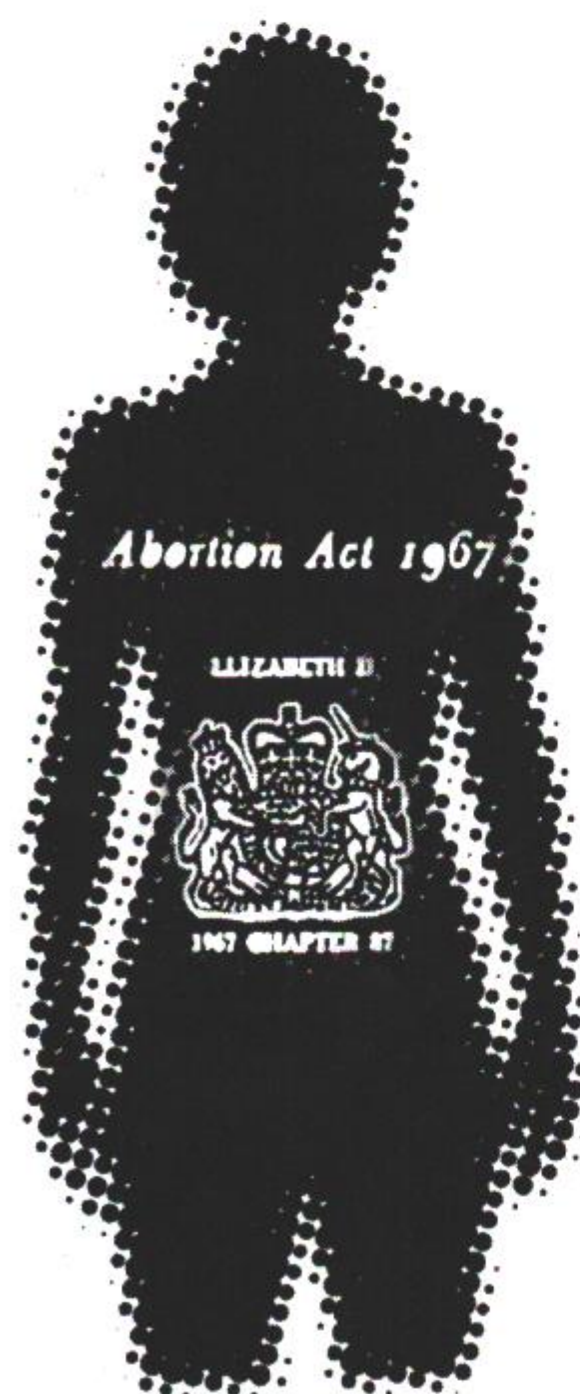
The woman's 'actual or reasonably foreseeable environment' can be taken into account which means that abortion can be provided on 'social' grounds. Despite this, pro-choice critics of the 1967 Abortion Act rightly complain that the law demeans women, turning them into supplicants forced to plead their case to a doctor who might not agree to

refer them for the procedure. In law, the fact that a pregnancy is unwanted is not a good enough reason to end it.

However, although the Abortion Act appears highly restrictive on paper, it is interpreted liberally by most doctors. They understand that accidental pregnancy is a fact of life—50 per cent of pregnancies are not planned—and that abortion is consequently a fact of life too. Most doctors are eager to reduce their caseload and few are enthusiastic about the prospect of managing a resentful woman patient through an unwilling pregnancy. And most find that they can, with a clear conscience, legally refer a woman for abortion on the grounds that there is a greater risk of damage to her mental health from forcing her to

continue the pregnancy than by conceding to her request for an abortion.

Anti-abortion campaigners argue that such a liberal interpretation of the law was never intended, and that current medical practice provides de facto abortion on request. But their protests have fallen on deaf ears, largely because the law as it is currently interpreted serves policy-makers and politicians reasonably well. A law which did not allow the abortion of unwanted pregnancies would cause all manner of problems for a society which shares a strong belief that children should be wanted, and that parents should be able to support them and be willing to make sacrifices for them. Growing social concern about 'unfit' or 'problem' parents does not easily coexist with a disposition to force people to bear children they do not want and by their own admission cannot care for.



But however liberally the abortion law is interpreted, it remains a problem for women. Even those who face the most sympathetic of doctors are forced to engage in a demeaning game of 'let's pretend'. The woman pretends that she cannot cope with a child and the doctor pretends to believe her. This is a particular insult to the many women who know that they could cope with pregnancy but simply do not want to.

Pro-choice critics of the 1967 Abortion Act have called for the British abortion law to be reformed to bring it more into line with contemporary thinking. The 1967 Act was a product of its times. It reflected and codified the concerns of the 1960s and it was shaped by the debates and controversies of its day. British abortion legislation predated the women's liberation movement. It was not motivated by demands for women's equality or by a sense that women should have the right to opt out of motherhood. In Britain, the change was in the main brought about by a desire to regulate and control abortion practice.

Even before the 1967 Act, abortion was becoming increasingly available. The popular image of backstreet abortions involving hot baths and gin, coat hangers and knitting needles is far from the reality. Some abortions were carried out in this fashion and women suffered and died. But frequently abortions were performed by gynaecologists in NHS hospitals, and a profiteering private sector was well-established. By the 1960s even backstreet practitioners were becoming proficient: often they were midwives or retired doctors who believed themselves to be providing a necessary community service. In short, abortion was happening and needed to be controlled.

The 1967 Act was intended to clarify the circumstances in which doctors might and might not perform an abortion and defend their actions. It was as much about restricting access to abortion, and who could do it, as it was about allowing it. Pro-choice campaigners have long insisted that the law should be changed to provide abortion on request, at least in early pregnancy, and that only one doctor should have to give approval. But the limited character of their demands for reform is a sign of their low expectations. Ask a speaker from the pro-choice campaigns why they focus on abortion on request in early pregnancy and they will tell you it is unrealistic to call for abortion on request throughout pregnancy; it is better to do things step by step.

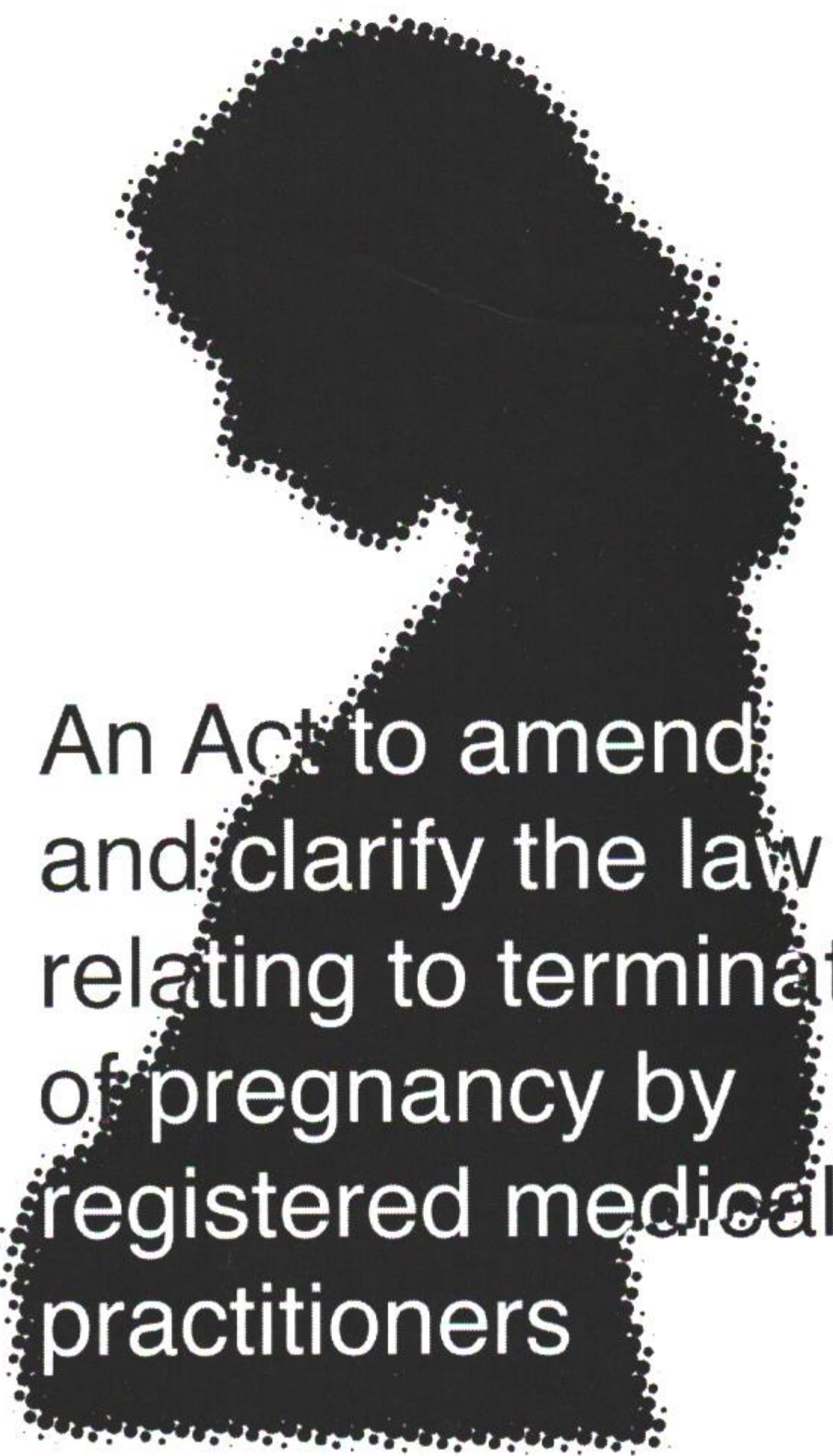
In reality, a call for abortion on request in early pregnancy is not a step towards the abortion law we need, and it could even turn out to be a step backwards. The introduction of different

criteria for an abortion at 12 weeks and one at 13 weeks implies that there is a change in the status of the fetus which means it should be treated differently. Just as, in codifying the circumstances when abortion can be legal, the 1967 Act reaffirms when it is not, so an amendment for abortion on request up to 12 weeks ratifies that women should not have access to abortion on request after 12 weeks.

It is bad enough that the law currently differentiates between legal abortions before 24 weeks of pregnancy and illegal ones after that point, implying that were it not for the state's imposition of these restrictions, women would be wantonly disposing of viable fetuses a few weeks before birth. Introducing a legal distinction between first and second trimester abortions would mean accepting that a woman needs the state

to moderate a decision about her pregnancy and ensure that she stays on the right side of the decency line. In reality, women do not need politicians or judges to decide for them whether an abortion is a right and moral choice at any stage in pregnancy.

A woman's need for her pregnancy to be terminated may not lessen as her pregnancy advances. It is often argued that, if abortion were to be available on request in early pregnancy, fewer women would require later terminations. That sounds sensible enough. But it assumes that women request later abortions because they cannot get one earlier. In fact, improvements in abortion provision mean that this is true for a decreasing number of women. Most women requesting abortions after 12 weeks do so for unavoidable reasons: perhaps they failed to realise they were pregnant, perhaps a wanted pregnancy has become unwanted. Their need is as great as that of the woman who has just missed her period. Women from ►



An Act to amend
and clarify the law
relating to termination
of pregnancy by
registered medical
practitioners

The relatively liberal provision of late abortion in Britain should be defended

◀ Spain and France—countries which have abortion on request in early pregnancy—routinely travel to Britain for later abortions, because their liberal early provision has been bought at the expense of stricter controls on later procedures. We cannot afford this compromise. The relatively liberal provision of late abortion in Britain is something that needs to be earnestly defended.

It is indisputable that public opinion is more sympathetic to early than to late abortions. But public opinion is not static and, just as the anti-choice movement seeks to convince them that abortion is wrong, so those who support access to abortion have to put a case for why the procedure is needed. It is time to put the case for the abortion law that women really need—that is, no law at all.

Women in Britain do not need a law that allows them to request abortion in legally defined circumstances. The criminal law has no place in the regulation of abortion. The procedure should be subject to no greater restriction than any other clinical procedure. The legal framework which regulates other clinical procedures, from appendectomies to lobotomies, is largely concerned with ensuring that those who perform the procedures are qualified and that the premises in which they are carried out are adequate. There is no law to state that it is legal for a heart specialist

to perform a coronary bypass only if his patient meets certain criteria, nor should there be a need for laws to govern the circumstances in which pregnancy can be ended.

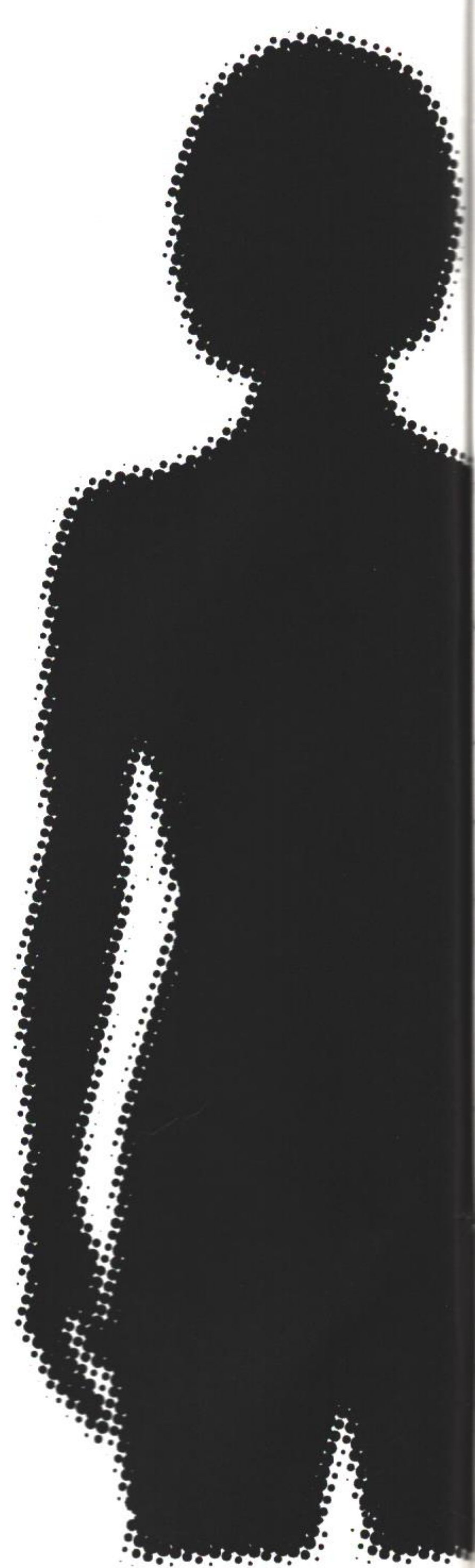
Any law that defines when abortion can take place serves to stigmatise abortion and set it apart from other medical procedures. Such laws create an atmosphere where it is assumed that women should continue their pregnancies unless there are special mitigating circumstances. A more appropriate attitude would surely be that women should continue their pregnancies only if they want to.

Any law that focuses on the need for abortion on request suggests that there are circumstances when that request might not be granted. A law that allowed abortion on request in any circumstances would make no sense. We do not require a law that permits us 'contraception on request' or 'cervical screening on request' or 'accident or emergency treatment on request'. The provision of abortion services should be regarded as a routine part of a doctor's duty of care, with no need for special pleading.

The New Labour government has pledged to reform the archaic 1861 Offences Against the Person Act because it is considered unclear and insufficiently relevant to today's society. Home Secretary Jack Straw has announced that he intends to include in it a number of new offences against the person, such as stalking and racial violence. Instead of thinking of new crimes to create, it would be good to think that the new government, in the spirit of commitment to women's equality, might simply delete the clause of that Victorian Act which makes the procurement of miscarriage a criminal offence.

If it were not an offence to induce an abortion, then the 1967 Abortion Act which makes it legal in certain circumstances would be redundant, and abortion could finally find its rightful status as just another method of fertility regulation. ●

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ANN BRADLEY

Promising nothing



The Sacred Assembly of Men, organised recently in Washington by the Christian evangelist 'Promise Keepers', sent a shudder through American feminist networks. Women's groups were horrified that the rally of 700 000 men to 'build strong marriages and families through love, protection and biblical values' was applauded by a president keen to show support for men 'willing to reassume their responsibilities'.

The Promise Keepers are about men coming together to rediscover their traditional role, and that of religion, in a society that has spun out of control. They are for men taking back their authority, and feminists are rattled, perhaps understandably, because the movement has attracted such phenomenal support. The National Organisation of Women (NOW), seeing the demonstration of male solidarity through different eyes to Clinton, denounced it as 'a feel-good form of male supremacy with dangerous political potential'. Conservative Christian Women countered that NOW was behaving like a bunch of paranoid victims. 'Strong women', declared a spokeswoman from the lobby group, Focus on the Family, 'don't fear strong men'.

The debate about whether women should fear or embrace strong men is surreal because these are not strong men—rather they seem to be sad and pathetic men in search of some meaning for their lives.

Men who need to look to somebody else to guide them in their family relations, men who need others to direct them on how to confront their weaknesses, men who need a confessor to help them get over their mistakes, are not strong men. The enormous gathering in front of the White House was not a sign of its participants' strengths but of their weakness, confusion, sense of rolelessness and failure. One rather imagines that those men who are managing to build 'strong families, through love, protection and biblical values' were at home being loving, protecting and God-fearing. Those

at the assembly were simply Charlton Heston wannabes. But then I have always felt that godliness is a bit like sex—those who have least, talk about it most.

One *Washington Post* commentator, William Raspberry, pinpointed the real meaning of the Sacred Assembly. 'Men and boys', he said, 'are losing the certainty of their place in things'. The new politically correct America has done away with the traditional sense of what it is to be a white male and left many men thrashing around for a sense of what they should be. With little else to aspire to, it is no surprise that the men at the assembly are clutching in desperation at an apple-pie vision of how they like to imagine the family used to be. Their solidarity is in effect a collective whine of despair because they do not know where to go.

The representatives of NOW might be behaving like a bunch of paranoid victims, but these men are behaving like victims too—needing to lean on others to fire themselves up for what they cannot carry off alone. The underlying sense of hopelessness is even captured in some of the rhetoric of the leading Promise Keepers who claim that they do not come together to press for their rights, but to repent their wrongs: 'We are called to be worms. When you step on a worm, what happens? You don't hear a sound. Not a peep of protest.'

The image of man as worm does not seem to fit with Promise Keeper Tony Evans' insistence that men should reclaim their position at the head of the family. Evans suggests a script to supporters. Sit down with your wife, he advises, and say something like this, 'Honey, I've made a terrible mistake. I've given you my role. I gave up leading this family, and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim my role'. He insists a man must, 'Treat the lady gently and lovingly, But lead!'

You can see the scene now: Wayne returning from Promise Keepers' rally: 'Honey, I must reclaim my role. I am leading this family.' Mary-Beth looking

up from the ironing: 'Not a peep more out of you, you worm.'

Evans seems to have lost the plot. Does he not realise that a strong man does not need to get in a huddle with 700 000 other men to be told he is strong—he just acts strong. And when somebody has to be told to lead, they become not a leader, but a follower.

Some commentators have compared the single-sex solidarity of the Promise Keepers to the women-only gatherings of the women's liberation movement. There is, however, one big difference. At least the WLM's girlie gatherings aspired to transform society into a place where men and women could relate to each other as equals. These guys want a return to the crippling, stultifying banality of traditional family life. The movement's critics are concerned with the hidden right-wing religious, anti-abortion, anti-gay, racist agenda which they believe is hidden behind the touchy-feely let-me-be-a-good-husband-and-father stuff. For me their overt agenda is as worrying as their covert one.

Clinton may believe these men set a good example. I think it is appalling. They preach a philosophy of depressingly low expectations—where the best a man can be is boss in his own home and the best a woman can be is his wife. They define themselves by what they are—men—rather than what they do. They have taken the worst feature of feminism—the belief that there are such things as women's natural values which should be celebrated—and applied the principle to men.

People do not construct their values and aspirations according to their chromosomes, their hormones or what they have between their legs. Men and women are capable of progressive or reactionary views, of high aspirations or low expectations. The choice is not between masculine values or feminist values—but between values that will take society forward and allow humanity to progress, and those that hold back the potential of men and women.

John Fitzpatrick on the dangerous implications behind the proposal to introduce a new offence of racially motivated violence

JACK STRAW'S THOUGHT CRIME



PHOTO: DAVID COWLAND

Jack Straw's proposal to introduce an offence of racially motivated violence brought the house down at the New Labour conference. The home secretary also proposed that racial motivation will 'aggravate' existing offences so that stiffer sentences can be imposed. In one sense the acclaim is understandable. Most people feel that an assault carried out because the victim is black is particularly odious. The sickening death of Stephen Lawrence, invoked by Straw and many others, looms large in the collective memory, and rightly so. 'Black bastard' they cried before the knife went in.

When emotions are high, however, reason should be vigilant. Reason should warn us that the new offence will reinforce trends in law and society which should be worrying to us all.

We might note at the outset that so far as Stephen Lawrence is concerned it would be a good start if his killers were actually caught. If convicted they would face a mandatory life sentence. The judge could even recommend that they never be released. How is such a case of any relevance to Straw's proposal?

God, we are told, asks us to be pure in thought, word and deed. The state, in the past, has been less exacting. But for some time there has been an authoritarian shift in the focus of the criminal law from deed to word to thought. A crime which punishes motivation is a further step down that road and should send a chill down our collective spine.

That might sound odd. After all, the detectives are always asking 'Who had a motive?'. Many people claim that the present legal system, in deciding whether to convict, routinely takes into account the reason why somebody committed an offence. This is quite mistaken.

The determination of criminal liability essentially concentrates upon an act and upon whether the defendant intentionally, recklessly or knowingly committed it. (We can leave aside minor 'strict liability' offences.) It is easy to confuse that second element with motive. As Lord Hailsham observed in *Hyam v DPP* in 1975, 'motive is entirely distinct from intention or purpose. It is the emotion which gives rise to the intention and it is the latter and not the former which converts the *actus reus* [the act] into a criminal act'.

As the detectives often find, many suspects had a motive but chose not to act on it. They are not convicted for having a motive. Nor is the person who did choose to act convicted for the motive. He is convicted for the act, intentionally committed.

It has long been an axiom of the law that a bad motive is no more reason for convicting a person of a crime than a good motive is an excuse for

acquitting him. A murder may be motivated by anger, misogyny, political conviction or mercy, but all the court wants to know, in order to convict, is whether there was a murder and whether it was committed intentionally by the defendant. One hesitates to cite both Lord Hailsham and Margaret Thatcher, but there was a certain point to her claim that in law a crime is a crime is a crime, and it doesn't matter why you did it.

Sentencing of course is a different matter. In convicting, the law purports to treat every person in the same way, indifferent to who they are or why they did it. Afterwards, the law is dealing with a guilty person. The nature and circumstances of the offence, motivation, the defendant's character, police records and social enquiry reports can all be taken into account so that mercy might mitigate retribution.

How else can justice be done? The circumstances of every offence and every offender are so different that parliament can only set a general framework of tariffs. It leaves it to the judges to fit the sentence to the crime. Even in exceptional cases like murder where mandatory sentences are legislated, the judicial discretion pops in the back door through the 'recommendation' on when the person convicted should be released. It should be noted here that with maximum

think, believe or want. Furthermore, the premium we place upon freedom requires us to prohibit only those acts which are harmful.

There are many types of harm recognised by the criminal law—physical harm, mental harm, harm to the property of another, harm to the government or the public, harm to moral standards. In recent years, however, the categories of mental harm have been much expanded. In 1994, for example, the court of appeal held clearly for the first time that the phrase 'actual bodily harm' in the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 could include 'psychiatric injury'.

In 1936 the Public Order Act banned 'threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour' which were 'likely to provoke' a breach of the peace. In 1986 'breach of the peace' was replaced by 'harassment, alarm or distress'. In 1997 the Protection from Harassment Act created a further offence of 'a course of conduct' (including speech) amounting to harassment of another. Harassment is undefined save that it includes 'alarming' somebody or causing them 'distress'. The harm originally centred on the disruption of the public peace by threats or abuse, now the harm is distress to one person caused by just about anything.

One effect of this of course is to make words as well as deeds much

This exception has been fitted into the public order legislation. A person may not use 'threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour' which are likely to stir up racial hatred. The implication is that such words or behaviour would lead to a breach of the peace. But there is already a law about words and behaviour which does that. No, behind the exception lie three very dangerous assumptions—people are not capable of withstanding certain ideas, are not able to think or believe something without acting violently upon it, and are simply not entitled to have one type of belief. The new proposal to criminalise racial motivation now gives direct effect to that last idea. It is a thought crime.

The authorities already seem keener to punish thoughts rather than acts. The Crown Prosecution Service in consultation with the previous attorney general prosecuted the racist rag *Stormer* earlier this year for incitement to racial hatred, after it published the names and addresses of targets, gave detailed instructions on how to make bombs and urged readers to get on with it. So why weren't they prosecuted for incitement to violence? Even though that form of incitement could have received a much heavier penalty, the authorities apparently preferred to send a message that the state will decide what we can and cannot think.

In striking at the distinction between a motive and an intentional act, Jack Straw strikes at the freedom and responsibility which individuals should have to choose and control what they think. In doing so he strikes at the idea of the moral autonomy of the individual which lies at the heart of our society. The cant phrase in this discussion is 'it will lead to', as if people are automatons waiting to be activated by a lurid speech before marching zombie-like to war. In any event if we were really to accept, which we should not, that encouragement of a particular view should be a crime because it will 'lead to' violence, who should we charge? Those who publish nasty little news-sheets which nobody reads or those who talk of rivers of blood, swamping, the need for immigration controls and the perils of multiculturalism?

In reality, the roots of racist violence, like any violence lie deep. Neither is violence, as is insistently implied, always irrational. It is generated by real conflicts. It is those conflicts which we have to address and we will only be able to do so successfully from the conditions of the fullest possible freedom. ●

John Fitzpatrick is director of the Kent Law Clinic and lecturer in law at the University of Kent

In a FREE SOCIETY the law punishes acts not thoughts

sentences of five years for 'actual bodily harm' and life for 'wounding with intent', the judges have plenty of scope already to impose the punishment they feel is appropriate for violent crimes.

Jack Straw's first proposal to introduce motivation into the process is not about sentencing. It will create a new crime, and a key part of that crime will be the motivation for it. Even his second proposal will require the court to make a finding about the defendant's motives. Then, like Michael Howard before him, he wishes to curb judicial discretion on sentencing.

Why does the law at present disregard motive in the crucial matter of criminal liability? Because in a free society the law punishes acts not thoughts—what you do, not what you

more susceptible of prosecution. Next time you are arguing with somebody and they say 'don't hassle me' or 'I find that really offensive' you'd better watch out.

The law also categorises as harmful those acts which persuade or encourage another to commit a harmful act. So long as there is a crime in the first place it is also a crime to incite it.

But in the field of race relations it is also a crime to incite somebody to do something which is perfectly lawful—to hate other people on account of their race. You are entitled, in a free society, to hate who you like, whether they be black, Arsenal fans or Jack Straw. However since 1965, with several strengthening amendments up to 1994, it has been a crime to incite one type of hate.

Charlotte Reynolds on New Labour's plan to abolish the line between young children and adults in criminal law

NOW WE ARE ALL 10 AGAIN

Jack Straw's plans to crack down on youth crime will be at the centre of the home secretary's forthcoming Crime and Disorder Bill. Lurking between the 'reparation orders' and the 'Youth Offender Teams', almost obscured by the 'parenting orders' and the 'child curfews' is Straw's most worrying proposal of all; abolition of the common law presumption of *doli incapax*.

Common law in England and Wales presumes a child under the age of 14 to be *doli incapax*, that is, incapable of evil. The age at which a child can be found guilty of a crime, the age of criminal responsibility, is 10 years (section 50 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933). However, between the ages of 10 and 14 a presumption of incapacity exists, which can only be rebutted by proof that the child had 'mischievous discretion'—that is to say he knew the act was seriously wrong.

The presumption of *doli incapax* derives from a recognition of the immaturity of children, who do not have a complete understanding of what is right and wrong. Conversely, adults are presumed to be responsible actors with rational capacity and an ability to understand the nature of their actions, the circumstances in which they occur and the consequences which may flow from them. The government's proposals would abolish this presumption, leaving children as young as 10 in the same position as adults.

Unusually low

The principle of *doli incapax* was first called into question in 1995, in the case of *C (a Minor) v DPP*. Then, the House of Lords ruled that, while the doctrine of *doli incapax* did indeed continue to be a part of English law, the time might be right for parliament to re-examine it. But when the Penal Affairs Consortium subsequently addressed the question of *doli incapax*, they concluded that the doctrine is 'an important recognition that young people of this age should not be considered as fully criminally responsible as adults. In our view it should not be abolished unless this is accompanied by a substantial raising of this country's unusually low age of criminal responsibility'.

It is true that, at 10, the age of criminal responsibility in the UK is out of line with other European countries (in France it is 13; in Germany, Austria and Italy it is 14; in Scandinavia 15; in Spain and Portugal 16; and in Belgium it is 18). However, the key point in the Penal Affairs Consortium's conclusion is the distinction they draw between the

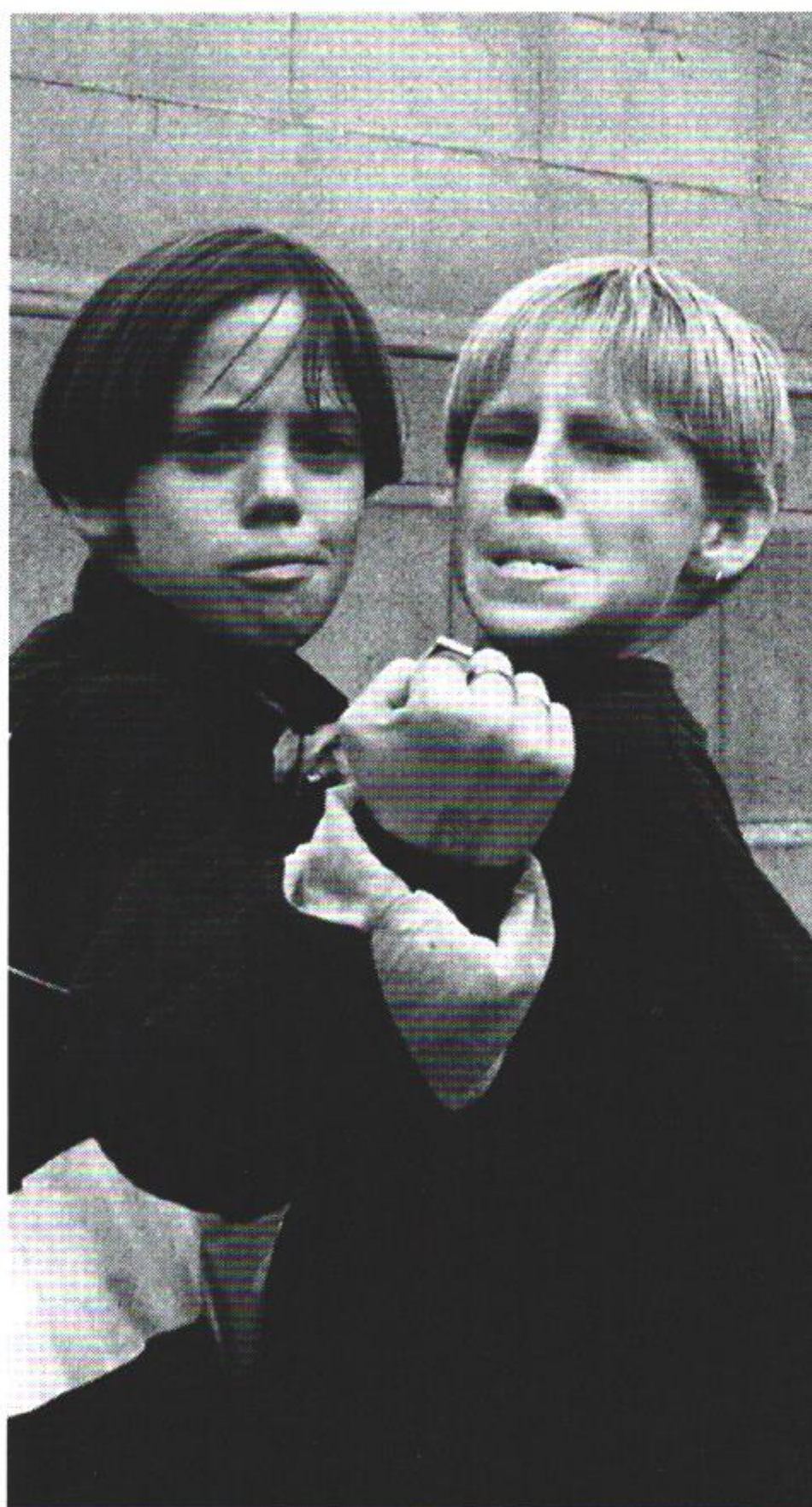


PHOTO: DAVE CHAPMAN

responsibility of children as against adults. It is this distinction that New Labour seems intent on ignoring.

In March this year, Jack Straw announced that *doli incapax* 'defies common sense. Most young people aged 10 to 13 are clearly capable of knowing the difference between right and wrong'. As capable, it would appear, as an adult. The advantages of education and experience, of maturity and knowledge are ignored as adult rationality is placed on a level with that of a 10 year old. And so, the distinction between adult and child is at best confused and at worst obliterated.

In New Labour's consultation paper 'Tackling youth crime', which helped pave the way to the Crime and Disorder Bill, the message is clearer still: 'abolishing the presumption outright...would send a clear signal that in general children of 10 and over should be held accountable for their own actions.' But in order to be held accountable for your own actions, you surely need to have a degree of control over what you do. It seems ridiculous to say that, at the age of 10, when it is probably

somebody else who chooses which clothes you wear, what you eat and where you go, a child should be held accountable for what it does in the same way that an autonomous and independent adult should be. The distinction between adult and child is blurred—and in the process, the real meaning of being independent and responsible is lost.

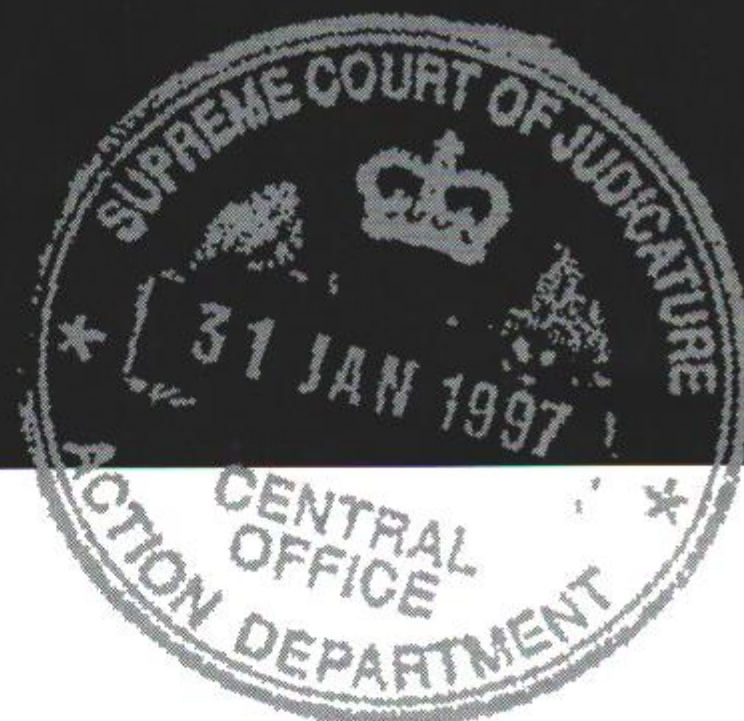
To understand the significance of attacking the adult-child distinction in law, it is worth looking at the principles underlying the separation in the first place. It is a fundamental principle of law that 'a person should only be held criminally liable where he has the capacity to understand his actions, in the sense of being able to understand the nature of those actions and the circumstances in which they occur, and to recognise the consequences that may flow from them, and, having understood them, where he has the capacity, to control them' (M Allen, *Criminal Law*, 1995).

Forward to the 14C

Moral culpability should not be attached to a person who does not understand what he is doing, since he is not a responsible actor and is therefore not deserving of blame or punishment. Indeed, the legal system is organised around the notion that a common standard of behaviour can be expected from all citizens, and in the past this level has been taken to be the rationality and capacity of an adult.

The abolition of *doli incapax* and the erosion of any real distinction between what should be expected from adults as against children, implies that the legal system should be organised around the lowest common denominator of behaviour, that being expected of a 10 year old. The implication is that nobody should really be considered any more competent, autonomous or rational than a primary school girl or boy.

Since the time of Edward III, the doctrine of *doli incapax* has recognised infancy as an exception to the presumption of rationality—along with intoxication and insanity. When the capability of a 10 year old is equated with that of a grown adult, the notion of rationality disappears altogether. If the legal system is organised on this basis and we are all viewed as having the rational capacity of children, how long will it be before we organise society on the basis that we are all drunk or mad? But then, perhaps that has already happened. What else could be behind the recent attempts to ban guns, knives and mobile phones but an assumption that we all need to be treated like crazy, out of control children?



NO ORDINARY LIBEL CASE

ITN has raised the stakes again in its libel case against LM. The news corporation's latest legal submission accuses the magazine of 'express malice'—a charge which carries the threat of punitive damages if accepted by the courts.

Helen Searls argues that ITN's latest move not only threatens to close down LM magazine and bankrupt its editor and publisher; it also represents an ominous new use of the libel laws to impose yet further restrictions on free speech

In January ITN issued *LM* with a writ for libel, after the magazine published an article by the German journalist Thomas Deichmann which raised embarrassing questions about ITN's award-winning reports from a Bosnian camp ('The Picture That Fooled The World', *LM*, February 1997). Readers will know that *LM* vigorously denies this charge and has contested the case from the start.

In July, however, ITN levelled a new accusation against *LM*. In a legal document dated 14 July, ITN accused *LM* of being 'actuated by express malice' in publishing Deichmann's article.

Being 'actuated by express malice' sounds painful, but what exactly does it mean? As the less-than-snappy terminology indicates, the law relating to malice in libel cases is derived from the nineteenth century. To make sense of the charge it is necessary to get behind the Dickensian phraseology and explore what malice means in libel law.

In an ordinary libel case the motive or intention of the person accused of publishing a libel is irrelevant. As many defendants learn to their cost, libel courts are rarely interested in what you meant to say or what you were thinking when an article was written. Trials centre on what the contested words are reasonably capable of meaning to an average reader. If the plaintiff can convince a jury that particular words are capable of an unintended but defamatory meaning then, in law, the

plaintiff has every right to sue for libel on the basis of this meaning, even though the author never meant to say that. Many defendants have had a tough time defending the unintended meaning of their writings.

Motive is taken into consideration, however, if the plaintiff can demonstrate that the defendant was motivated by 'express malice'. In English law 'express' or 'actual malice' is defined as ill will or spite towards the plaintiff or any 'indirect' or 'improper motive' in the defendant's mind at the time of the publication. For the plaintiff to succeed in this charge he has to demonstrate that this 'improper motive' was the sole or dominant motivation for publishing the words complained of.

If the plaintiff can prove that the writer or publisher of defamatory words was driven by such improper motives, it has serious consequences for the case. For a start establishing malice can defeat the defence of 'fair comment', which many defendants in libel actions rely upon. It is an effective defence when the alleged libel is a matter of opinion, on a matter of public interest and based upon true facts. It must, though, be an opinion which, objectively, any person could honestly hold. If malice is established then the defence of fair comment will fail. The defendant can no longer claim that his opinion was honestly held since his motives are no longer considered honest.

◀ The other major effect of establishing that the defendant was motivated by malice is that aggravated damages will be awarded to the plaintiff. A libel motivated by malice is considered worse than a non-malicious libel, and so the courts award plaintiffs larger sums in damages. An award of aggravated damages could easily double the amount of money that the defeated defendant has to pay to the plaintiff. In 1995, for example, football manager Graham Souness sued Mirror Group Newspapers over an article about the break up of his marriage entitled 'You Dirty Rat'. He was awarded the spectacular sum of £750 000 in damages when he won the case, including aggravated damages due to the defendant's conduct and behaviour throughout the case.

In nearly all cases where malice is contested, establishing malice comes down to the plaintiff proving that the defendant published something that he knew to be untrue. Publishing

war, and attempt to argue that this approach is sufficient reason to charge the magazine with malice.

Specifically ITN contends that the Deichmann article was published by *LM*

'with the sole or predominant improper motive of:

a) fuelling its campaign of pro-Serbian propaganda by smearing Western journalists who publish or broadcast reports which are critical of Serbian conduct and/or harmful to the Serbian cause in the Yugoslav conflict; and

b) thereby hoping to further the cause of revolutionary communism and/or Marxist ideology by publicly exposing "imperialist" and "capitalist" Western powers such as the USA, Britain, France and Germany, together with their mouth pieces in the Western media.'

This new use of the charge of malice has disturbing implications. Of course it is the court that will decide whether there is any validity in law to ITN's claim, but the very fact that ITN even cites this as a legitimate charge is a worrying sign of the times.

As an aside it is worth mentioning that ITN does not begin to understand *LM*'s approach to reporting the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. For the record *LM* never championed the Serbian or any other cause in Bosnia. Nor has *LM* fuelled any campaign 'by smearing Western journalists who were critical of Serbian conduct'. *LM* published Deichmann's article because it raised important questions on a matter of great public interest. The magazine took no sides in the Bosnian war and only criticised journalists when it had good reason to believe that they had acted less than professionally. *LM*'s concern in the Bosnian civil war was that the demonisation of one side—the Bosnian Serbs—was used to justify Western involvement. Since *LM* writers believed, along with some other serious commentators, that Western involvement only prolonged the conflict, the magazine was critical of anything that lent legitimacy to Western intervention.

But let us put these important objections to one side for a moment, and take ITN's accusations as they stand. Its charge of malice raises some disturbing questions about press freedom and freedom of expression. Is it really 'improper' for a publication to have a political motive for publishing certain articles? What if *LM* writers really were rabid Serbian nationalists, or really were stupid enough to believe (as ITN alleges) that the Bosnian Serb nationalists were the last hope for Marxism on Earth? Does that mean that we should be charged with malice for publishing an article in good faith that happened to aid our political cause? And can a distinct political approach really be reduced to 'malice' because others find those politics objectionable?

ITN's charge of malice means that it deems that the political arguments presented in *LM* (or rather, its caricature

According to ITN, *LM*'s 'IMPROPER MOTIVE' was politics

known lies is taken as clear evidence that the defendant acted maliciously. In contrast, if the defendant believed what he said was true—however unreasonable, irrational, stupid, obstinate, prejudiced or exaggerated the belief—then the charge usually fails. Occasionally, however, the plaintiff tries to cite different evidence for malice. If the plaintiff can prove to the court that some other 'improper motive' preoccupied the defendant, then, even if the defendant believed the libel to be true, the charge of malice may stick.

When plaintiffs introduce the charge of malice into a libel case they have to give particulars of the evidence that they will rely upon to prove their case. ITN has done just this in its document of 14 July. In this document ITN makes no attempt to prove that *LM* knowingly published a lie (nor could they, since *LM*'s editor and publisher stand by every word of Thomas Deichmann's article). This then is not an ordinary charge of malice. Rather ITN is attempting to prove that an alternative 'improper motive' affected the minds of *LM*'s editor and publisher.

According to ITN, *LM*'s improper motive was politics. In a lengthy reply to *LM*'s defence ITN claims that a particular political approach was the 'sole' or 'predominant motive' for publishing the Deichmann article. And as evidence of this allegedly malicious motive its lawyers cite over 40 articles that have appeared in *LM* on the subject of the Bosnian war. ITN lawyers try to identify *LM*'s distinct approach towards this

of those politics) do in fact constitute an improper motive for publishing an article. Throughout the 23 page reply ITN's lawyers quote numerous past *LM* articles that argue against the demonisation of the Serbs and against Western intervention in the war. These are quoted as clear proof of *LM*'s improper motive. I was, incidentally, surprised to see that one of my own articles was cited as evidence of *LM*'s improper motive. In a recent issue I documented how I thought the recent trial of Dusko Tadic at the International War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague was a miscarriage of justice. Why such an argument should be taken as evidence of malice I am unclear.

It is hard to imagine the charge of malice being levelled against other publications with a distinct political approach. The *Guardian* for example has defended itself in a string of high profile libel cases against ex-Tory ministers, but nobody ever thought to charge the *Guardian* with malice for writing such articles. Undoubtedly one reason the *Guardian* published revelations of sleaze in the Tory party was the newspaper's own political agenda. The *Guardian* has promoted itself as the exposé of sleaze in high places and made no secret of the fact that it was keen on a Labour victory at the last election. There was never any suggestion that these things constituted improper motives for running their exposé articles. Nor should there have been. It is entirely legitimate that newspapers and magazines have political affiliations and publish articles and exposés that promote their own views.

So why has ITN taken the unusual step of adding malice to its libel suit against *LM*? Of course we can only speculate as to its motives, but surely it cannot simply be that *LM* is a political magazine and promotes views that its writers believe in. There must be something more to it than that. In my opinion the problem is not that *LM* has a distinct political approach, but rather that *LM* writers have views and opinions that are somehow unacceptable to respectable society. It is this assumption of unacceptability that underlies the charges that are now being levelled against the magazine.

Since the moment the writ was served, supporters of ITN's libel action have insisted that the case against *LM* is no ordinary libel case. Ed Vulliamy of the *Guardian/Observer* alleged that *LM*'s motives in publishing the article were 'diabolical' and cited ITN editor in chief Richard Tait as saying this was a case of 'good against evil, (*Frank*, October 1997). The implication is that *LM* not only published a libellous article but put itself beyond the pale, outside the boundaries within which respectable political ideas can be discussed. By attempting to label *LM*'s politics as 'malicious' ITN is now pursuing this line of attack in the courts. By reducing a serious political opinion to malice—that is 'ill will' or 'spite'—ITN is trying to get the court to endorse its demonic view of *LM* and all that it represents.

In my view the fact that ITN's specific characterisation of *LM*'s politics is grossly inaccurate is really secondary here. Who is to say that any political approach is so 'improper' that one should be punished for publishing what one believes to be true? Where does this leave the right to free speech and press freedom? ITN claims that *LM*'s presentation of this case as an attack upon press freedom is 'specious and self serving'. But the right to free speech is not just something that *LM* has dreamed up. It is an important right that democrats and civil libertarians have always championed.

The right to free speech means nothing if only popular ideas and mainstream arguments are to be protected. People never want to punish ideas they agree with. It is how we treat ideas that we find unpopular or offensive that is the true test of commitment to this right. As the eminent nineteenth-century writer and civil libertarian, John Stuart Mill put it, 'We can never be sure that the opinion that we are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure it would be an evil still....Complete liberty of contradicting and disapproving our opinion is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purpose of action'.

If ITN win this libel case, and malice is established, the defendants—*LM* editor Mick Hume, publisher Helene Guldberg and *LM*'s publishing company—will be liable for aggravated damages. If *LM* is not financially wiped out before it gets to court then it will be destroyed if it loses the case. Mick Hume and Helene Guldberg will also be driven into bankruptcy. By setting out to win aggravated damages ITN has let it be known that it is out to cripple *LM* and punish those responsible for it. It seems that ITN will not be happy until it has extracted every ounce of its pound of flesh.

Punishing critics in this way goes further than even McDonald's did in the infamous McLibel case. McDonald's is often described as the ultimate bully when it comes to libel cases. It took two penniless eco-activists to court and sought to silence their criticisms of the burger company. But even McDonald's at least publicly said that its motive was simply to put the record straight. It claimed that it was not interested in damages or in destroying its opponents. And at the end of the trial it said it would not pursue its damages award. Obviously McDonald's had its own PR reasons for taking this line, but it is interesting that ITN doesn't even pretend to play this game. ITN wants to punish *LM*. It has put *LM* on notice that its action is no longer simply about correcting the original Deichmann article. It now wants to pursue *LM* for having a bad attitude.

Helen Searls is the legal coordinator for *LM*'s defence campaign

Support the *LM* libel appeal, the Off-the-Fence Fund—see inside back cover

When even the American tobacco companies cave in to the government's latest health kick, argues Cheryl Hudson, the future is bleak for smokers in Britain

WHO KILLED THE MARLBORO MAN?

Some say the Marlboro Man died of cancer brought on by too many cigarettes, and that it was his own fault. If he were to fall sick today, he might have a better chance of pinning the blame on the companies that sold him the deadly weed.

In June this year American tobacco giant Philip Morris joined other tobacco companies in signing away \$368.5 billion in a national 'guilt pledge'. Under an agreement reached with state governments and private trial lawyers, tobacco companies agreed to pay out \$308 billion in compensatory damages to settle existing lawsuits; another \$60 billion will fund public health programmes and health cover for uninsured children; and \$500 million will finance anti-smoking advertising campaigns.

A good thing? As a smoker facing possible related medical costs, I would like to think I could con big business into helping me out. But the moralism that has forced the tobacco companies onto the defensive in America, banned tobacco advertising in Britain, and informed a whole series of restrictions on smokers' lives on both sides of the Atlantic means I am more worried about my freedom than my health.

The bizarre spectacle of American tobacco companies choosing to advertise *against* their own product did not even cause a raised eyebrow. Not only were the tobacco companies widely chastised for not going far enough, they were also told that they would have to foot the bill for enforcing the rules against themselves. If smoking

among American youths is not reduced by 50 per cent over the next seven years, tobacco companies will be liable for \$80 million for every percentage point they fall short of that target.

Tobacco companies have not always been so down on themselves. Just three years ago in 1994, Geoffrey Bible took the helm at Philip Morris and launched a crusade for smokers' rights. Bible began a furious advertising campaign and started filing lawsuits against those who dissed his company. He was quoted in the *Independent on Sunday* as saying, 'We are not going to be anybody's punchbag...When you are right and you fight, you win' (5 November 1995). It did not take long for the chairman's bravado to melt into weak-kneed capitulation.

Clinton's protectorate

Sceptics have argued that there must be something in the deal for the tobacco companies. Well, there is, but it is not really what you would call a bargain. Their \$368.5 billion buys them immunity from further class action legal suits and an annual cap of \$5 billion on individual compensation payments. In fact, by caving in, big tobacco has embarked on a suicide mission. Under the terms of the settlement, tobacco companies have assumed responsibility for the health of all Americans who continue to smoke, and are charged with discouraging others from taking up the habit.

Even that has not got the government off their backs. Last month Bill Clinton passed judgement on the negotiated settlement with the tobacco

companies. Rather than applauding their self-sacrifice, he outlined further steps to be taken in the fight against the evil weed. The June agreement was presented as a starting point rather than as a final settlement. Clinton wants tough congressional action to double the price of cigarettes and to give the federal Food and Drug Administration firm control over the sale of cigarettes as classified 'drug delivery devices'.

So why have the cigarette giants made such an about turn? To pose as a defender of smoker's rights seemed perfectly rational for an industry whose profits depend on those rights being exercised. But something other than self-interest propelled big tobacco to sign up to the terms of the recent agreement. It looks much more like a collapse of confidence than a careful PR ploy.

American business has not been immune from the demands for safety prevalent in the 1990s, when the avoidance of risk has become the mantra of Clinton's administration. From guns to child abuse to Gulf War syndrome, Clinton has made it his mission to protect Americans from the dangers all around them. In office, Clinton has begun forging a new moral code to police America's behaviour, one couched in terms of risk rather than sin. Smoking, as a risky activity, was the perfect target for his brand of personal Puritanism.

Perhaps this is irrelevant to Blair's Britain. America, after all, is the land of Puritanism and Prohibition. Surely we would never go as far as that. Think again. The current crusade



against smoking is as unprecedented in America as it is here.

The prohibition of alcohol in 1920s America was an unpopular and coercive measure driven by a rural backward-looking morality. Urban dwellers resisted it and eventually bootlegging made a mockery of it. It was not only out of keeping with the times, but it was a futile attempt to turn the clock back to a more innocent age. By contrast, smoking prohibitions are thoroughly in keeping with the mood of the 1990s. Widespread calls for protection from all risks in life mark this decade out from anything that went before. Tony Blair is just as ready as Bill Clinton to take up the role of guardian of the public health. Indeed, if Clinton didn't inhale, Blair never even lit up.

Politicians on both sides of the Atlantic are now queuing to set themselves up as the people who will keep us safe and protect us from the risks around us: even if those risks are self-inflicted. With a lifestyle choice such as smoking, the role of the authorities—and now big business—becomes one of protecting us from ourselves. The result is that citizens are treated like little kids, incapable of managing our own lives.

I recently went out on the town in Los Angeles, looking for a little wild excitement. After dinner, I reached for my cigarettes, but was told the restaurant was smoke-free. Even in the night clubs I was told to put my cigarette out. I was dismayed to find out that there is in fact a city-wide ban on smoking in public places. This may not seem like a major problem,

especially to non-smokers who dislike having smoke puffed in their face, but surely smokers and non-smokers are able to negotiate such trivial matters among themselves. It would seem not. Bans, regulations and controls are all necessary, and they really are for our own good. That night, I felt as if I were in a kindergarten rather than one of the most exciting and dynamic cities in the world.

Smokescreen

Britain is moving down the same road; having long since imported the American invention of staff guiltily puffing outside office buildings, a public ban on smoking is now under discussion here. Yet these official measures and the moralism behind them are proving to be popular. In the recent negotiations with tobacco companies in America, it was President Clinton who set the ball rolling. At his suggestion, Mississippi governor Michael Moore contacted R J Reynolds and Philip Morris to set up the first meeting. But it was public support for a more responsible smoking policy, and the flood of individual and class action lawsuits against the tobacco companies, which prompted the companies' participation in the talks and their eventual capitulation.

Even worse, smokers are now joining in the anti-smoking crusade, by presenting themselves as victims of unscrupulous big companies. What else would lead hundreds of life-long smokers to sue cigarette companies for damaging their lungs? It is typical of these times, in which we are continually

being encouraged to blame outside influences for what we do, and discouraged from taking responsibility for our own actions. And so smokers play the victim too, blaming the producer for choices they themselves have made.

The public support for the tobacco companies' settlement acts as a smokescreen for what the negotiations really represent: pure contempt for people. This is the only relevant parallel with the era of Prohibition. In those dark days political deals were done behind closed doors. The smoke-filled room used to be the place where decisions were made out of the reach of the masses. Now political, legal and business elites are getting together in smoke-free rooms to negotiate deals that manipulate the silent, self-polluting masses. Michael Moore and Geoffrey Bible clearly view the American public as weak-willed, easily manipulated and unable to make decisions for themselves. Clinton and Blair know what is best for us, apparently, and are going to make sure we see things their way.

Whatever my personal opinions on the question 'to smoke or not to smoke?', my major objection to the moralism of anti-smoking in the States and in Britain is that I do not like being told what to do by the likes of Clinton and Blair.

As a pack-a-day smoker, I am well aware of the risks involved in my habit. It is a risk I think is worth taking. The bottom line is that it is a personal decision, and should be of no concern to politicians. So get out of my face, and give me a light.

Jennie Bristow talked to Devil's advocate Marjorie Nicholson, director of the smokers' rights campaign Forest

A FIRE IN THE FOREST

Forest is clearly one of those campaigns for which the clever acronym preceded the rather garbled name.

The Freedom Organisation for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco was set-up in 1981 to challenge the anti-smoking lobby. Funded partly by donations from its 7000-odd supporters and partly by the tobacco industry, Forest has become the representative body of one of new Britain's most unpopular causes: smokers who want to smoke and resent the growing restrictions on their activities.

Rather than me, you might think, as tobacco companies are banned from advertising, yet more tax is added to the price of a packet of fags and smokers are hounded out of respectable society. Yet Forest director Marjorie Nicholson is not in the least apologetic. For her, defending the rights of smokers is about protecting consumers, protecting minorities and upholding democracy against the restrictive tendencies of modern government.

'Over the years we have seen a lot of very welcome moves to deal with discrimination in society', she declares. 'It has a lot to do with the moves towards political correctness. We have had a whole new style of language and attitude develop. There are a lot of things you cannot say. But the one group of people against whom discrimination is legitimised is smokers.'

Discrimination against smokers, argues Nicholson, has very real consequences. She refers to the cases of GPs refusing to treat patients who smoke, smokers not being allowed to foster children or to have custody of their own children, and companies refusing to employ smokers. Governments are legitimising that prejudice, she says, through their attacks

on smokers, and this strikes to the very core of democracy. 'Fundamental to a democracy is that we protect minorities—we may not agree with their argument, but we try to accommodate it. Some things obviously can't be accommodated, like paedophilia. But for some reason smoking is considered a legitimate thing to go for.'

So smoking is not comparable to paedophilia: presumably even the most rabid anti-smoker would concede that. But why have smokers become such a target of animosity in recent years?

Nicholson has many theories about this, some more wacky than others. One is that society needs an enemy, and at the end of the Cold War the West turned on an easy target: 'you can see smokers, and you can smell them.' Another is that the decline of Christianity in the West and the belief in something 'outside ourselves' has led to an obsession with health and an almost 'morbid preoccupation with living life as long as possible'. Her explanation for the Labour government's propensity to clamp down on smokers rests on the party's traditional distrust of big business, and the fact that the tobacco industry has historically supported the Conservative Party. Governments see healthcare as too expensive, and have therefore had a go at smokers.

I find these theories implausible, and even Nicholson seems to have her doubts about some of them. But convoluted as her theories might be, some of Forest's insights do shed light on the problems of the current anti-smoking crusade.

Nicholson is particularly sensitive to the line that has been drawn in recent years between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' lifestyle activities: '£500 million per year is spent treating sporting injuries, but people are not taxed

for taking part in sport because it is considered to be a good thing.' She has picked up on the increasing penalties that the government has been placing on motorists, who, like smokers, subsidise everybody else through the extra taxes they pay. Nicholson points out that the government is quite willing to spend money on certain activities, but only if they are acceptable to the all-healthy, non-polluting world of New Labour.

In relation to the compensation claims being levelled at tobacco companies in the United States, Nicholson seems to think that there is something slightly daft about the

Britain: 'the general view here seems to be, well, smokers know the risks and if they decide to go ahead and smoke then, well, tough luck.' I hope her predictions are right, but I have my doubts. Nineties Britain is a place where everybody is falling over themselves to play the victim rather than the villain, preferring to whinge to the courts about how they have been harmed by a product rather than recognising their own role in using that product.

I prefer that wise old barrow-boy saying, you pays your money, you takes your choice; and anyway, who ever believed that smoking was good for you? Of

'The one group you can
DISCRIMINATE
against is smokers'

companies caving in. 'It is no different to somebody suing a motor manufacturer because you are speeding down the motorway and you have a crash going at 70 miles an hour. Whose fault is it—you for driving at that speed, or the motor manufacturer for making a car capable of going at that speed? You are aware of the risks and you are in control of what you are doing at a given time, so then who should take the blame?' She has a point there; blaming the manufacturer might be a good wheeze to let you off the hook, but you have to be prepared to sacrifice your self-respect in the process by claiming you were not in control.

Marjorie Nicholson thinks that the litigation that has gone on in America will not happen in

course, we can all be cynical about the tobacco industry's attempts to defend their profits by packaging them in the language of smokers' rights, and we can all be a bit sceptical when Forest tries to downplay the health risks of smoking. It is not a healthy lifestyle choice, and lighting up a fag does not somehow strike a blow for democracy and freedom.

However challenging the growing restrictions on our personal behaviour in the purified, puritanical new Britain is something that needs to be done. Forest may not get much support from the sterilised corners of Islington coffee houses, but at least it has the phrase 'enjoy smoking' on its letterhead, and a director who refuses to grovel.



PHOTO: DAVE CHAPMAN

That was the week that was Not on

David Nolan's diary of how Britain closed down after Diana's death



TV AND RADIO On Sunday 31 August, the day Diana died, ITV and BBC TV dropped their entire schedules in favour of an all-day grief-fest. All five BBC national radio networks cancelled their regular programmes and carried continuous coverage from Radio 4's *Today* team. On Radio 1 there were no jingles or trails until the afternoon of Monday 1 September. Radio 4 cut Monday's *Newsquiz* and a Julian Clary comedy. ITV took out *Talking Telephone Numbers*, *Strike It Rich*, and *Police Academy 6* from Monday's schedule; and on Tuesday *Lethal Weapon III* was replaced by the 'gentle fantasy' *Field of Dreams*. Throughout the week, TV and radio schedules were subject to further revision. Chris Evans cancelled his show *TFI Friday* (the first in a new series), saying he 'wasn't in the mood for a lot of jokes, and he didn't suppose anyone else was either'.

On Saturday 6 September, ITV and Channel 4 carried uninterrupted coverage of the funeral, without breaking for adverts (Mercedes had already withdrawn its advert). The National Lottery draw did not take place on Saturday evening; it was held over until Sunday morning, but was not broadcast even then. An episode of *London's Burning* featuring a car crash in a tunnel under London's Docklands was hastily rewritten, even though it was not due for transmission until early 1998. Fridge magnets (price: 59p) in the shape of the *Spitting Image* puppet of Princess Diana were withdrawn from sale.

PRESS On Monday 1 September *Hello!* magazine pulped several hundred thousand copies of its 'Diana Romance' edition, which suggested that Di and Dodi might marry. A memorial issue appeared later in the week. On Wednesday the American publicist for the Duchess of York said he had tried to withdraw all Fergie's slimming ads in which she says that losing weight is 'harder than out-running the paparazzi'; the ads did appear in two magazines which went to press before Diana's death. The biggest supermarket chain in the USA announced that it would not sell newspapers which carried pictures of the crash victims in the car; nobody dared print them anyway. Earl Spencer asked tabloid editors to stay away from Saturday's funeral, although broadsheet editors were invited.

National newsagents removed copies of the *Viz* summer issue (printed ages before Diana's death) because it carried the coverline 'your chance to romp with a naked Princess Di' and featured a spoof board game called 'Princess Di's Shopping Extravaganza'. *Private Eye* also disappeared from many shop shelves, even though its 'controversial' issue was criticising press and public hypocrisy rather than taking the rise out of Diana herself.

ENTERTAINMENT Liz Hurley and Mike Myers cancelled the Monday premiere of their new film *Austin Powers, International Man of Mystery*. Bette Midler postponed the release of her film about a paparazzo-turned-hero. On Tuesday the Royal Shakespeare Company cancelled Cole Porter's 1930s musical *Jubilee* (about a princess called

Diana who does not want to be royal) at the Barbican. Sir Cameron Macintosh stopped all the Saturday matinees of his London shows. Saturday evening performances of *Miss Saigon*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Cats* and *Martin Guerre* concluded with a minute's silence.

U2 were criticised for not cancelling their Tuesday night gig at Edinburgh's Murrayfield stadium. Scheduled for Saturday 6 September, Wet Wet Wet's concert at Glasgow's Parkhead was held over until the following day. Kylie Minogue changed the title of her album *Impossible Princess* to...*Kylie Minogue*. Techno-punks Prodigy postponed the release of their single 'Slap my bitch up' (already in trouble with radio controllers) while the sleeve was re-designed; the original artwork depicted a banged-up VW Beetle. Rolling Stone Keith Richards refused to participate in a Diana memorial album, saying 'I never met the chick'.

POLITICS With only days to go before the Scottish and Welsh referenda, all political parties suspended their devolution campaigns. Party politics went into abeyance, until Tory leader William Hague was strongly criticised for suggesting that New Labour was making political capital from its connections with the princess. In Dublin a 'giant' city-centre street party in honour of retiring president Mary Robinson was called off. Irish Prime Minister Bernie Ahern hoped that the death of Diana would be a spur to ending hostilities in the North. Demos, publishers of *Britain™* (a booklet about New Britain and its identity), postponed its release until the following week.

SATURDAY SHUTDOWN While Tesco, Safeway and Asda said they would remain closed until after the funeral, the Somerfield supermarket chain planned to stay open (and donate the takings to charity) until 'pressure from staff and customers' forced it to give way. The Federation of Small Businesses advised employers to allow 'sympathy leave' on Saturday 6 September (employees at the Aker McNulty offshore rig-yard went on strike after they were told to work as normal). All over Britain, notices went up saying that shops, post offices, parcel delivery companies, museums and zoos (the animals must have been in mourning too) would close that day 'as a mark of respect'. Among the many establishments that closed their doors until the afternoon was Diana's favourite department store, Harvey Nichols.

Bass pubs stayed shut until the funeral was over. Pubs owned by Scottish & Newcastle kept their doors closed until noon. Whitbread's did not open till 1pm. Pubs on or near the Spencer estate in Northamptonshire remained closed all day. Even the skies darkened: the Civil Aviation Authority banned low-flying aircraft between central London and Northamptonshire.

SPORT While the Scottish FA only begrudgingly gave in to demands to postpone its World Cup qualifying match scheduled for the day of the funeral, the organisers of the 180-year-old Braemar Gathering quickly called off the Highland Games on the same day. ●

Since the death of Princess Diana, 'paparazzi' has been a dirty word among politicians, the public and even the rest of the media. Tessa Mayes asked some top paparazzi about the view from the other side of the camera

PAPARAZZI SNAP BACK

MIGUEL ARANA

is a Spanish paparazzo who has worked in Spain and Britain for 20 years

'Photographers have been working for 150 years, since photography was invented. There are millions of us, millions of magazines and there's never been a problem. A photographer has never been accused of being responsible for somebody's death.

'We are not responsible for Diana's death. Diana was followed many times but nobody ever put the life of a royal at risk. If a terrorist was shooting at you, perhaps you would drive fast, but a photographer is never risking anybody's life. Her story was an open story so there was no need to hide anything or to go at that speed.

'Photographers don't go near to cars because you can kill yourself. You don't photograph a car moving, because even if your flash is against the window you can't get a picture. You end up photographing a reflection of yourself. You never flash a moving car because you could blind the driver. I've chased Diana many times but when the driver gets sporty, you back off.

'In Spain, the king will never run away from you. Diana was the only royal who would run or hide in a taxi. All you are doing is triggering the hunting instinct because it's the picture you want. Death will always be worse than a photographer taking your picture.

'Any press photographer in the world is a paparazzi. From the moment you are sent to cover a story and a person is killed, you take a photograph without asking their consent. You are writing history, but visually. If we are only allowed to take official photographs then there would be no news, so we have to take pictures independently.

'Not every paparazzi is a press photographer. Some have no training, no morals, don't have the right equipment and no contacts. These are the cowboys who sell their photographs

cheaply. I call myself a paparazzi as a general term. I've photographed Ted Heath for *Hello!* magazine and I was the official photographer at Paul Gascoigne's wedding. They wanted the paparazzi feeling.

'If the paparazzi are restricted, it is the worst thing that could happen in a democracy. It's done in places like Mexico, Columbia or Franco's Spain. We are the eyes of society. People can live their lives knowing that we keep an eye on what's going on. The only ones who would gain from restrictions are those with something to hide.'

WARREN JOHNSON

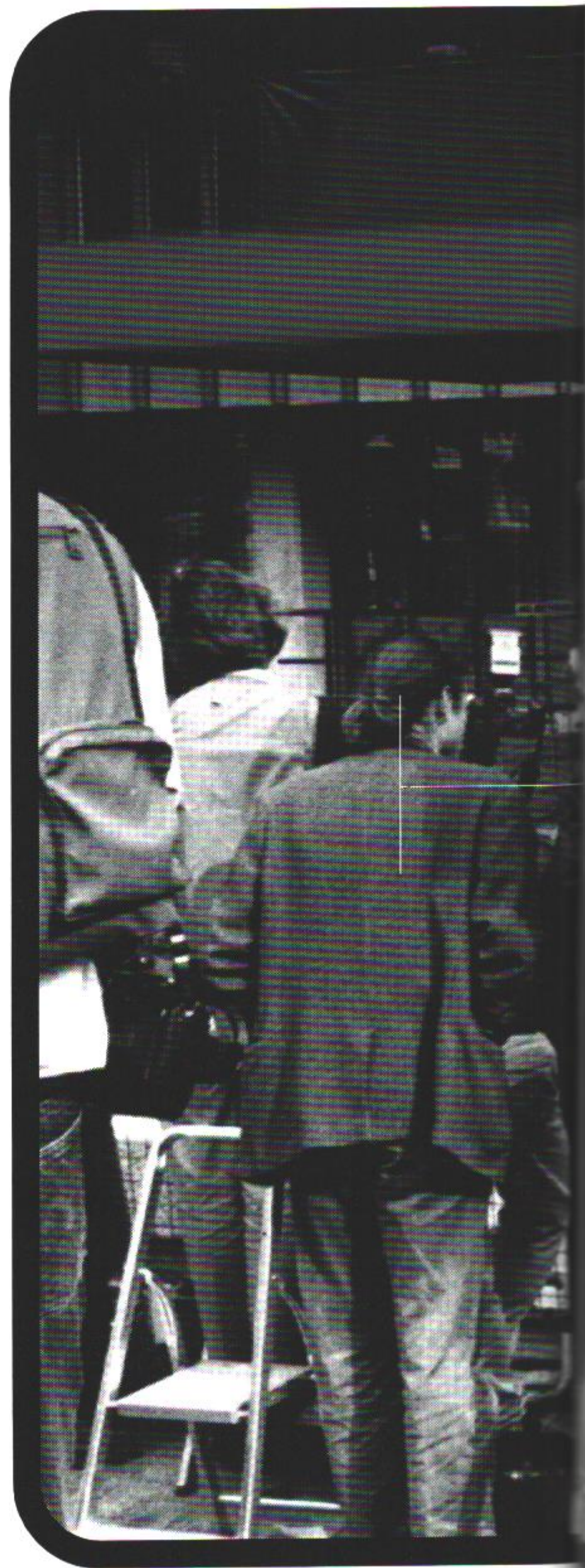
is a paparazzi photographer

'I think Diana deserved a medal; I wouldn't have put up with all the media attention every single day. But she was a bit fickle. She would court the media if she thought she could get on the front page. She was a few sandwiches short of a picnic. She wasn't this squeaky clean person that the general public thinks. Nobody wants to hear that now. I suppose they want to forget the bad bits and I can understand that.

'Now our name is shit. Friends and family have a go at me in a jokey way. But I didn't want to see her dead. We're not heartless people. And I made money out of her.

'I do sport, fashion, hard news and pap. After all the hype to get media attention, once people get famous then you are unwelcome. That's when pictures are worth more. I'm proud of a lovely picture of the Spice Girls on Red Nose day that I took when I had to sneak into the theatre with the camera down my sleeve.

'Even on invited events you are abused. We were invited to Hamley's to cover Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley. It was chaos because the shop was full of people, mums and children were being pushed and shoved. I was threatened by his security guard when I pointed this out.



'There is a mark you don't cross over but in the heat of the moment, with the adrenaline going, it is easy to overstep that mark. It's difficult to step back when everyone else is taking pictures. One photographer does it, another and then everyone does it. It's not a mob thing. If you are working as a stringer and the newspaper knows you are getting pictures it's a load of bollocks to say that they wouldn't want you to

get certain shots. They'd have a go at me if I didn't. Your name would be shit and you don't get any work the next day.'

IAN RICHARDS
former paparazzi photographer
and co-owner of Absolute
Picture Agency which handles
paparazzi work

'Paparazzi are those people who hang around restaurants, hotels, working in the streets looking for celebrities.

Banning the paparazzi would be, in a way, censorship. These celebrities love to invite you to take their picture. They say "tell your people to buy my book, see my film or support my charity". They love the publicity until they are going out and then it's different. Diana would invite certain media along for her own purpose. When you start doing that you're increasing their interest in you.

'I'm not sure the paparazzi think about the rest of Fleet Street in the way that

were following her, she would lose you. If the driver was stupid—cutting corners, going through red lights—then we would have to do that because we're doing a job. I got an exclusive of Diana and her boys at the Harbour Club by going round the back. Four newspapers wanted that picture.

'Experienced photographers cover the royals properly with long lenses to get a nicer picture. It's the kids who do stupid things, because they are hungry. It's got worse with pushing and shoving among photographers. There's one who, ever since he got an exclusive of a pop star, has been bashing other photographers out the way. He's a complete nuisance, but generally we all work together.

'People want to know what's going on. Women love all the gossip in women's magazines. We are made into the scapegoats but everyone is to blame. The work will continue once this all dies down. For a while, there'll be softer focus stuff like the Spice Girls by a pool rather than shot from over a fence. But photographers will feel the pinch, although the price for photos has been going down for ages.

'People in the media are all slagging each other off now. A TV cameraman walked in front of me as I was trying to get a shot of the flowers outside the palace. I said 'are you blind mate?'. TV crews don't care about stills. There is a rivalry there. After Diana's death we were being filmed by TV and it looked like photographers were the only ones around. But of course they were there too, but nobody gets to see pictures of the TV cameras. What will be lasting, a great picture or television coverage of the funeral? The one great picture, but we'll still get abused. People should think before they speak.

'When people say the paparazzi killed her, the fact is that you can kill somebody by moving them. You don't touch somebody if you don't know what you're doing. Do you see photographers helping people after rail crashes? No, because the ambulance people know what to do with the injured whereas the photographers are doing their job by taking pictures. The Paris event was the same except for the fact that she was Princess Diana.

'What stinks is that people were trying to make money of photographs of her in the car. As a news photographer, I'm curious to see the pictures but I wouldn't wish any member of the public who loved her to see them. End of story.'

Personally I've never been a car chaser because I don't want to write my car off, it wouldn't be worth the picture. Money depends on whether that photograph sells and sells, it depends on the market.

'It's all very well people calling us names but what about all those people who buy *Hello!* every week? If the photographers weren't out there you would have a boring set of journals.

they think about the paparazzi. Paparazzi just probably prefer the freedom of being a freelance without some editor shouting at them.'

ANDREW MURRAY
Australian freelance photographer

'We would follow Diana at a distance because as soon as she knew you



BRAND NEW BRITAIN



The question of Britain's national identity has taxed politicians, historians, industrialists and generals for years, but this is the first time that advertising agencies have been called in to design a new one. James Heartfield investigates the repackaging of Britain's image

Changing the company name from British Airways to BA was bad enough for old-fashioned patriots. But BA's redesign this summer added insult to injury by dropping the Union Flag logo from its planes, on the advice of designers Newell and Sorrell. Instead of the already clipped triangle of the Union Jack, created by Landor for BA's privatisation in 1984, BA announced that it would feature abstract designs by artists with a multicultural theme on the tail fins that were previously dedicated to the Red, White and Blue. 'The new mission is to be the undisputed leader in world travel', said BA management head Chris Holt, leaving the implication that the Union Jack was bad for business unsaid. But Margaret Thatcher, who tried to block the image out with her hankie at a BA stand at the Tory conference, knew a snub when she saw one.

BA's doubts about the commercial attractions of Britain's identity were the signal that things were changing in the marketing of Great Britain. It seems that, for companies that want to trade on the world market, the association with a declining power like Britain is often judged as more of a millstone than an advantage. Richard Branson's announcement that he would pick up the fallen standard and fly the flag on Virgin Atlantic was an indication that the new business elite is not so keen to abandon Britain altogether. Instead designers and advertisers have launched a debate about repackaging the British image for the next century.

First the Design Council launched its 'New Brand for a New Britain' discussion paper in May. Then image makers Wolff Olins used the BBC's *Money Programme* to announce their concept of Britain plc. In July the English Tourist Board unveiled a new identity designed by Team Saatchi. The following month British Council offices around the world got a refurbishment to give them a more modern image. In September the think-tank Demos published its report *Britain™: Renewing Our Identity* by Mark Leonard. In October the BBC launched its new understated logo.

The terminology is all advertising and design, concepts and images, but make no mistake, this is a public and a political discussion about Britain's future. Forcing the pace of events is Prime Minister Tony Blair. Early into his office, Blair invited 60 of the design world's great and good to Downing Street for a feelgood gathering. 'These people are ambassadors for New Britain', said the new PM, 'they embody strong British characteristics as valuable to us today as they ever have been: know-how, creativity, risk-taking, and, most of all, originality'.

The Design Council's discussion group that met this spring (which is to say before the general election) had an invitation list that reads like Tony Blair's Christmas card list: Robert Ayling, BA's Chief Executive, Martin Bell, journalist and now MP, Richard Greenbury, Marks and Spencer chairman, the *New Statesman's* Ian Hargreaves, John Hegarty of Bartle, Bogle and Hegarty, Jonathan Porrit,

Sir David Puttnam, the BBC's Alan Yentob, and Tim Melville-Ross, director general of the Institute of Directors.

The findings of the Design Council, like those of the Demos report, chime with many New Labour themes. And with former Demos Director Geoff Mulgan's accession to the prime minister's new image group the circle is completed. The country is going to be redesigned. It was the Tories under Margaret Thatcher who first brought in the image consultants of the Saatchi brothers, but it is New Labour that turned over policy making to the advertising agencies. Indeed one of the best places to find out what the government is thinking these days is the magazine *Design Week*.

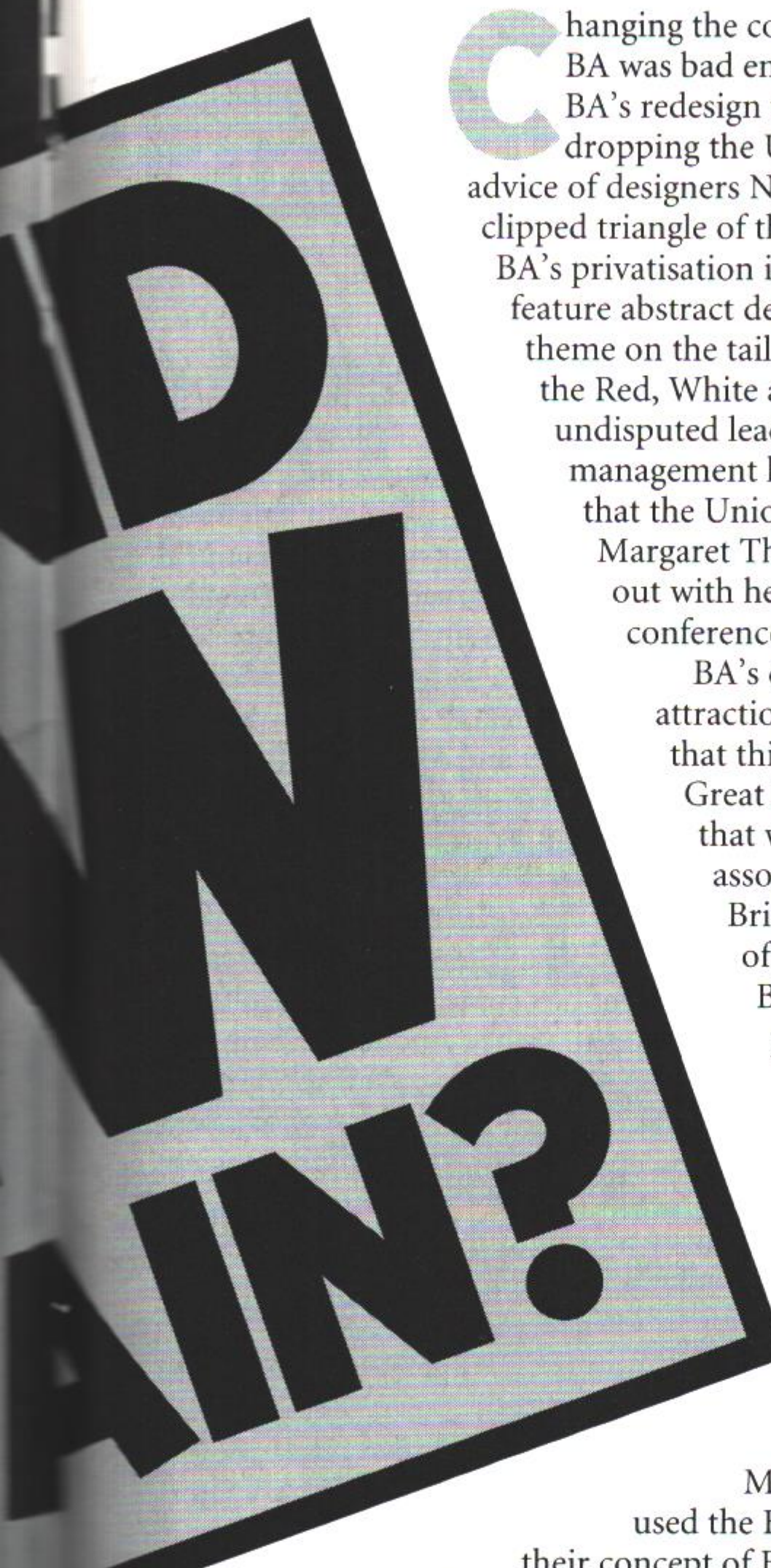
Like Blair, all the ad agencies agree that the image of 'Great Britain' is out of date. The Tower of London, red telephone boxes, Beefeaters and Shakespeare's Globe theatre convey an impression of Britain as backward-looking and mired in its history. They have a point. Britain's boom industry of the 1980s was heritage. Working mines were replaced by mining museums, industry by industrial theme parks, and above all Britain's wartime victories were celebrated in the awkwardly self-conscious D-Day celebrations, the re-opened 'war rooms' and other wartime museums.

Mark Leonard's report for Demos, *Britain™* does not stint on the problems raised by Britain's national identity (indeed he relishes them, as part of his case for 'renewing our identity'). Scouring different business surveys of foreigners' views of Britain, Leonard reports that they have a low opinion of the country's industrial products, thinking us best at making jam, while they do favour partnership with British retail. In other words, they don't want to buy our old crap, but they would happily sell us some of their electrical goods. Also, Leonard reports, Britain has an unfortunate reputation for racism and imperial arrogance, especially in the Far East.

The drawback with Leonard's diagnosis, though, is that he thinks that Britain's image problem is just an image problem. The trouble is that Britain has the image it deserves. The perception that Britain suffers from imperial arrogance arises from its imperial arrogance. The perception that British goods are shoddy and uncompetitive arises from the shoddiness and uncompetitiveness of British goods. No amount of logo redesign will overcome that reputation.

In fact, the current preoccupation with British identity has less to do with what foreigners think about Britain than it might at first appear. The sudden spasm of redesigns and renovations does not reflect an astute business move, so much as a boom in self-doubt. It is rather like those companies that issue mission statements when they are not quite sure where they are going. It might be news to the advertising industry, but Britain's reputation for industrial decline and imperial arrogance is not new. The difference is that under the Conservatives, imperial power was something to be re-emphasised, and industrial decline was to be reversed. The elevation of the question of image only expresses the anxieties of the new British establishment over its failure to address those underlying weaknesses.

Even within the more modest world of business, no amount of corporate image-making can make people buy something that is sub-standard. The best that any advertiser can do is make a virtue out of the product's modest claims, like the current Vimto or Pot Noodle campaigns. ►



Blair's problem is that
for all the good will
he has from the
NEW COGNOSCENTI
of the design world,
he is selling Pot Noodles



◀ The idea that national identity is susceptible to redesign is a mistake.

Leonard cites a book written by Eric Hobsbawm called the *Invention of Tradition* (he means a collection of historical essays of that title edited by Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Penguin, 1993) to justify the claim that national identity can be manipulated. The contributors to that collection showed how apparently long-standing traditions such as the Coronation, Christmas cards, Scottish Tartan and even the monarchy itself, at least in its current form, were in fact invented relatively recently. Leonard's point is that if these apparently primordial traditions were actually manufactured by politicians, writers and entrepreneurs, why not invent some less stuffy, more up-to-date ones?

But traditions are not so easily invented. While it is true that somebody had to decide that the Coronation would make a good public pageant—as Disraeli did when he crowned Victoria Empress of India—such innovations have to be in the grain of public expectations in order to take hold. The enduring transformations of Britain's national identity generally took hold in the midst of a real transformation of Britain's self-esteem and standing abroad. The rise of the British Empire and the post-war creation of the welfare state were the occasions of substantial innovations in British national identity, because they seized upon popular aspirations, in the midst of self-evident national successes. By contrast, former prime minister John Major's attempt to galvanise the country around the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day showed that it takes more than spam fritters and Vera Lynn to make a national street party.

So what resources does Tony Blair have at his disposal in the modernisation of Britain's image? On the plus side, Blair's approval rating of 93 per cent represents a remarkable achievement of good will. At the root of that support is the way that Blair has become the personal focus of the hopes of the British elite. So many different quarters are banking on Blair to succeed, that his own standing rises and rises, far outstripping the popularity of his party. In particular Blair's New Britain satisfies the aspirations of a newer generation within the elite to take over from the old guard. On top of those domestic hopes invested in Blair, his renovation of New Labour is seen as a model for the political classes across Europe and in the USA. All of that political good will gives him considerable room to manoeuvre, allowing him to stand above the party political allegiances and loyalties that tie down more traditional politicians.

Evidence of Blair's authority came with the events surrounding the death of Princess Diana. Blair put himself at the forefront of a people's commemoration. The stuffy rituals of the House of Windsor were subordinated in a detraditionalised public grieving. The humiliation of Tory leader William Hague, accused of trying to score political points at a time of national grief, marked the new leader's

monopoly over public pageantry. But grief is a poor tool with which to motivate the country.

The limitations of Blair's New Britain could be seen in his keynote address to the Labour Party conference in Brighton. The feelgood rhetoric of New Britain was designed to appeal to the leader's growing band of fellow travellers. Blair made all the right noises about where the country's economic future lay: with information technology, financial services and design, a message meant to appeal to Blair's new found friends in the design world, the city and Microsoft. But his message to the country was decidedly downbeat.

Blair's formulation that Britain would never again be the most powerful or the biggest, but it could be the best, was a message designed to moderate expectations. In content the speech warned of austerity to come before recovery—recalling the one-time French President de Gaulle's proposition that belts would have to be tightened if the standard of living was to rise, or as they used to say bread today, jam tomorrow. In place of solutions for Britain's economic decline, Blair hoped that we could all feel good about becoming a 'giving' society, though who was doing the giving and who the taking was left unclear. In practical policy proposals the speech only offered to take 500 000 people out of the labour market by means of expanding further education—which is a bit like cutting your coat to fit your cloth. As a newly elected prime minister's first address to his victorious party it was far from valedictory.

Blair's problem is that for all the good will he has from the new cognoscenti of the design world, he is selling Vimto and Pot Noodles. Between all the New this and New that, the underlying anxiety about Britain,™ or plc, glints through darkly. At the heart of this New Britain is not a positive message for the world, but a modesty in ambition and a fear of the future. The main arenas of New Labour policy making—education, health and law and order—are not places where ambition is writ large. Instead they appeal to people's fears of unemployment, of illness and of crime.

The message of innovation and modernisation is shallow compared with the appeals for respectable society to pull together. Blair's appeal is to the strait-laced more than the risk-takers. Young people feature as hooligans—or more favourably as clean-cut summer school attendees—in New Labour's message, but rarely as rebels overturning the apple-cart.

The various attempts to renew Britain's identity all suffer from the same tentative, self-effacing and fearful attitudes expressed by Blair. Indeed, that is bound to be the case. However much will there is to dump the old icons and symbols, no designer can summon up a lively national image out of thin air. Inevitably all of the caution and anxiety of the age floods in to fill the gaps left by the excised heraldry and pageantry of old.

The British Tourist Authority's (BTA) new brand image for Britain is a case in point. The Union Jack was a powerful



Britain

BRITAIN

Britain

Britain



Top left: the British Tourist Authority's new brand for Britain
Above: the BA tail fin that had Thatcher reaching for her hankie and Real Time Studio's sketches for the BTA logo

image to deal with. A standard that has variously stood for the original common man John Bull, the Butcher's Apron of perfidious Albion, swinging London and the thugs of the National Front is saturated with meaning. The best of designers would have a job creating an image with as much force, even in the most optimistic of times—and those are conditions that do not obtain here.

Instead the BTA has done a bog-standard job of subduing the old image, by scrunching it up a bit, and pushing the flag off-centre (militating against its target-site directness). Red, White and Blue are subdued by the arbitrary addition of some green and yellow that gives the impression of having been left in the wash with an Irish tricolour. And all of that over the word Britain (no longer the triumphalist Great Britain) on a pastel blue background in a thirties lettering last seen on an already retro British Rail poster advertising day trips to Skegness. The *Guardian's* design critic Jonathan Glancey was generous, but accurate, when he wrote 'the new logo is, in fact, harmless, old-fashioned, apolitical and jolly good fun'.

Fun, perhaps, but not the stuff of a new national image.

The Demos/Design Council report makes a more serious attempt to enumerate modern British virtues, but in doing so it only illuminates the cautious and self-effacing identity of a country ill at ease with itself. In the various 'stories' that Demos suggests have shaped the heritage of Britishness the same spirit of qualified and modest ambition resonates.

Britain we are told is a 'silent revolutionary', quietly innovating in technology and governance. In every phrase the qualifying terms 'silent' and 'quiet' stick out like Tony Banks' crossed fingers. It is like being told that Britain is a little bit revolutionary, or not very innovative. Or again, Britain is a country of 'fair play'. Not something that her former colonies might agree with, but even if they did it is a peculiarly modest claim, carrying echoes of John Major's vision of England, where the crack of leather on willow rang around old maids on bicycles.

Also, we are told, Britain is multicultural, summed up in the Demos slogan 'united colours of Britain'. This is a claim that, even if it wasn't pinched from an Italian company whose relatively innovative adverts were lambasted by the British press and Advertising Standards Authority, ought to raise a few eyebrows. First, Britain's record of vicious anti-immigration legislation and racist policing must put a question mark against such a claim. But just as importantly, the very attempt to sell Britain as a multicultural society represents a self-conscious attempt to distance Britain from its imperial past.

Demos' view that Britain ought to apologise for its past triumphalism might strike many as long overdue. But in its own way this apologetic approach is as destructive as the old imperial arrogance. One of Leonard's more bizarre—though sadly not unlikely—proposals is that the Monarch should make a tour of Britain's former colonial atrocities and apologise for the nation's misdemeanours. Clearly he has in mind such events as Tony Blair's recent apology for not having introduced welfare relief for the victims of the Irish famine.

These mawkish exercises in phoney compassion sum up the image of New Britain. They are not intended to address the all-too-real imposition of British military intervention in the here and now. On the contrary. The kiss and make up approach says we have done wrong, we are none of us perfect, the best we can do is recognise our mistakes (and no doubt try to make some amends by sending in the new humanitarians of the SAS to execute a few more alleged foreign war criminals). It is a self-image that sums up the lowered expectations of the age: self-effacing and apologetic.

Reacting to the Demos report the *Guardian* newspaper deplored the commercialisation of the national identity implied in handing it over to advertisers and designers. They need not have worried: there is no danger of any hard sell here.

In Blair's post-Diana New Britain, the experts want to psychoanalyse society and propose psychotherapeutic solutions to social problems. Dr Michael Fitzpatrick prescribes a complete rest from this 'delirium of desire'

PSYCHOPOLITICS



PHOTO: DAVE CHAPMAN

The breach in the border between the public and the private revealed in the national mourning for Princess Diana is closely linked to the trend for reassessing all social relationships in emotional and psychological terms. The outcome is a new moralising project that seeks to regulate our behaviour by intervening at the level of our most intimate feelings.

Tony Blair's 'caring, sharing, giving' speech at the Labour Party conference sought to capitalise on his success in

capturing the national mood after the death of Diana. Though the emotional pitch of British society reached a new intensity over the royal funeral, the trend towards public displays of private feeling had already become familiar in response to earlier events such as the shootings at Dunblane. Indeed New Labour had long anticipated the expanding scope of psychology in political life.

In March 1995 key New Labour figures such as Mo Mowlam (now Northern Ireland secretary) and Patricia Hewitt (now head of Blair's Downing Street policy unit) met with leading psychotherapists and academics at a conference at the Tavistock Clinic, Britain's most prestigious psychoanalytic institution. The contributors self-consciously counterposed the values of 'attachment' and 'identity rooted in belonging' to the notorious Thatcherite dictum that 'there is no such thing as society' (see E S Kraemer and J Roberts, *The Politics of Attachment: Towards a Secure Society*, 1996).

Since New Labour's election victory, psychoanalysing society and proposing psychotherapeutic solutions to social problems has become increasingly popular. In his latest book *Britain on the Couch*, clinical psychologist Oliver James acclaims Blair's success as a 'cause for hope'. Displaying sometimes awesome crassness, James brings together the thoughts of evolutionary psychologists, studies of animal behaviour and researches in psychopharmacology with anecdotes from his own clinical practice and extensive speculations on the psychopathology of the royal family, based on tabloid biographies.

James quotes surveys revealing that a 'large proportion' of the population is 'dispirited, disappointed and angry' (p307). He reckons that around one third of British adults could be diagnosed as having some form of 'psychiatric morbidity'. Adding those manifesting tendencies towards 'violence and impulsive aggression' brings the proportion of those deemed in need of intervention 'to around one half—perhaps 20 million people' (pp308-9).

James' solution (admittedly 'short-term') to this problem? Put them on Prozac, the popular anti-depressant drug. He reports how, shortly before the election, he put his modest proposal to Jack Straw, now home secretary. Straw was apparently 'mildly amused at such a mechanistic formulation', though this did not discourage James from his conviction that 'this is a useful way of thinking about the problems he faces in his job' (p307). Straw's response suggests that his objection was to the impracticability of the proposal rather than on any grounds of principle.

Indeed there are numerous examples of the advance of the trend towards the psychologising of society.

Take the recent spat between Betty Boothroyd, speaker of the House of Commons and some of the New Labour women MPs, who accused her of being too tough in requiring the new members to follow procedure and of failing to support her sisters against the barracking of the Tory backwoodsmen. While Boothroyd's unsympathetic response simply confirmed the gulf between New Labour and the old order, there can be little doubt that the trend away from 'adversarial', confrontational politics towards a 'feminised', consensual approach is in the ascendant. In Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, one of the most 'touchy-feely' of the Labour cabinet, presides over a process of negotiation that has successfully redefined this long-running conflict in terms of rival problems of emotional insecurity, requiring collective psychic reconciliation rather than a political solution.

At home the government's solution to problems of marital strife, difficulties in child-rearing, or unemployment among single mothers is professional counselling, increasingly enforced by state agencies rather than being merely offered as an option. Meanwhile the professionals are moving on to colonise new areas of national life. One of the key events on the fringe of the Labour conference was the launch of Antidote, a campaign by a group of 'psychotherapists and other members of the caring professions' for the wider promotion of 'emotional literacy'.

Appropriate behaviour

The new psychopolitics offers the framework for a code of behaviour to replace the outmoded moral systems of the past. As private emotions come to the fore, they are accorded public values, positively or negatively, and people are judged according to the worthiness or otherwise of the feelings they display. This process was clearly revealed around the funeral of Diana: Blair's trembling chin, Charles Spencer's vengefulness—good; Prince Charles' stiff upper lip, the Queen's restraint—bad. In general, the new code elevates the values of intimacy and authenticity, it favours increasing self-esteem rather than self-control, the quest for individual happiness rather than individual achievement.

Today people are judged according to their attitudes as much as their actions. Look, for example, at the new curriculum for medical education recommended by the General Medical Council (*Tomorrow's Doctors*, GMC, 1993). Whereas in the past, medical students had to satisfy their examiners that they had a grasp of basic medical



'Respect' offered glibly to status rather than **EARNED** discreetly by achievement is hollow

◀ science and its clinical applications, they are now obliged to demonstrate competence in three areas of apparently equal weight—knowledge, skills and...attitudes. The GMC guidelines detail a dozen 'attitudinal objectives' that must be attained, 'both in relation to the provision of care to individuals and populations and to his or her own personal development'.

One 'attitude' now deemed essential to the practice of medicine is an 'awareness of personal limitations, a willingness to seek help when necessary and the ability to work effectively as a member of a team'. Though the heroic medical pioneers of the past were clearly in denial of their inner frailties, they did manage to make significant advances in the understanding and treatment of disease. Taking the flawed and self-obsessed telly docs of *ER* and *Casualty* as their role models, tomorrow's doctors may not even make it through the ward round. Medical students will now have to display the correct attitudes as well as learning the facts; conformity is mandatory.

Another 'attitudinal objective' for medical students is that of 'respect', for 'patients and colleagues'. Indeed the concept of 'respect', like that of 'apology', enjoys the highest status in the new moral framework. One of the major events of the recent party conference season was Tony Banks' joke about William Hague's resemblance to a fetus. Though I thought this was very funny, all official commentators solemnly agreed that it was disrespectful; Banks only secured his ministerial job by making a cringing apology. 'Respect' for Diana demanded the reorganisation of television schedules; 'respect' for the victims of Myra Hindley's crimes of 30 years ago threatened an exhibition at the Royal Academy. Meanwhile, controversy raged over whether the Queen would apologise in India over the Amritsar massacre and whether Blair would apologise in Derry over Bloody Sunday.

These controversies reveal an acute sensitivity to slights, real, imagined or historical. They also suggest that such sensitivities are easily assuaged by the emptiest of gestures. In fact this exposes the inauthenticity of the public display

of emotion. 'Respect' offered glibly to status rather than earned discreetly by achievement is hollow. 'Apology' without genuine contrition or reparation is like the *Oprah Winfrey*-style confessional, degrading to everybody involved. Though Banks' apology carried all the sincerity of Blair's reading at Diana's funeral, such is the devalued currency of feeling in Britain today that both were widely accepted as good coin.

Though the politics of the emotions has grown rapidly in influence in Britain under New Labour, it has been gathering momentum for some years, notably in the USA where it originated. Writing nearly 20 years ago, Christopher Lasch fiercely criticised what he dubbed 'the awareness movement' and its influence in diverse areas of American life (*The Culture of Narcissism*, 1979). He identified the source of the malaise in the national 'failure of nerve' following defeat in Vietnam and economic stagnation. He discerned a 'mood of pessimism in higher circles, which spreads through the rest of society as people lose their faith in leaders' (p17). The result of this loss of confidence was that 'economic man' had given way to 'psychological man', characterised as the 'new narcissist' who was 'haunted not by guilt but by anxiety' (p22). Lasch's analysis appears as a prescient take on recent developments in Britain.

Escapist fantasies

Lasch incorporated much of Richard Sennett's critique of the political consequences of the new narcissism (*The Fall of Public Man*, 1977). Sennett recognised that the decline in class consciousness led to a tendency for people to blame themselves, rather than the structure of society, for their inferior social position. As a result, 'politics degenerates into a struggle not for social change, but for self-realisation' (*Culture of Narcissism*, p66). For Sennett, 'when the boundaries between the self and the rest of the world collapse, the pursuit of enlightened self-interest, which once informed every phase of political activity, becomes impossible'. Reducing politics to psychology, removing the boundary between the public and the private, meant in practice the end of politics.

Lasch summed up Sennett's conceptualisation of the difference between the old and the new: 'The political man of an earlier age knew how to take rather than desire...and judged politics, as he judged reality in general, to see "what's in it for him, rather than if it is him". The narcissist, on the other hand, "suspends ego interests" in a delirium of desire.' (p66) From Blair's refusal on taking

office to draw his full prime ministerial salary to his Brighton sermon on the virtues of compassion, the repudiation of self-interest has been one of New Labour's cardinal principles. But if politics is divorced from self-interest, then any hope of using politics as an instrument of social change is abandoned.

For Blair, the political realm is a sphere into which he projects his undoubtedly virtuous personal and family life. But what about that section of society identified by Oliver James as suffering from disappointed aspirations and shattered attachments? For them the world of politics is dissolved into a private realm characterised, on the one hand, by abuse of self and hostility, if not overt violence, towards others, and on the other by escapist fantasies of the sort nurtured by Princess Diana.

The basic problem, as Lasch emphasises, is that 'the cult of intimacy originates not in the assertion of personality but in its collapse'. The characteristic feature of modern society is its loss of confidence in itself and the resulting crisis of individual subjectivity. The penetration of market forces into every area of personal and social life—a dynamic enthusiastically embraced by New Labour—both intensifies the conflictual character of public life and destabilises personal and family relationships.

'Our society', concludes Lasch, 'far from fostering private lives at the expense of public life, has made deep and lasting friendships, love affairs and marriages increasingly difficult to achieve' (p69). Hence the turn from the public to the private offers only illusory solutions to the problems of both the individual and society.

The subtitle of Lasch's book, 'American life in an age of diminishing expectations' receives a striking echo in James' endorsement of Blair's achievement in winning the election while going 'to great lengths to douse expectations about how much he could achieve' (p324). He strongly approves of New Labour's emphasis on obligation and personal responsibility and pursues the authoritarian logic of the new psychopolitics to alarming conclusions. To encourage people to be more realistic and to reduce their aspirations, he recommends the strict regulation of advertising (extending the principle of banning cigarette adverts) and the reduction in the proportion of US-made television and films ('hugely destructive to our well-being') to less than five per cent of the total. Satellite and cable networks which refuse to conform should be jammed and foreign ownership of newspapers should be banned. The delirium of desire threatens to culminate in the tyranny of New Labour's therapists. ●

Stop scaring parents about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome says Bríd Hehir

THE COT DEATH GUILT-TRIP

Every parent is plagued by the media-fuelled fear that cot death or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) might suddenly snatch their child away in the night. Yet the fact is that SIDS is very rare. There are fewer than 500 cot deaths out of an average 688 000 live births every year. What is more, the concern about SIDS has arisen when infant mortality is falling overall. Between 1980 and 1994 the number of infant deaths halved, from 12 to 6.2 per 1000 live births; by contrast, between 1946 and 1950 there was an annual average of 36 deaths per 1000 live births. Just as the problem of infant mortality has been largely solved, concern about it has intensified through the campaign to highlight cot death.

In particular, parents who smoke have been subjected to relentless guilt-tripping by the media and health professionals alike. A leaflet produced by the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (FSID) claims that 'Smoking in pregnancy increases the risk of cot death' and that 'Babies exposed to cigarettes after birth are also at an increased risk of cot death'. By implication a parent who continues to smoke at home is irresponsible and might even be accused of abusing her child.

However, the causes of SIDS are more complex and contestable than the anti-smoking crusade suggests. Sleeping position, temperature and toxic gas from plastic mattresses have all been posited as explanations. Yet many experts insist that smoking parents are to blame. In 1996, following the Confidential Enquiry into Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy, Professor Peter Fleming of Bristol's Royal Hospital for Sick Children asserted that 'smoking is the most important preventable factor in cot deaths aside from sleeping on the front. If we took smoking out of the equation we would reduce cot deaths by about 61 per cent'.

But all that has definitely been established is an association between parents who smoke and those who suffer a cot death—and an association is not a cause. At the very least it is difficult to separate smoking from other factors linked to cot death, such as parental poverty. As scientist Barry Richardson (who believes cot death is caused by chemicals in mattresses) argues, 'I think it is fashionable to blame all

health problems on smoking. The high proportion of SIDS households with smokers does not mean that smoking is a cause of SIDS, although it may be a risk factor. It should have been stressed that smoking is more usual in families with low family incomes' (*Nursery World*, 22 August 1996).

Even Professor Fleming has previously stated that 'analysis showed that neither the sex of the infant nor maternal smoking had any significant effect on the odds ratio' (*Lancet* letters, 18 March 1995). Most research suggests that low birth weight, prematurity and poor growth in the womb are factors. SIDS is also more likely if the mother is young, if the family has a low income and in households with several children. Professor Fleming's own investigations confirmed that most deaths occur among the socio-economically deprived.

Despite the lack of hard evidence that smoking causes cot death, and despite the fact that more babies survive than ever, the campaign around SIDS has had a profound influence on parents and prospective parents.

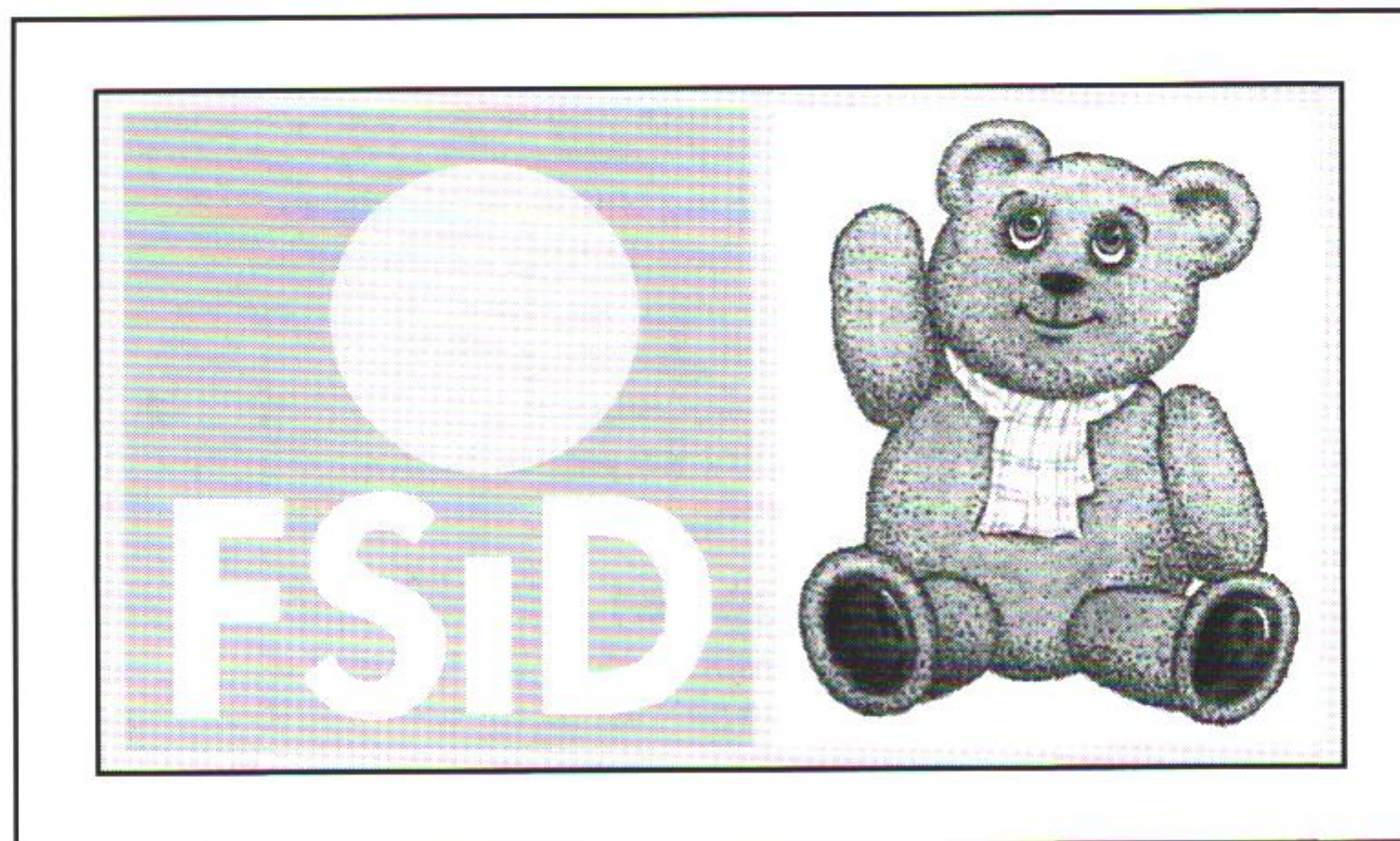
It has helped to generate a sense of insecurity among parents who fear a tragedy that is extremely unlikely to happen. This can only undermine their enjoyment of a baby's early life and potentially make them over-attentive and over-protective. Furthermore in the unusual but awful event of a baby's death parents do not need to be prompted to blame themselves: they are already agonised enough by the possibility that they could have done something to prevent the death.

The campaign also fuels the debate about parental responsibility, making parents who smoke feel unnecessarily guilty. This effect can

only be reinforced by the recent shift in the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths to focus more on parenting in general. In their April 1997 conference FSID placed less emphasis on smoking as such and more on the relationship of parenting practices to infant death. While they insist that parents should not be blamed, and that families living in difficult social circumstances are more at risk, the stress on parenting practices can only serve to point the finger. It is even worse than emphasising smoking alone, because it suggests that a whole range of normal parenting behaviours could cause an infant's death.

Parents are now routinely accused of child neglect and abuse, blamed for failing to bring up their children as law-abiding citizens, and for putting their children's mental and physical health at risk by feeding them a diet of violent television and chips. The cot death campaign only reinforces the sentiment that many parents cannot be trusted to raise their children safely and need to be constantly monitored and educated. This in turn generates an unhealthy atmosphere of anxiety, where parents who want to be seen as responsible are under pressure to cosset and over-protect their children, instead of letting them breath life.

Bríd Hehir has been a practising Health Visitor in London for 15 years



Cuddly image, scary message: the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths

The link drawn between smoking and SIDS also leaves unexplained the fact that cot deaths increased during a steady decline in smoking. Smoking was at its peak in 1948 in Britain, when 84 per cent of all adults smoked. Cot deaths were virtually unknown then—SIDS was first described in 1953. Between 1972 and 1988, smoking numbers dropped from 52 to 33 per cent of the population, yet SIDS was at its highest between 1986 and 1988 (1569 babies died from SIDS in 1987). In addition, the number of cot deaths has since fallen, while smoking levels remained more or less the same.

Brendan O'Neill asks who is really setting the agenda for the all-party talks in Northern Ireland

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

Maybe it's because we are women that we tend to have a much more positive and pragmatic approach to the all-party talks. We don't sit there posturing over principles that we will never move away from. That means we can truly engage in negotiations in a meaningful way, without having to say we are selling out.'

Monica McWilliams, leader of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, is feeling good about her group's role in the all-party talks that started in October. While republican, nationalist and Unionist parties are criticised for squabbling over age-old differences, McWilliams and her coalition have been praised for taking their responsibilities more seriously. 'We have got until next May to come up with a frame of words that can then be put to the people of Northern Ireland in a referendum', she told me. 'There is a lot for us to discuss, but let's face it, it is not the most difficult thing in the world.'

Six months ago May Blood, a founding member of the Women's Coalition, told me how their delegates had been treated 'with the most appalling physical and verbal abuse' when they first entered the all-party talks last year (see "Consensus" by coercion, *LM*, June). Now it would appear that the Women's Coalition is playing a leading role. 'I don't want it to sound like we have an exaggerated view of ourselves', says McWilliams, 'but the proposals that we put forward tend to be the ones that everyone else agrees to. We have always been about creating the consensual option which, believe it or not, eventually becomes the acceptable option. It may not be the preferable option that people start out with, because the two sides have many political differences, but we find that when we write papers for the forum they tend to be the ones that win support'.

At the election to the all-party talks in May 1996 the Women's Coalition won a measly 7731 votes, compared with the Ulster Unionist Party's 181 829. At the general election in May this year, the coalition's vote went down to 3024

while the UUP's went up to over 250 000. So how is it that a few women can put forward proposals that mass political parties feel obliged to accept?

'Because the all-party talks is not about first-past-the-post democracy', responds McWilliams. 'That old way of working is not going to help us to agree a set of arrangements. We have got to think about consent and the consensual option. That is why everything agreed at the all-party talks has to go along with the "sufficiency of consensus" mechanism.'

'Sufficiency of consensus' is a triple-lock mechanism which ensures that no submission or proposal makes it past the forum unless it wins the support of the smaller parties as well as the traditional nationalist and Unionist parties. Lord Alderdice, leader of the small but influential Alliance Party, told me how 'sufficiency of consensus' works: 'Firstly, a proposal must win the support of a majority of those representing Unionists and a majority of those representing nationalists; it must also be clear that it has the support of the community in Northern Ireland as a whole; and then it must win the support of the parties participating in the talks.'

Nationalist v Unionist

According to Alderdice this way of working has helped to move Northern Ireland away from the polarised, adversarial politics of the past and towards a new, more consensual form of government: 'Consent, as defined at the talks, requires more than the support of the traditional Unionist parties and the traditional nationalist parties, and that means that other views which are normally marginalised can be brought on board in a very real way.'

This is how McWilliams' 'consensual option' always becomes 'the acceptable option': the talks forum has been designed to elevate consensus and agreement over the adversarial politics which would normally prevail if nationalists and Unionists were left to their own devices. But where does this leave democracy? After all, age-old arguments between nationalists and Unionists may not be to everybody's liking but it looks like that is what the

people have voted for. 'That kind of argument will get us nowhere', says Alderdice. 'In the kind of society that we are trying to create we do not want to see a simple nationalist v Unionist see-saw. We are looking for a new society where people will not institutionalise their divisions, but will overcome them.'

The clear implication of Alderdice's argument is that if the people of Northern Ireland, and the political parties they support, continue to stick to their outdated allegiances then the more enlightened parties will have to forge ahead without them, in search of the new consensus-based society. Behind all the politically correct language of consent and agreement, surely this is anti-democratic?

'To give minority groups the same amount of delegates and the same strength of vote at the negotiating process as the larger parties is completely anti-democratic', says Ian Paisley junior, justice spokesman for the Democratic Unionist Party. The DUP has boycotted the talks because of the inclusion of Sinn Féin. Every inch his father's son, Paisley junior describes the forum as an 'IRA-driven process': 'We will not sit down and watch the IRA dominate a process which should be about finding a solution that the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland want.'

But behind his paranoia about the IRA, Paisley junior is also concerned about what he considers to be the degradation of the democratic process in Northern Ireland: 'For a party like the Women's Coalition who got 0.7 per cent of the vote to be allowed to have the same number of delegates as my party which got nearly 20 per cent of the vote, I mean, anyone can see that that is completely anti-democratic.'

Paisley junior is concerned that the emphasis on consensus at the talks will prevent the parties from representing the will of their constituents. 'The DUP was elected by people who want to see an internal British settlement in the North, but we would not be able to argue for that because we would have to try and reach consensus. It's a joke. Our objective now is to stop this process delivering a settlement that



CONSENSUS

is a means of

FRUSTRATING

democracy



U2's single *Please*, is addressed to party leaders in the talks, who get the Andy Warhol treatment in the record's publicity

will be against the interests of the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland.'

Having spoken to Monica McWilliams and Lord Alderdice about the elevation of consensus, I found myself forced to agree with Paisley that the talks are undemocratic and that the parties will be prevented from representing their voters. But then I thought, what right does Ian Paisley junior have to talk about democracy? The only reason the Paisley family and the Democratic Unionist Party support majoritarian democracy is because they know it will return a Protestant-Unionist majority every time in the statelet of Northern Ireland, whose boundaries were so carefully drawn in 1921 to ensure a permanent pro-British majority.

So maybe the new politics of consensus is not such a bad thing? If

the new politics enables small groups of radical women and others to challenge Unionist domination, then maybe we should welcome it? After all, anything which so infuriates the Paisley patriarchy has got to be good, right?

A new partition

I would not be so sure. It might be satisfying to see Unionist bigots getting a taste of their own undemocratic medicine, but it looks like the new politics of consensus will be at least as bad, if not worse, than the old politics of partition. 'It is imperative that we move toward consensus', says Monica McWilliams as our conversation comes to a close. 'The old politics have not worked.' And if the people of Northern Ireland continue to support the old politics? 'Well, I would argue that electoral representation is not the only legitimate form of representation', responds McWilliams, ominously. 'We also need participatory democracy, where elected representatives can sit down alongside community representatives and public sector representatives, and reach accommodations and solutions together. That way everyone gets a chance to put their views across.'

This is the reality of the politics of consensus. Despite being presented in the language of inclusion and consent, the new politics heralds the end of electoral representation in Northern Ireland and the beginning of a 'consensual dictatorship'. By elevating the smaller, consensus-driven parties and unelected 'community representatives' to the same status as the mass parties, the process will deny people in Northern Ireland any say on the political agenda. Consensus is the order of the day, whether the people like it or not.

In this sense, the politics of consensus is to the 1990s what partition has been for the past 70 years: a means of frustrating democracy and popular choice in Ireland. And willingly or not, the likes of Monica McWilliams and Lord Alderdice are set to play a similar role for the new establishment as the Unionists played for the old. The talks process is a triumph for those who think that consensus is more important than democracy. It is also a triumph for Tony Blair and his Northern Ireland Office who want to see controversial debate reduced to a minimum. But it is a tragedy for the peoples of Northern Ireland, all of whom will have less say than ever in how they are governed. ●

FUTURES

Astronomer Henry Joy McCracken fears that recent events around the Mir space station and the Mars Pathfinder probe point to a closure of the 'final frontier'

WHY HAVE WE STILL NOT WALKED ON MARS?

Growing up, I always dreamed of Mars. I read with rapt wonder Ray Bradbury's stories of the red planet; with him I walked across ancient Martian flood plains which had not seen water for a millennium and gazed upon deserted, empty cities older than any on Earth. I soon discovered that we had just been to Mars, a few years earlier: the Viking landers had sent thousands of pictures back to blue-green Earth of a desolate place with a reddish-brown sky and rocks, rocks, rocks right to the horizon. Viking was just the start, I was sure: in 10 years men would walk on Mars (Richard Nixon had told us so, and I was young enough to trust him) and soon we would start to answer all the questions that Viking had raised. And there were many questions to answer—starting with the question of Martian life.

In August 1996 there was much excitement at the possible discovery of Martian microfossils in Antarctic meteorites. Mars is certainly an attractive place to look for life; in the distant past it was much warmer and wetter than it is today and the ancient Martian flood plains would be excellent places to search for fossils. If life—even ancient life—was discovered on Mars, it would have immediate implications

concerning the possible commonality of life in the Universe and the uniqueness of life on Earth.

We would also like to understand why and how the Martian climate changed from a temperate one which supported surface water to the parched, frozen one which exists today. And in a broader context, a thorough understanding of Martian geology would provide many insights into the formation of the solar system and the Earth itself. Mars is unaffected by many of the geological processes such as weathering and continental drift which on Earth quickly erase the geological record. The Martian highlands are old; and written in their hills and valleys is a lucid record of the formation of Earth and Mars, waiting to be read by any travellers that venture there.

Beyond these scientific objectives, another important fact should command our attention: apart from Earth, Mars is the only place in the solar system which can support a sustained and substantial human presence. There is water frozen beneath the Martian soil, and the Martian atmosphere and the length of the Martian day makes using this water to produce foodstuffs a viable proposition. Mars' lower gravity (one third of Earth's) would make long trips across Mars or to Martian orbit and beyond a trivial exercise—making Mars an excellent base for the exploration of the outer solar system. On a longer

timescale, the transformation of the Martian climate into one less hostile to human life—one which is warmer and with a higher pressure and eventually a breathable atmosphere—is a process well within our knowledge of industrial chemistry and physics.

Early in July the Mars Pathfinder probe dropped out of the Martian sky, rolled to a stop and began to transmit information back to Earth. Was this the return to Mars that I had been waiting for since Viking, and a first step towards manned exploration of Mars and space beyond? The omens are not good. In the week of the Mars landing, Pathfinder shared the headlines with the troubled Mir space station, which a few weeks previously had suffered a near-fatal collision with a cargo ship full of rubbish. Since then, Mir has suffered mishap after mishap. Many leading scientists, such as Britain's Sir Martin Rees, have argued that Mir's troubles give us reason enough to halt manned exploration of space entirely. In every press conference and in every interview, people talk



of the risks of space exploration, apparently without realising that exploration will always be risky.

However, it is not just Mir's problems that have disheartened me. Superficially, a greater contrast could not be imagined between Mir and the Mars landing: on one hand a 10-year-old semi-decrepit orbital shack, on the other the glittering, hyper-modern Mars Pathfinder Lander, which appears as comfortable on the frigid, arid Martian surface as it does in the balmy climate of Southern California. But beneath these differences both missions share a common aim: to explore space in the context of a social and economic environment which is hostile to exploration.

The success of the Mars Pathfinder is the success of sending a probe to Mars on the cheap, for the cost of a Hollywood movie—a somewhat doubtful achievement, especially if fulfilling this objective has an impact on the amount of useful science returned. The difficulties of the Mir station show how hard it is to adapt the human exploration of space to these new, more limited, economic horizons. There are some systems in an orbital station which must work, and which money must be spent on—like drains and air filtration.

The unfortunate fact is that rather than recent events presaging a manned trip to Mars, they are more likely to be the latest stage in the decline of human ambitions in space.

It is 40 years now since the first man-made object orbited the Earth. A commentator writing in the distant days of 1957 would have found it unbelievable if he had been told that by the end of the millennium the solar system would be largely unexplored (with the exception of the odd robot probe like Pathfinder), and that the human exploration of space would be limited to repair missions in low earth orbit along with (extremely boring) tests of endurance

on a decade-old space station. Given the staggering advances made in those years in other areas such as computing, this state of affairs does indeed seem strange. But if we examine the motivations and reasons why we explore space, it is easy to see why after all this time we are still Earth-bound.

The ending of the Cold War had a profound impact on the human exploration of space. Up to that point, geopolitical and military factors furnished the reasons for exploration. Space—'the high frontier'—was an important military objective. It was also a means to display national superiority and exhibit a country's excellence in science and technology. These were the reasons the Americans competed so vigorously with the Soviet Union. And these were the reasons why the barren and airless Moon was such an attractive destination for manned space exploration. There is nothing on the Moon—no minerals, no water, no atmosphere. The Apollo ships were crewed by military men, not scientists—the first scientist did not travel to the moon until the last Apollo mission. The emphasis was placed firmly on reaching the Moon as an end in itself, a prestigious act of conquest, and scientific rewards, although they were great, were not the reason that the mission was funded.

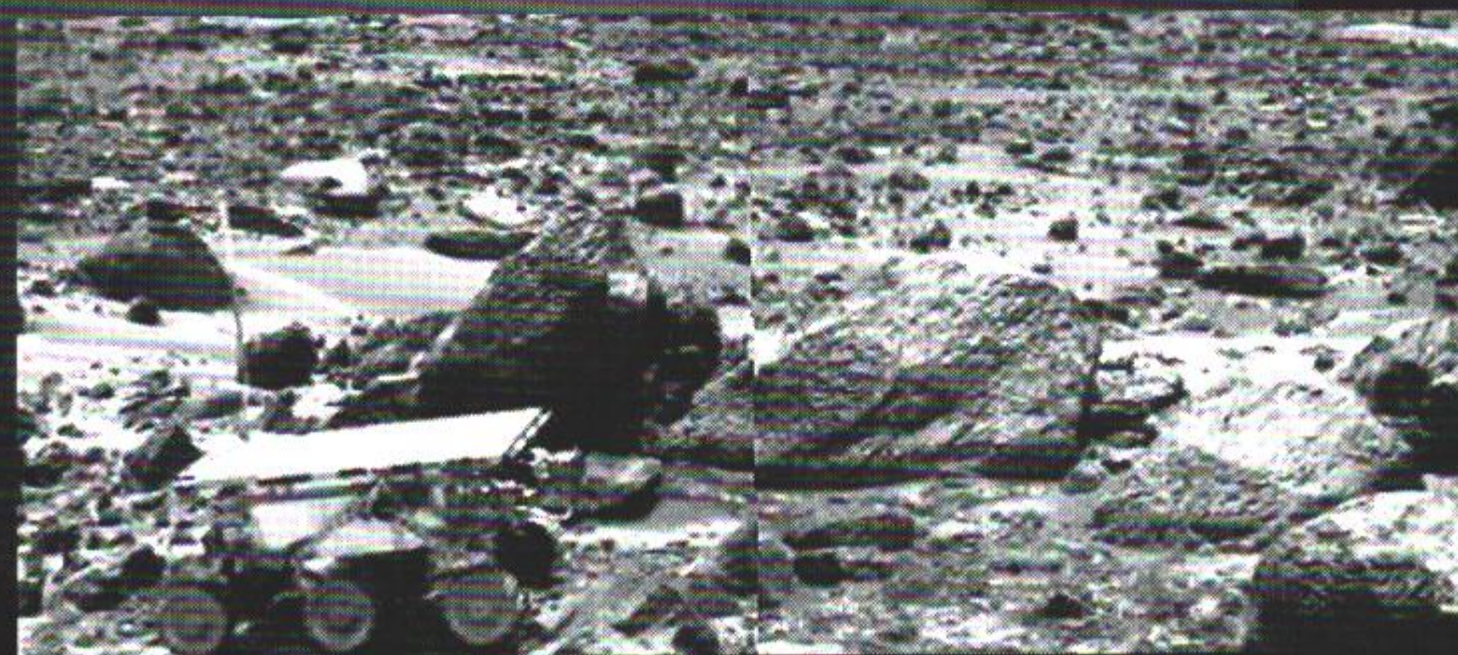
Even in the midst of the Cold War, the manned exploration of space had begun to falter. After Apollo, Nixon was presented with an ambitious plan to put Americans on Mars by the middle of the 1980s. But faced with a multitude

of economic and social problems at home and the Vietnam War, the programme was never funded. Then there was the Space Shuttle—presented as the next big thing in manned exploration, a reusable spacecraft. However, the Shuttle flew five times fewer missions than originally planned and its design was altered by the Department of Defence (who were paying) to allow the delivery of military payloads into low Earth orbit—severely limiting the Shuttle's mission capabilities. Today Space Shuttle astronauts seem more like repairmen than explorers, fixing the odd broken satellite or telescope here and there.

The public have also lost their enthusiasm if they have not become overtly cynical. Before the recent landing on Mars many expressed doubts about whether Pathfinder's intricate system of airbags and parachutes could land the craft safely on the surface of Mars—ignoring the fact that exploration is intimately linked to taking risks and attempting to achieve what has not been achieved before. After the successful landing, questions asked at the initial press conferences focused entirely on two minor problems afflicting the lander and rover, rather than the wealth of scientific data returning from Mars—all the more astonishing considering the fact that no real efforts had been made by NASA engineers at that stage to correct the difficulties.

What of the future? Throughout the press conferences officials continually stated the policy of 'faster, cheaper, better' which they believed the Pathfinder mission had vindicated. It is worthwhile looking at this new approach towards interplanetary missions a little more closely.

The Pathfinder mission cost approximately \$200 million—a small sum ►



Space permits no half measures and is unforgiving of mistakes

◀ compared with Viking, which was over a billion dollars. Does this mean that Pathfinder is 'better' than Viking? Hardly. The two missions had completely different objectives and were designed with a different set of specifications. For example, Viking carried on board a \$25 million biology lab designed to detect the presence of living organisms in the Martian soil—a complex enough task to carry out in an Earth-based laboratory but one which is infinitely more difficult to conduct in the remote deserts of Mars. The design of the Viking missions reflected the fact that they were the first Martian landers—the spacecraft systems had a high degree of redundancy and were tolerant to conditions much more extreme than those eventually encountered.

Pathfinder, by comparison, contained no life-science experiments and only a minimal science package. Its

main mission objective was a technological one—to demonstrate how a small science package could be delivered to the Martian surface cheaply and safely. But if this is meant to be the wave of the future, it is a sign that we have given up on exploration. If we are to discover the true history of Mars, how its climate changed, where the water went to, if life ever existed there or if life exists there today, we will require more than robotic exploration. The missions of the 1970s showed that the surface of Mars is hostile to life; if there is life on Mars today it is probably far beneath ground, near volcanic vents, or in similarly inaccessible locations. These are precisely the sorts of locations which robotic probes would have the greatest difficulty reaching, but which would pose few difficulties to tool-wielding humans.

Human ingenuity and creativity can only be partially replicated on the surface of Mars by a robot probe 140 million miles from its controllers. Remarkably, there are no technological reasons preventing humans from travelling to Mars; many NASA design studies of the 1980s showed how the manned exploration of Mars could be carried out. The key aspect of the plans was that the fuel required for the return journey would be produced on the surface of Mars rather than transported from Earth. Adopting this strategy meant that Mars missions could be designed around existing spacecraft technologies.

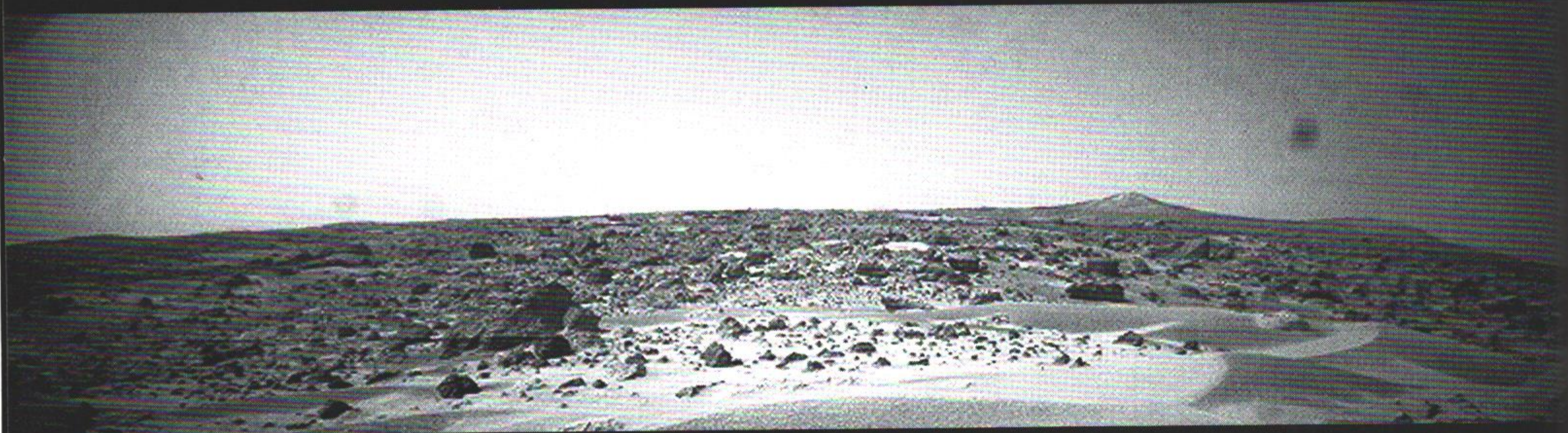
Of course, travelling into space is a risky and extremely dangerous venture; that is why it is a frontier. It is also an activity where the potential rewards are very high. But like many frontiers, no specific, tangible and immediate economic benefits can be offered as an incentive to extend political vision beyond the surface of Earth.

This brings us to the real reasons why Mars is likely to remain unexplored. Society is dominated by economic calculation and an aversion to

exploration—an aversion well demonstrated by the response to 'British-born' Michael Foale's presence on the Mir space station, where the main concern was to get him down again as if he was a child stuck up a tree. This safety-first attitude towards exploration is mirrored in our society's approach towards science in general. The human desire to question, to take risks and explore is challenged more and more often and with greater and greater vigour. The latest scientific discoveries are greeted not with acclaim and praise, but with a raised finger and questions: 'should we really be doing this? What are the consequences?', with little regard for the rewards they might bring. The demand for certainty and for freedom from risk and doubt is incompatible with the practice of science and is stifling it.

To venture into space we must be strong-willed and determined. We must be fully committed to its exploration and discovery; space permits no half measures and is unforgiving of mistakes. We will do a poor job of exploring our solar system and understanding the formation and history of Earth if we insist on doing it with automated probes and for the cost of a summer-time blockbuster. Our picture of the rich geological history of the Martian flood plains and highlands will be an incomplete one if we are unwilling to make the perilous trip to Mars and look at the Martian hills through our own eyes, instead of the eyes of a television camera. We will be well rewarded for the risks we take. ●

Henry Joy McCracken is an astronomer at the University of Durham



The renewed fascination with extra-terrestrials says a lot about what is happening here on Earth, suggests Aidan Campbell

ALIEN NATION

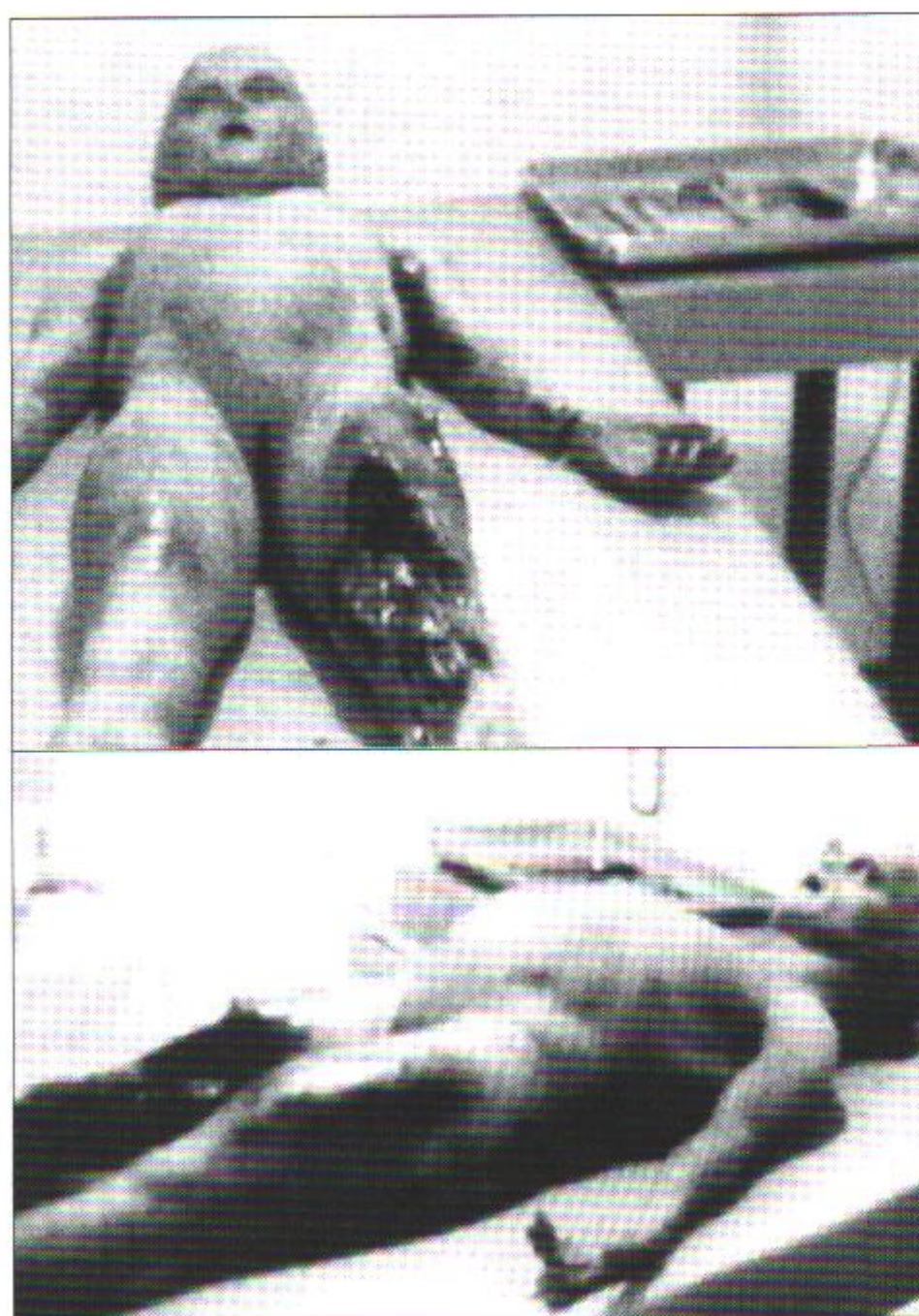
Aliens are everywhere, invading both Planet Hollywood (*Contact*, *Men in Black*, *Mars Attacks!*, *Independence Day*, *Event Horizon*, and *The Fifth Element*), and the TV world (*X-files*, *Dark Skies*, *The Uninvited* and a host of documentaries and drama-docs about the 'Roswell incident' of 1947). Some of the more perceptive commentators see it as symptomatic of a *fin de siècle* millenarianism taking hold of our anxious society. But why have invading aliens become a symbol of this mood?

For the past 50 years, the changing perception of aliens in popular culture has said less about what is going on in outer space than about how people feel about things down here on Earth. The top sci-fi films of the fifties, for instance, (notably *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, 1956) were products of the Cold War climate in which America was searching for Reds under its collective bed. Today's crop of alien films and programmes reflect the different fears of our age.

A leitmotif of the new school of alien movies is the conspiratorial cover-up of the alien presence. UFO aficionados insist that both Washington and Whitehall are run by alien abductees. Whereas racists are slammed for suggesting that immigrant 'aliens' like the Jews control the US government, it is now trendy to imagine that aliens from outer space tread the corridors of power. The theme of the alien-behind-the-throne encapsulates the modern preoccupation with sleaze and skulduggery among the Great and the Good. 'Take me to your leader', requests the traditional alien. 'Trust no-one', is the advice of FBI Agents Scully and Mulder from the *X-files*, who are pitted against an official conspiracy to assist alien colonists.

When the Pathfinder module landed on Mars in July, there was much speculation that—as prefigured in the film *Capricorn One* (1978)—the whole event actually took place in the Arizona desert. The *New York Times* published an item from the Internet, in which 'General Rgrmmy' of the Mars Air Force reassured Martians who had taken to speculating that life might exist on Earth: 'The object was in fact a harmless high-altitude weather balloon, not an alien spacecraft.' (The mention of a weather balloon is an ironic reference to the official US army air force explanation of what happened at Roswell, New Mexico, in July 1947, where a flying saucer was said to have crashed in the desert and alien bodies were supposed to have been recovered. The CIA recently admitted that such UFO sightings were disinformation put out to cloak their spy plane programme from Soviet eyes.)

Those who are most cynical about accepting the denials of the Pentagon or the RAF that UFOs exist are also the most gullible when it comes to accepting any old rubbish as incontrovertible evidence of the alien presence. For a while the existence of crop circles around Britain was ascribed to the impression caused by aliens landing their craft in farm fields. Typically, when the all-too-human pranksters admitted their culpability, their confession was queried as a government put-up job.



The infamous Roswell footage

In the past, aliens were always fantastic monsters or superior intelligent beings—even the famous 'little green men' arrived in amazingly hi-tech vehicles. They were all *big*. By contrast, today's aliens are often pictured as disappointing creatures that resemble human babies in embryo. Indeed, there seems to be very little difference left between us and visitors from outer space. As John Lithgow (alien commander Dick Solomon in the TV comedy *Third Rock from the Sun*), put it: 'We are all aliens now.'

If the cultural representation of aliens consistently reflects both the anxieties and aspirations of our society, then these reduced aliens surely represent a more diminished image of ourselves. In *Contact* (directed by Robert Zemeckis of *Forest Gump* fame), Jodie Foster does get to travel in an interstellar vehicle, but only to hear a Gump-alike intone an alien version of 'Life is like a box of chocolates'.

Independent film reviewer Adam Mars-Jones has noted how, while 'more and more seem to believe in extra-terrestrials', the new breed of aliens 'hardly offer us the keys to the universe' (31 July). Where once they offered humanity cures for ageing (*Cocoon*, 1985), they are now more likely to present us with trinkets, like European adventurers trading with primitive peoples in the past.

In *Men in Black*, Will Smith's character is the only one to shoot down a cardboard cut-out of an eight-year-old girl—instead of a host of alien ones—in a test to enter a training academy that will police aliens on Earth. Smith wins the position in the school when he explains that she was the 'most dangerous' because she was carrying a book on quantum physics. The subtext is clear. After exploding the atom bomb, can humanity be trusted with anything more complicated than knick-knacks from the stars?

With humanity now held in such low esteem, the alien fad seems to me to be slowly but surely shifting from their demonisation to their canonisation. The notion of the UFO as the 'Chariot of the Gods' has become an important part of the ET scene. Some even argue that aliens created humanity through genetic engineering and are now revisiting Earth to inspect the results of their 'experiment'. These arguments can now win a wider hearing than the original anorak-wearing 'trekkies', because they chime in with the diminished view of what we are capable of ourselves.

In days of yore, peasant girls had visions of the Virgin Mary at Fatima or Lourdes. Modern-day St Bernadettes like Scully are more likely to experience an alien abduction (was Princess Diana also abducted?). Just as there has been a steep decline in sightings of UFOs since the late forties, there has been an equally drastic increase in claims of alien abduction since the early sixties. The ordeal of alien abduction has been compared to the spiritual transcendence experienced by a tribal shaman, said to have been seized by the gods and whose bodies are reconstructed according to divine inspiration. Afterwards, the shaman returns to his tribe to serve as the mediator with heaven. Similarly, being implanted by aliens can entitle you to visionary status today.

Given the alienation that many expect to experience as the modern condition, the fact that more people look to aliens for inspiration is maybe not so surprising. In the absence of other sources of popular authority, how long before our leaders feel tempted to acquire some celestial approval of the third kind?

ultimate . art

ART FOR ADS' SAKE

Signs of the times

'In the bible belt, if you wear women's panties, you're unacceptable.'

American sports consultant commenting on the demise of Marv Albert, legendary ginger-toupee-wearing basketball commentator, accused of sexual assault while wearing women's underwear. Go tell it to Frank Bough, Marv.

'I walked through the crowds in St James and realised this was no longer a country I understood'
former Tory cabinet minister, quoted anonymously in the *Sunday Telegraph*

Harrow School has banned touchline chanting at its rugby matches, following 'loutishness' during the fixture against

Unless you have just arrived from another part of the world, you will have heard about the defaced picture of Myra Hindley in Sensation, the Royal Academy exhibition of works by young British artists from the Saatchi collection. Setting the surrounding controversy to one side for a moment, let us look at the works on display in purely aesthetic terms.

One thing that can be said without controversy is that these rooms contain an eclectic crop of exhibits, ranging from abstraction to hyper-realism, from painting and sculpture to installations and video. Yet one gets a sense throughout of the advertiser-turned-art-patron — Charles Saatchi—who is the presiding genius of the show; not least because the bulk of the work obeys the premise of advertising (not art) in one important aspect.

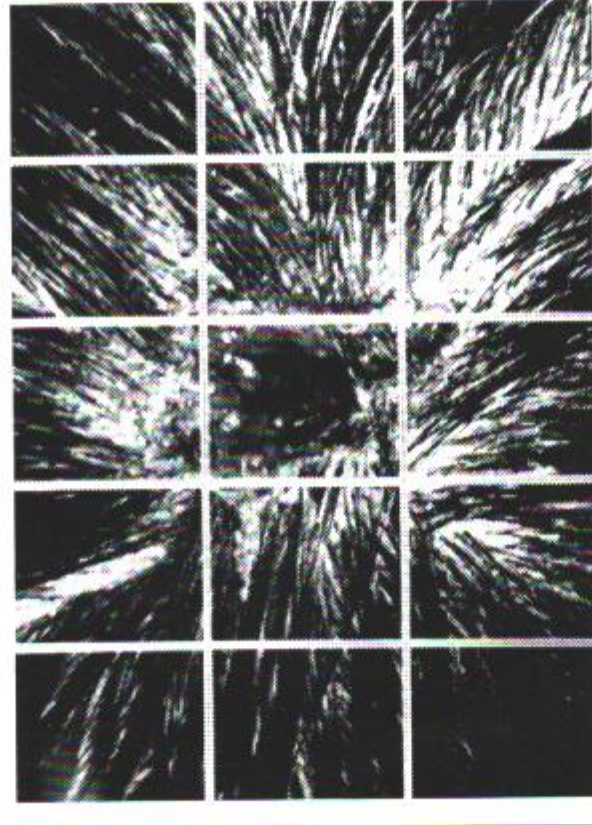
Successful advertising is based on a clever idea which has a succinct relationship to the thing being sold. Bringing that idea to its final form is a largely technical matter—the presentation being merely a vehicle for the message it promotes. In art, on the other hand, conception and realisation cannot be so neatly separated. The 'idea' is not self-contained but must be worked out as the exhibit is made. The end result is not merely a vehicle for an idea, but the idea itself fully realised. Hence the sense of discovery and spiritual struggle, first undergone by the artist himself and then re-experienced in contemplation by the viewer.

Sensation is full of clever ideas but short on this kind of (re)experience. Instead one

MYRA, 1995, MARCUS HARVEY/BULLET HOLE, 1988-93, MAT COLLISHAW



can almost imagine the artists going to Saatchi with an idea to see if he would back it through the production stage. 'A cow's head in a glass case with thousands of flies around it? Go for it, Damien.' There are some talented painters here, such as Richard Patterson, Jenny Saville and Marcus Harvey (he of Myra fame), whose surviving pictures have a kind of pornographic vigour. Nor are you likely to find the other exhibits boring, provided you do them at a quick pace, 'getting' the ideas and



not lingering for deeper meanings. This is the kind of show that you check out rather than engage with.

Louis Ryan

Sensation is at the Royal Academy, Piccadilly, London W1, until 28 December 1997

Merchant Taylor's School. Headmaster Nicholas Bomford commented, 'We have a number of school chants, some perfectly harmless. Others, however, are more tribal'. Angry letters have been sent to the school magazine, including one signed 'Lagerflout'.

Westminster Council has outlawed children under 12 from its meetings. This is a ruse to prevent councillors such as Kate Pritchard from breastfeeding their babies. A special sound system has been installed at a cost of £3000 to enable Ms Pritchard to follow proceedings from an adjoining room.

Meanwhile East Riding Council has erected curtains around its tables to hide the legs of women councillors. LibDem councillor Dave Ireland explained: 'I brought the matter up because the female members shouldn't have to go to a meeting and worry about the way they are sitting. I think it is extremely distracting for male councillors with reasonable levels of testosterone to sit there, especially if you have legs like one or two of the councillors do.'

TECHNICAL FAULT

Lucy Kimbell deplores the gimmickry of digital art

Recent examples of digital art, such as those included in the Serious Games show at the Barbican, prompted me to ask why much of it is so bad. One possible explanation lies in the roots of developments in computer technology. Driven by military and corporate needs, computer graphics and connectivity were often developed by technicians with poor visual design skills. The focus has been on achieving improvements in display rather than asking what should be displayed.

Another reason is that many visual artists using computers tend to do things just because they can. They may get pleasure out of sticking some pages up on the Web, designing an interactive multimedia interface, and having it come up on a computer monitor plonked in a gallery; but there is little or no artistic investigation in such activity. Artists who would not exhibit bits of fiddling with traditional media are happy to show the results of their toying with computers. In the current intellectual climate this work is tolerated and, even worse, billed as 'experimental'.

Moreover, artists doing these bits of fun tend to take technology itself as their subject. Now there are painters whose concerns are primarily the practice of painting, but their skills and their attention to detail speak of much more than paintbrush, oil and canvas. This is not the case with many of those making digital work, whose range of investigation is limited to technology itself and what it can do. As a result, it is difficult to view shows of artworks made with digital technology without feeling a compelling desire to know how they were made. What is on show is the technology, not anything that might be art. The preoccupation with technology on the part of artists is then reproduced by art critics. Compelled to focus on the technical basis for a piece of work, many critics fail to engage with what (if anything) the artist is doing.

These problems were evident in Serious Games, a group show which contained a variety of interactive works. The experiences on offer ranged from pushing buttons which determined what popped up on screen, to

BEATIFIC



PHOTO: GENA ROWLANDS, 1992, BRUCE WEBER

20 November is the opening date for an exhibition of Bruce Weber's photographs at the National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place, London WC2. The 200 prints on show will include portraits of Sean Penn, Juliette Lewis, Leonardo de Caprio and Ewan McGregor. One strand of Weber's work refers back to the Beat Generation which came to prominence 40 years ago this autumn with the publication of *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac. In his advertising campaign for Pepe jeans, in his films *Broken Noses* (about boxers) and *Let's Get Lost* (about jazz trumpeter Chet Baker), and in portraits of Robert De Niro and underground cinema star Gena Rowlands, Weber continues to make images which correspond to Kerouac's definition of Beat as both 'beaten' and 'beatific'.

Andrew Calcutt

navigating, by leaning and inhaling, through a virtual world viewed on a headset, to writing down your thoughts about money on a piece of paper and 'planting' it in an organic, evolving installation. The gadgetry seemed to be all that was available here.

Over the river at the Hayward Gallery, Tatsuo Miyajima's solo show Big Time included works of various sizes all employing slowly-counting numbers in the form of LED lights. The largest work comprised a vast dark hall, crossed by a metal walkway below which a number of barely visible toy vehicles moved around. On top of each vehicle was an LED display counting from one to nine and back again. The trucks bumbled around the hall, occasionally bumping into each other, changing direction and carrying on, as people passed through on the walkway above.

In its simplicity and depth of contemplation, this exhibit achieved what most other digitally-based works fail to do: it worked as an artistic investigation into an idea, into the stuff of information itself. But for want of editorial endeavour, in reviews it was often

bracketed with the Serious Games show, resulting yet again in the conflation of art with the technology.

How might artists approach digital media? One strategy is to acquire software and hardware and begin to develop something approaching a technique, a field of practice and a language of expression. This is a continuation of the Modernist model of being an artist, in which digital technology is just another tool or material or frame, or all three; and with this strategy, it makes sense to apply the label 'digital art'.

Another approach is to grab bits of technology which intersect between everyday life and its cultural representation, and use them to interrogate the distinctions between the two. This seems to have the potential for a deeper investigation into aesthetic concerns and a closer engagement with contemporary art practice. And if it works, it is just art—the 'digital' label is redundant.

Lucy Kimbell is a member of Soda Creative Technologies (www.soda.co.uk), whose show at the Lux Gallery 2-4 Hoxton Square, London N1, opens in January 1998

E AND AFTER

The tenth anniversary of the 1987 'Summer of Love' prompted plenty of commentary. But the tone was decidedly downbeat, and smiley faces were noticeable by their absence. At the Institute of Contemporary Arts recently, the screening of *Coming Down*, a film by D*Note's Matt Winn, and the subsequent discussion entitled 'Have we come down yet? E and after', revealed a high level of insecurity among the 'chemical generation'.

Coming Down depicts a group of twenty-somethings re-entering reality after their night's retreat into drugs and dance music. They try to establish a meaningful rapport, but remain dazed, confused and alienated. By suggesting that even hedonism offers no escape from reality, the film identifies a void at the heart of the clubbing experience. Winn is asking where a decade of necking Es and dancing has got us. Not very far, seems to be his answer. The same bleak conclusion figures in some of the contributions to the recently published anthology *Night Fever: Club Writing in The Face 1980-1997*.

Citing the illicit raves of the early nineties, some participants in the ICA discussion saw clubbing as part of a counter-cultural tradition stretching back to punk, Haight-Ashbury hippies and the Beats. Panelist Miranda Sawyer dismissed such extravagant notions, suggesting that people go to clubs just to be with other people. She likened clubbing to the funeral of Princess Diana—opportunities for an alienated nation to experience a ghost of togetherness.

The forced 'positivity' that accompanied the rave scene has indeed disguised an experience which emphasises personal isolation. Hugging strangers while 'off your face' is as hollow as communing with 'the people's princess'. Perhaps the last 10 years of club culture have always been about myth and mourning—for the original 'Summer of Love' that never was.

David Panos is a researcher for club culture inc.

Night Fever: Club Writing in The Face 1980-1997, edited by Richard Benson, Boxtree, £9.99 pbk

all the culture film

Signs of the times

House of Commons

Speaker Betty

Boothroyd has

been accused of

discriminating against

the new women MPs.

Boothroyd is alleged

to be unfairly strict

with the women

when correcting

them on matters of

commons procedure.

One Labour MP burst

into tears after being

lectured by

Boothroyd. Others are

up in arms about this

sort of 'humiliation',

and the matter is to

be raised at Labour's

women's committee.

The Royal Mail has

decreed the catalogue

of the Royal

Academy's Sensation

exhibition too

obscene to handle,

leaving the gallery

to dispatch them by

courier to its

academicians.

'We have few

contemporary words

for the act and the

parts involved, and

if you should find

yourself listening one

night to a farmer's

daughter from West

Wales talking dirty to

you, it's striking how

similar it is to

There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about', wrote Oscar Wilde in 1891, 'and that is not being talked about'. In the centenary of his release from Reading jail, everybody is talking about Wilde. He has been commemorated in Westminster Abbey, a campaign to erect a statue in London is gathering strength, and new books about 'his exquisite life' are filling the shops. Riding high on this wave of interest is Julian Mitchell, who wrote the screenplay for *Wilde*, the new biopic starring Stephen Fry.

believes, is the 'modern day Wilde', Stephen Fry. 'When people see the film they will know why everyone says Stephen was "born to be Wilde"'. He is the right age, the right height, the right girth, he is funny in his own right, he is a wit, a writer. He is just perfect. In fact the only thing wrong with Stephen is that he has got a broken nose.' Some might add that Fry has only a tenth of Wilde's talent. But he does have a considerable fortune, the sympathy of the media for his personal problems, and a prime slot on nationwide celebrity showcases

passion for Lord Alfred Douglas (Jude Law) could not be passed off in this way. 'Here', says Mitchell, 'was a man leading a successful London life with a wife and two children whom he adored, and he suddenly fell in love with this absolutely disastrous young man. That has the making of a great drama'.

After his affair with Douglas came out in court, Wilde was jailed for 'acts of gross indecency with other male persons'. Some of the most moving scenes show his spirit being crushed by a prison regime that

all the culture cooking

MUSHROOMING

The mushroom season is the one time of year when I appreciate the benefits of having a dog. Wandering through the woods shortly after dawn, armed with wicker basket, walking stick and Swiss army knife, I cannot help but feel self-conscious, especially on those occasions when, after several hours hunting, the basket is still empty. Pretending to be walking the dog would at least provide some cover. This autumn, though, a dog would have been useful for transporting my rich harvest of *porcini* and birch, larch and bay *boletes*.

Prized as a delicacy in every other European country, in Britain mushrooms growing in the wild (or 'toadstools' as we call them — a term which has no equivalent in French or Italian) are ignored, trampled underfoot or even despised as 'spawn of the Devil'. I am not complaining. Like all mushroom hunters, I prefer not to have too much competition.

Of course there are certain risks associated with the consumption of fungi, ranging from mild stomach upsets to death from liver and kidney failure. I was recently told the story of a young French girl who, denied mushrooms at dinner as a punishment for some misdemeanour, turned out to be the only one of her family not to succumb to fatal mushroom poisoning. But the risks should be put into perspective. According to Antonio Carluccio in his excellent recipe-book-cum-field-guide *A Passion For Mushrooms*, in Europe there are about 5000 species of wild mushroom; of which 1200 are thought to be edible (though only about 20 are worth eating); 30 are highly toxic and a further 30 are dubious.

If you observe the basic rule of never eat-



Screenwriter Julian Mitchell tried to convince Brendan O'Neill that Oscar Wilde is still a rebel figure

PHOTO: POLYGRAM

you, it's striking how similar it is to

reading a catalogue of seventeenth century farm implements. The word for a woman's nether regions is "ffwrch" which means furrow as in field and a word for penis is "coes bach" or little leg

Jon Gower, producer of the Welsh Union of Writers' newsletter and delegate to the 'Sex: The Great Welsh Not' conference, which addressed the problems of dealing with modern sexual issues in the context of Welsh culture

Visitors to the Pencyrnor wildlife park have been confronted by a cage marked 'DANGEROUS', containing a selection of men. The typically depressing nineties message is that human males are 'the world's most dangerous animal'.

'I did it for Britain' Gerard Moorehouse, explaining why he punched Fabio Piras, the man convicted of stealing a teddy bear left as a tribute to Saint Diana

The new B&Q superstores in Glasgow and Merseyside have been designed in accordance with the teachings of Feng Shui. 'There is a buzz about the place', says Glasgow manager David Ingliss.

'Wilde has been a constant nagging presence in British culture for 100 years', says Mitchell, 'which is partly to do with the fact that he was always an outsider. Not only was he a sexual rebel, he was also a socialist and an Irish nationalist. These were not good things to be in Victorian Britain'. At the end of the twentieth century, however, the outsider and victim commands more respect and greater respectability than any other cultural figure, as demonstrated by the canonisation of Diana. Perhaps that explains why Wilde, a rebel a century ago, can be so widely revered today.

In 'writing Wilde' for the cinema, Mitchell was keen to present him as one who speaks to us today: 'Wilde should be seen not simply as a figure from the past, but as someone whose life and work has continued to be painfully relevant to British society.' The best man to render this relevance on screen, Mitchell

like Elton John's fiftieth birthday TV special. Wilde died in homeless exile in Paris, an ex-jailbird and outcast.

Mitchell's screenplay starts in 1882 with Wilde's return from a triumphant lecture tour of North America. After marrying, and fathering two children, Wilde, then approaching the pinnacle of his playwrighting fame, is shown in pursuit of young men. 'The film does not concentrate exclusively on the gay relationship', Mitchell explains, 'so much as on Wilde's array of emotional relationships. I thought it was important to portray him as a good husband and a loving father. Firstly, because it is true; and secondly, because the notion of Wilde as a great gay god is completely false. He led a very "heterosexual life" until he was 35'.

The film depicts Wilde trying to place his liaisons with young men within the classical tradition of Platonic friendship. But his

proved too much for him. But Mitchell maintains that 'Wilde's trial and tribulations changed public perceptions. That is another reason why he has continued to stick in the throat of British society. His downfall paved the way for all kinds of questions about why people should be able to do what they want and with whom they want'.

Wilde's trial and imprisonment were, Mitchell says, 'extremely important historically'. He might also like to reflect that times change and the Wilde men of yesteryear can sometimes be transformed into the respectable role models of today. In an age when the government includes an 'out' gay minister of cabinet rank, Wilde has become so respectable that he might not recognise himself.

Wilde is on general release. Julian Mitchell's screenplay is published by Orion Media, £16.99 hbk

SHEFFIELD'S HARMLESS HEROES

Out walking the other day I stumbled across yet another film crew taking shots of my city. Suddenly Sheffield is a sexy location, especially after the success of *The Full Monty*, a black comedy about six unemployed former-steelworkers who become strippers.

The film explores the demise of the old culture which dictated that Sheffield men should be as hard as the steel they used to make. The crisis of masculinity is a central theme; and to make sure you get the message there is a scene where a woman stands up and pisses into the urinal at a working men's club. Recasting the steel city into a cultural showpiece has been an ambition of the local authority for years; and the recent spate of Sheffield movies suggests that the city is indeed turning into a film set. Arizona has the desert, Liverpool has derelict buildings for film-makers to blow up, and we have steel men, Ward's bitter and brass bands. Judging

alt.culture.tech

TAMAGOTCHI GOTCHA

I am the sort of bloke who would buy a tamagotchi just to watch it die. But the potential of cyberpets to develop, using existing and upcoming technology, is very sexy. By next year, they will have audio DSP chips that can classify tones of voice, so you will be able to talk to them soothingly instead of pressing buttons. They will respond to the name you gave them. They will communicate with each other by micropower radio, as Cabbage Patch dolls have been doing for some time, so they will be able to tell each other how well they

are being looked after, or grass you to the tamagotchi social services. Thermistor sensors will be able to tell whether they are warm enough, and they could be equipped to cough petulantly if you light a fag.

Fresh data will be uploaded to them when you put them in front of the telly, during the same interval between video frames that carries teletext, and they will receive it through simple optical sensors. They will be able to ask to watch reruns of *This Life*, and they will know if you do not tune in or at least tape it for them. Mummy and daddy tamagotchi will live on the Internet and in the phone system, and encryption signatures will, like DNA, establish their lineage. So it will be possible to work out if your tam-

agotchi is related to that of anybody famous.

A few years down the line, they will merge with your cellphone and your Internet agents and your personal digital assistant (a filofax for techies). Embedded biosensors based on the electronic noses now being developed for food quality and medical diagnostics will respond to the aroma of the food and drink you offer them. They will learn to analyse your behaviour and play on your emotions. They will try out different personality-riffs derived from your choice of films and music. Lovers will split up because their tamagotchis do not get on. No problem—the first tamagotchi to reward a devoted owner with sexual services has almost certainly been built already.

Nigel Burke is a dissident technologist

RAM

If you observe the basic rule of never eating anything which has not been positively identified, either by a mycologist or through careful research based on several sources (consult your local library), you should come to no harm. Alternatively, you could always buy them. But with prices for fresh *porcini*, when available, in the region of £20 to £30 per kilo, you might have to get a dog and go hunting instead.



Mushroom risotto (Serves four as a first course)
300g <i>carnaroli</i> or <i>arborio</i> rice
300g <i>porcini</i> , sliced; or large field mushrooms, sliced, and a handful of dried <i>porcini</i> , soaked in a little warm water for 30 minutes then rinsed and chopped
1 small onion
2tbsp olive oil
25g unsalted butter
1.2 litres chicken stock
To finish
25g unsalted butter
60g freshly grated Parmesan



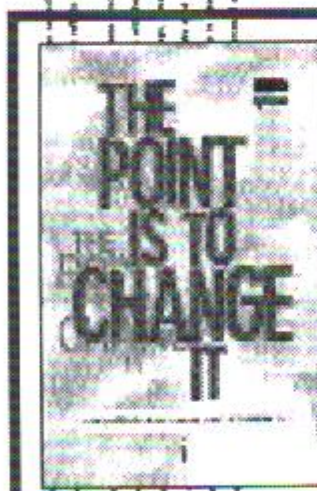
Bring the stock to the boil (if using dried mushrooms, add the soaking liquid, strained through a tea-strainer). In a large, heavy-based pan or casserole (with a lid), sweat the onion in the olive oil and butter. Do not allow to brown. Add the mushrooms and cook until the liquid has evaporated. Add the rice and the liquid for two minutes, stirring carefully to prevent the grains from sticking to the pan.

Add a ladle of stock and stir until the liquid has been absorbed. Continue in this way, a ladle at a time, stirring gently to release the starch from the rice, until the rice is almost cooked (the grains should still be distinct and slightly firm to the bite with just a hint of chalkiness at the centre). This will take about 20 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, stir in the remaining butter and half the Parmesan, check the seasoning and place the lid on the pan. Allow to stand for three minutes. Serve in warmed soup plates with the remaining Parmesan.

© **Neil Haider** BBC1's Masterchef 1996

THE POINT IS TO CHANGE IT

'Our reply to all of the pleas for caution and restraint is that until now humanity has only learned to crawl. We still live in a world that is not fit for people. Our problem is not that we are too ambitious, but that we continually hesitate about experimenting with new solutions. We need a revolution in outlook, so that we can continue to advance and give new scope to human creativity.'



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READING

BETWEEN THE LINES

Tessa Mayes won't be signing up for the new school of war reporting

ATTACHED JOURNALISM IS BAD JOURNALISM

THE TENTH CIRCLE OF HELL: A MEMOIR OF LIFE IN THE DEATH CAMPS OF BOSNIA

Rezak Hukanovic,
Little, Brown & Co,
£14.99 hbk

A HACK'S PROGRESS

Phillip Knightley,
Jonathan Cape,
£17.99 hbk

IN HARM'S WAY: REFLECTIONS OF A WAR-ZONE THUG

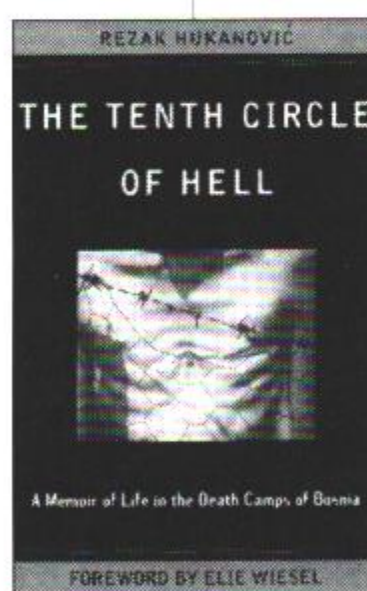
Martin Bell,
Penguin Books,
£16.99 pbk

BOSNIA BY TELEVISION

James Gow, Richard Paterson
and Alison Preston (eds),
British Film Institute,
£12.99 pbk

IMAGINE BEING A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT covering Bosnia. Witnessing bloody deaths in god-forsaken places, you are surrounded by other journalists trying to convince editors in the safety of London, New York or Frankfurt that people should know what you have seen and risked your life for. Alan Bleasdale tried to imagine it. The mood of the war reporter character in his Channel 4 drama *Melissa* (broadcast earlier this year) summed up the modern war reporter's psyche: frustration. Reporter Guy Foster kicks in TV sets wherever he goes. What irks him is that he has spent '14 years attempting to write the truth' and yet war continues to rage and even TV reporters can't seem to stop it. Why?

Real war reporters are trying to answer that question and do something. For many, the war in former Yugoslavia became a watershed in how wars should be understood and reported. Some journalists now argue for a new type of war reporting. Martin Bell, veteran BBC foreign correspondent, is one of the leading protagonists of this new school of journalism. In his book *In Harm's Way* Bell argues that journalists should no longer report from the sidelines with little to say on how to stop war. Instead they should adopt a 'journalism of attachment'.



LM editor Mick Hume has stirred up the media debate about foreign reporting with his pamphlet, *Whose War is it Anyway? The Dangers of the Journalism of Attachment* (see back page for details). For me, as an investigative reporter, one of the many dangers which Hume touches upon stands out as a pressing problem. The trouble is that what is being advocated by Bell and Co marks a decline in journalistic standards. The Journalism of Attachment leads to bad journalism.

Attached journalism in Bell's view is a journalism that 'cares as well as knows'. The idea is that journalists should be morally responsible by standing up for 'good' against 'evil'. Above all, journalists should call for something to be done about war; they can no longer be neutral.

THE CASE FOR BELL'S ATTACHED JOURNALISM IS elaborated in opposition to the traditional BBC idea of 'balance'—that all sides would get to put their case, and that the reporters would remain impartial, reporting only the facts. As Bell says, he felt 'neutered' as a BBC foreign correspondent. But the real problem with the old BBC tradition, was not that it was impartial. On the contrary, it was profoundly partial to the world-view ►

SHOCKING IMAGES MAY CAUSE REVULSION. YET OFFERED WITHOUT A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CAUSES OF A WAR THEY CAN ONLY CONFIRM THE VIEW THAT HUMAN SUFFERING IS INEVITABLE

◀ of the British establishment. It dressed up its own imperial view of the world as if it was an impartial account.

Bell recounts a story that illustrates the limitations of impartiality in the old BBC tradition. Writing in the *Listener* magazine in the sixties, he denied that censorship was a problem at the BBC. 'I still don't know why I wrote that', he concedes (*In Harm's Way*, p207). While reporting in Northern Ireland, he had been asked to substitute the word 'refugees' for 'Roman Catholics' after Loyalists burned Catholics out of their homes in the Shankill Road in August 1969. Denying the significance of the religion of those ousted from their homes meant censoring the truth of the situation. What Bell does not appear to notice, is that this is an account of the BBC's lack of balance, not an excess of it.

AT A RECENT MEDIA CONFERENCE IN LONDON, Martin Bell advocated that journalists give evidence at the War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague (set up by Western powers to convict those seen as responsible for the war in former Yugoslavia). Bell is concerned about doing the right thing according to his own political thinking, but then applies it as a code of conduct for all journalists to swear by.

Bell's strictures can only be disastrous for journalistic independence. If journalists have to hand over their news footage and other evidence to the authorities on demand, how can they hope to protect their sources, gather information and investigate, free from interference?

At the World News 1996 conference in Berlin, Bell said that victims of war should not be censored. Underlying this call is the idea that images of atrocities will spur people into action, since the sanitisation of war has led to political apathy. Calling for less censorship in news sounds radical enough. But a flood of news footage portraying tragedy after tragedy does not offer an understanding of war; it ends up sentimentalising the news as one 'human interest' photo-story after another. According to Bell 'pictures speak for themselves'. Actually they don't. The *Times*' Simon Jenkins makes a good argument against Bell here: 'He used the images to make the world want to come and stop the killing. He never said how. He wanted to blot out thought. His was a bias against understanding.' (quoted in *In Harm's Way*, p134)

Shocking images may cause a reaction: revulsion. Yet offered without a clear understanding of the political and social causes of a war they can only confirm the view that human suffering is inevitable. Despite the pro-active language—'don't censor', 'do something', 'stop being a bystander'—the Journalism of Attachment limits human action and dehumanises war by denying the ability of people to work out the causes of war and

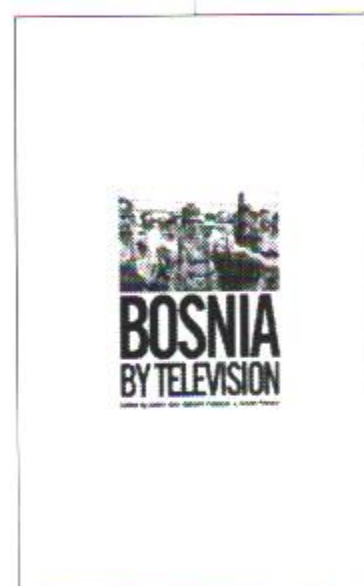
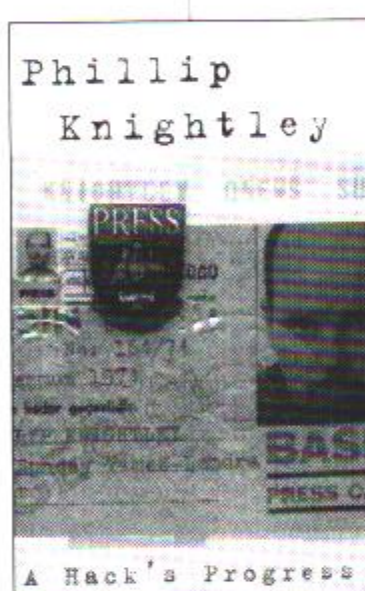
ultimately to stop them. Bell's reply to Simon Jenkins is instructive: 'The best answer I can muster to this is that there are problems which cannot be solved, but can only be managed.' (*In Harm's Way*, p134) In this, Bell shares an outlook with the former foreign secretary Douglas Hurd he has so often criticised, who commented 'disorder is as natural in this world as order'.

Opinions are not the problem in the Journalism of Attachment; it is what those opinions are based on. It is one thing to express a view, another to be able to explain it convincingly and with sufficient evidence. Unfortunately the history of war reporting in Bosnia—examined extensively in past issues of *LM* magazine—shows that opinions about the war have often been based on flimsy evidence, knee-jerk reactions, lies, propaganda or a limited understanding of the causes of war.

The editors of *Bosnia by Television*—a collection of papers from a British Film Institute conference in 1994—warn that there is 'competition for the truth over the Yugoslav war, that some of the detail contained in the following chapters should be treated with caution' (p1). However, establishing the truth is more than just an endless round of fact-checking, important though that is. It is also about working out the meaning and significance of facts. An objective approach at least recognises this by starting with a thesis to be tested, rather than a view to which you fit the facts. Otherwise journalism can end up giving up on analysis, ignoring the whole picture and concentrating on individual examples of human suffering.

It is the objective approach, however, which Bell discards as an 'illusion'. At the very time that objectivity in war reporting seems to be at an all time low, the implication of the Journalism of Attachment is that opinions and moral judgements should be the prime mode of analysis in war reporting. In practice, the danger of elevating opinions over objectivity can all too easily lead to the type of biased journalism that Bell says he wishes to avoid. Facts will be included only if they fit a preconceived opinion. Some truths will be ignored as inconvenient.

ALONGSIDE A DECLINE IN THE QUESTIONING OF mainstream assumptions comes the elevation of a new type of truth: the Greater Truth. Facts are held to be sacred but only if they fit the bigger picture of how a conflict should be understood. The view that the Serbs were mainly to blame for the Yugoslav war, and were the 'most evil', led many journalists to assume the Serbs were the aggressors in most skirmishes. *Bosnia by Television* provides some examples of this. James Gow and James Tilsley from the Department of War Studies, Kings College, London, point out in their chapter that the May 1992 bread queue massacre in Sarajevo was



IN AN AGE THAT SCORNS POLITICIANS THERE HAS BEEN AN ELEVATION OF THE JOURNALIST'S ROLE. THE NEW STRESS ON THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT INVITES JOURNALISTS TO PONTIFICATE ON THE WORLD

assumed by most journalists to have been the Serbs' handiwork, despite the lack of evidence. Tough sanctions were imposed on Serbia as a result. Yet the War Crimes Tribunal seems unable to find sufficient evidence to make this charge against Bosnian Serb leaders. News coverage of the bread queue massacre was not reportage a sabotage of the truth.

Eye-witness accounts are held to be part of the new truth. Witnessing events is claimed to lend the journalist credibility because 'I was there'. But eye-witness reports are no guarantee of the truth. Mort Rosenblum, a US journalist working for the Associated Press, warns that journalists must get a feel for a story while not being drawn into it. 'A minor skirmish can seem like D-Day to a correspondent pinned down all day by artillery.' (*Who Stole the News?*, 1993) First impressions can be wrong.

REZAK HUKANOVIC, A FORMER JOURNALIST, produces a forceful, firsthand account, of life and death in the Omarska camp during 1992 (*Tenth Circle of Hell*). Written in the third person, as a father called Djemo, one chapter describes how two prisoners were forced to bite the testicles off two others. 'The camp resounded with frantic screams' as the men died. Testimonies like Hukanovic's have been compiled as evidence against former guards and soldiers in the War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague. In a BBC2 documentary—'War crimes on trial' (broadcast 7 May 1997)—the method of justice at the tribunal was questioned. Sources were found to be lying and hearsay evidence was admitted even though in a British law court it would be dismissed. During the trial of Dusko Tadic, a Bosnian Serb reserve policeman, only one man was alleged to have been castrated, only one man was alleged to have carried out the act and he withdrew from testifying.

How does one react to such accounts as a journalist? You might think, like a lawyer, the journalist would be expected to substantiate claims with further evidence and question their sources. In the reporting of Bosnia, the problem has been that journalists are all too ready to publicise claims based on individual accounts or hearsay. It may make a shocking read, but where does that leave the truth? Such testimonies by definition fail to offer analysis. Even if they are true, they can only give a dramatic description of events. Beyond that they are limited.

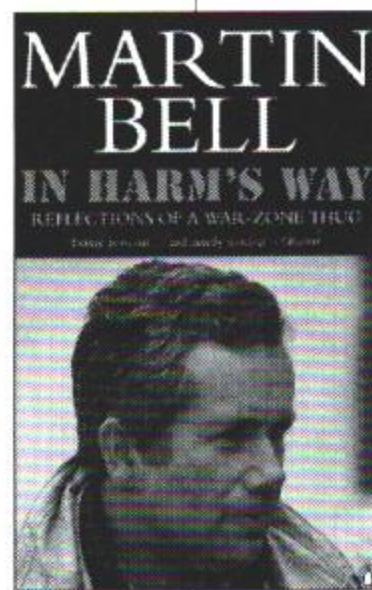
Despite the stress on opinions and judgements, many contemporary foreign correspondents deny they are being political. Bell says his views are based on an objective reporting of the truth. Christiane Amanpour, the famous CNN journalist says, 'I do wars. I don't do politics'. Although presented as non-political and commonsensical, the new journalism is politically charged.

Mort Rosenblum warns the reporter about using politically loaded words such as 'human rights', 'torture' and 'genocide' so liberally that 'in some cases it triggers little revulsion' (*Who Stole the News?*). To Rosenblum, the problem is one of term overuse rather than abuse; use such emotive terms too much and the reader becomes bored. Yet he fails to question his own use, or abuse, of such terms. Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian Serb leader, devised something 'close to a final solution', according to Rosenblum. Roy Gutman, the US journalist, is described as exposing the 'Serb concentration camps'. If every war becomes a 'holocaust', every camp a 'concentration camp', the words no longer signify anything distinctive. They become empty labels applied to anything that smacks of war. The particular characteristics of a conflict and explanations for a war get ignored.

Such journalism leads to a self-righteous view where other views are heretical and not allowable within the consensus. Morally correct journalism is dangerous because it stifles debate, particularly alternative political ideas which do not see the world in terms of moral battles between Good and Evil.

The last thing war reporting needs is moralising. Reporters used to at least pay lip-service to the facts, but now they are expected to be moral missionaries bringing the 'Greater Truth' to those at home and lecturing those abroad. The language of the new journalism has much in common with that justifying Western intervention. Western armies are described as peacekeepers who reluctantly intervene abroad to stop war; we now have journalists as peaceshapers who reluctantly have to report on wars (or as Bell puts it, war chose him).

In an age that scorns politicians there has been an elevation of the journalist's role. Bell writes that he had expected to be a peace correspondent by now, but the politicians have let him down. He recounts in his book how politicians frequently called on his advice before he entered the world of politics himself. As a foreign correspondent he had visited the wartorn areas in Bosnia and spoken to all sides, so he was viewed as having some insight into what could be done. The elevation of the role of foreign correspondent has put pressure on journalists to pontificate on world events. Equally, the journalist can rise from being an unknown reporter to one whose views count as they enter the political world stage, using their position as a loud hailer for their opinions.



IN HIS ENTERTAINING, AND THOROUGHLY humane account of 'a hack's progress', Phillip Knightley, a veteran of the *Sunday Times*' Insight Team, paints a different picture. Knightley's account is a lot more honestly self-deprecating than Bell's false modesty. Knightley tells his story warts and all. He readily ►

◀ admits that, as an investigative reporter, he has often been manipulated in unseen ways by the security services. He is bemused to discover many years later that the publishing company he worked for promoting American literature in India was a CIA front. But unlike Bell, Knightley lays off the moral indignation, because he knows that things are often more complicated than they seem.

Not only does Knightley put his hand up for the bad stories that he was implicated in, however tangentially, such as the famous Hitler Diary hoax at the *Sunday Times*, when that paper was persuaded to print a forgery of the dictator's memoirs. He also questions great scoops he was involved in, like the Insight Team's exposure of the thalidomide scandal, where the drug company Distillers was shown to have promoted a drug that caused severe disabilities. As he explains, the question of compensation often created new divisions between families, and within families later on. Knightley does not blow his own trumpet like today's attached journalists. His modest view of the journalist's powers has made him all the better a journalist.

It is bad journalism if so many journalists cannot see beyond their own laptops and end up repeating the new gospel according to the Journalism of Attachment. Are we condemned to a world where our interactive television channels give us daily moral guidance, while we are reduced to the role of a congregation? We might all end up putting the boot into our TV sets.

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READ ON READ ON READ ON READ ON READ ON READ

MOTHER TERESA: BEYOND THE IMAGE

Anne Sebba, *Weidenfeld and Nicolson*, £20 hbk

MOTHER TERESA WAS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS A master of media manipulation. If so, her decision to give up the ghost the day before Diana's funeral must go down as one of the most ill-timed media disasters of the twentieth century. Sebba claims to ask all the hard questions, but the answers leave a lot to be desired, resulting in a hagiography of the 'saint of the gutters'.

Sebba does recount the most oft-repeated criticisms of Mother Teresa: that she was treated at the best hospitals in the world while she allowed her own charges to die in agony for want of some analgesia; that she 'prescribed' prayer and love instead; that she suggested that the

survivors of the Union Carbide accident which killed thousands of people 'love a little more' rather than demand recompense; her opposition to abortion and birth control: Aids sufferers in her homes are denied condoms (Anthony Burgess called into question the nuns' sanity, claiming they thought Aids could be 'assuaged with loving words and a little hot soup', p114); that she was apparently autocratic and she and her order of nuns may even have salted away vast fortunes in Vatican banks.

WHILE THE GIVING OF A LITTLE HOT SOUP IS clearly not a crime, Teresa's suggestion that misery is beautiful, and even a noble aim is nauseating. Sebba boasts that 30 000 people died in the building Mother Teresa used in Calcutta. It seems rather apt that when Teresa took it over it was called Kalighat—an abandoned temple to Kali, the Hindu goddess of death and destruction.

Mother Teresa glorified the essence of poverty. Love and affection, she held, would do more to solve our problems than wealth and power. 'We are all called to love, love until it hurts' (p275) she was fond of saying. 'Accept your lot and seek God's love rather than material happiness on Earth' was another favourite of hers. 'There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread, but there are many more dying for a little love.' People died hopeless deaths in agony because of what she believed in. And they want her to be saint? But then, as Sebba points out, 'for Mother Teresa we are all just souls', (p275) so bodily pain must be immaterial.

Sebba wraps it up beautifully in her closing comments when she says that Mother Teresa inspired people 'because she demonstrated a way, not always effective, of using the power of love as a force of healing and redemption. In spite of all the criticisms levelled against her, Mother Teresa gave tens of thousands of people the opportunity to express their love for their fellow human beings' (p276). Presumably by their dying without causing a fuss and demanding what should rightfully be theirs.

Though maybe we ought to give Prime Minister Tony Blair a crack of the whip. He said: 'In a week already filled with tragedy, the world will be saddened that one of its most compassionate servants has died. Mother Teresa devoted her life to the poor and her spirit will live on as an inspiration to all of us.' An inspiration to those who do not want any apple carts upsetting and want those who want for everything to accept that state of affairs. The *Cork Examiner's* headline on the day of her funeral ran: 'Living Saint Buried.' The poor the world over might have been better off if that had been the case somewhat sooner.

David Nolan

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