

**ALTERNATIVE THEATRE  
AND  
THE STATE**

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## ABSTRACT.

This thesis examines the interaction between the state and the alternative theatre movement in the 1980s.

The first chapter deals with Thatcherism, the most active political force in the 1980s. It set out to convert Britain to a system based on the free market and on Victorian values: The chapter analyses its ideological roots, and evaluates its success.

The second chapter deals with the effect of Thatcherite philosophy on the Arts Council (Britain's largest arts funding body). The chapter discusses the structure and practice of the Arts Council, and gauges the effect of economic and political pressures on those structures in the 1980s.

The third chapter discusses the work of the Labour-controlled Greater London Council between 1981 and its abolition in 1986. The Council operated policies designed to involve the ordinary Londoner. The chapter places the G.L.C. in Labour Party history; assesses the impact of its approach on the Council's arts funding policy; and assesses the successes and failures of this policy.

The fourth chapter deals with the alternative theatre movement. It discusses the movement's growth during the 1970's, and its developing relationship to the state. The chapter then analyses the effect of economic, political and social pressures on the field in the 1980s.

The fifth chapter deals with Scottish theatre. It does so for two reasons; firstly because the state framework, the cultural development, and the political landscape of Scotland differ from the rest of the country; and secondly, because of this difference, the impact of the alternative theatre movement on Scotland has been substantially different to that in England.

The thesis concludes that, though the political atmosphere in the 1980s has been generally hostile, alternative theatre survives, because the field itself has changed, and because it has found support in some sections of the state.

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## INDEX.

INTRODUCTION	p1.
CHAPTER 1: THATCHERISM	p9.
CHAPTER 2: THATCHERISM AND THE ARTS: THE ARTS COUNCIL	p50.
CHAPTER 3: THE GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (1981-1986)	p96.
CHAPTER 4: ALTERNATIVE THEATRE	p148.
CHAPTER 5: NATIONALISM AND THE FRINGE: SCOTLAND	p196.
CONCLUSION	p236.
Appendix	
Notes	
Bibliography	

## INTRODUCTION

...Thatcherism has worked on it's own ideological terms. It's worked very well in terms of ensuring that it is difficult to put the collective idea across. Younger theatre groups immediately start off thinking about individual sponsorship, using the machinery and language of today, rather than actually addressing themselves to what they're trying to say, or for that matter, to whom they might be saying it... But where do we actually go from here? I find in myself a lot of ideas that are a residue of twenty years ago and not necessarily engaging with the realities of today - which is not to say that many of these values are wrong, but how does one readdress them?(1)

By the end of the 1980s, the late 1960's seemed remote. Woodstock, Yippies, Pink Floyd playing Interstellar Overdrive for half an hour or so in front of an audience of stoned and discerning hippies - the icons of the counter-culture seemed to have lost their relevance. These icons had been replaced by a set of shiny, new ones - London Docklands, the return of the Falklands Taskforce, Yuppies, the periodic public relations extravaganzas of privatisation. Apparently, Britain was a completely different society. In the wake of it's third successive election victory in 1987, the Conservative government seemed as secure as it ever had, it's success largely due to the personal effect of the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher - perhaps the decade's most potent icon.

This was not merely a change in fashion. "Thatcherism" - the peculiar blend of authoritarianism and liberalism endorsed by the Prime Minister and her acolytes - set out to transform everything. In the late 1960s an interventionist Labour government tried to rule by consensus - balancing the needs and imperatives of capital and labour, as represented by the C.B.I. and the T.U.C. This approach collapsed in the late 1970s: the Labour government of 1974 to 1979 seemed to lurch uncertainly from one political and economic crisis to another. Inflation, strikes, rising unemployment, the humiliating intervention of the International Monetary Fund - the Corporate State did not merely fail: it fragmented, apparently beyond any hope of repair.

The Tories came to power in 1979 determined to reverse the nation's decline. No part of the state or of civil society was to escape: the country would become a morally rigorous free-market state even if it had to be dragged along the way. In one of the Prime Minister's favourite early metaphors, what Britain needed was a dose of monetarist medicine: a strict regime of cutbacks and financial stringency would stiffen the nation's sinews, enabling it to journey confidently along the road to capitalist paradise. If some sections of society were not prepared to join in the great crusade (the unions, or some local authorities) it made no difference; there were no opt-out clauses on this particular trip.

The fringe or alternative theatre movement was one of the many social and cultural outgrowths of the late 1960s; and it shared the generalised anti-establishment bias of the counterculture. It questioned social norms from the first; either explicitly, frequently from an overtly socialist standpoint (Red Ladder, C.A.S.T., etc), or implicitly, by taking the forms and images of society and shaking them up (The People Show, for example). As the field expanded it absorbed, to some extent, emerging critiques of society - feminist critiques, critiques based on the experience of Blacks and Asians in Britain, critiques based on the experience of homosexuals, and so on.

Judging by the year by year descriptions given by theatre groups in succeeding editions of the British Alternative Theatre Directory, the fringe's political bias has always been left-of-centre, reflecting the breadth and diversity of left-wing politics in Britain. This, however, has not translated into automatic support for the Labour party, the largest force on the left. Harold Wilson was one of the counterculture's bugbears; he supported American policy in Vietnam, tightened already draconian immigration laws, and substituted pragmatic state capitalism for socialism. The Labour government of 1974 to 1979, as noted above, supervised the noisy Gotterdammerung of the Corporate State, but the embattled Cabinet received no sympathy from the fringe. David Edgar's Wreckers (for 7:84 England, 1977), Howard Brenton's Epsom Downs (Joint Stock, 1977), and John

Mcgrath's Little Red Hen (7:84 Scotland, 1975) portrayed Labour politicians as, in varying degrees, venal, ineffectual, stupid and/or alcoholic.

With hindsight, this attitude seems ironic: the fringe castigates a left-wing government, which is replaced by a government farther to the right than any other post-war Conservative administration. The change in political approach impinged directly on the fringe's existence.

The alternative theatre movement has always been short of money. Small companies have always scraped by on whatever funds they can muster, using proceeds from performance, dole money, funding from the Manpower Services Commission and various other government schemes, or by using wages from full or part-time employment. However, as the field expanded in the late 1960s and 1970s, it began to look to the existing sources of arts funding - the Arts Council, the Regional Arts Associations, and so on. At a time when state arts funding was increasing generally, this was possible; some of the newly established companies made their way on to the Arts Council's revenue list (meaning that their funding was ensured from one year to the next). With this secure base, the companies could begin to plan ahead, and to expand. Obviously, this did not include the majority of fringe companies; but it did mean that the field had room to grow. There was at least some chance that work would be recognised, and would receive the funding it deserved.

The development of the fringe, therefore, was tied to the general development of society in two ways. Firstly, as noted above, it was open to the influence of social forces such as feminism, forces which also had an impact in society as a whole. Secondly, it was directly affected by the state's attitude to funding. The first element was uppermost in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, as the government's approach to state expenditure changed, the second element became more and more important.

The equation would seem to be simple. The fringe expanded in a period when the general political atmosphere was relatively favourable, and when the state was willing to commit itself to public spending. When the social and political atmosphere changed, the expansion was halted.

However, it is not that simple. For one thing, state and society do not move, like some massive armoured vehicle, in the same direction at the same time. The state is a series of agencies, with greater or lesser autonomy: One of the Conservative government's recurring problems has been with state organisations- The Greater London Council, for example- that have used their relative autonomy to criticise and set up alternatives to central government policy. Neither has society travelled en masse with the Conservatives; Scottish voting habits have remained stubbornly at odds with the apparent Tory hegemony in parts of England.

This ambiguity is reflected in the various channels of state funding for the arts. Central Government controls its arts funding budget through an annual grant channelled through the Office of Arts and Libraries. The O.A.L. gives the Arts Council their grant, and the Arts Council in turn finances companies directly, and gives the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils their grants: the Arts Council also contributes much of the annual grants for Regional Arts Associations. However, state funding also comes to the fringe via other organisations (such as local authorities), and the political complexion of these organisations can influence their funding policies. The Labour controlled Greater London Council in the early and mid 1980s pursued policies which directly contradicted those of the government; and the Council's arts policy was no different. In Scotland, arts funding operates in a different state system and social climate than in England; and that difference has had an impact on the development of Scottish theatre as a whole.

This thesis does not set out to detail all of the elements of the interconnection between arts funding policy, the wider political and social climate, and the development of alternative theatre in Britain in the past ten years. Rather, it analyses key points in the structure, and attempts to show how the three processes named above have interconnected at these points. Put broadly, the thesis deals with the policy of central government, and the way in which this policy has impacted on the arts funding world. It also analyses the policies and structure of the G.L.C., and the social and political development of Scotland; two areas where the tide appears to have run against central policy. Although the three areas dealt with might seem to work against each other, they are all part of the state and social structure of Britain; and each one of the three areas has had an impact on the development of the fringe.

However, the structure did not emerge fully-formed and complete in 1979, when the Conservatives came to power. Each of the chapters contains some material relating to the development of its subject prior to the 1980s. Each one of these subjects has a different starting-point: Thatcherism and the philosophy behind the G.L.C. have their roots in the 1960s. The Arts Council's development as part of the post-war Welfare State is obviously relevant to its development after 1979. The fringe itself has its roots, as has been said above, in the late 1960s, a time held in considerable contempt by the Thatcher government.

The chapter on Scotland reaches furthest back into the past, back to the Act of Union in 1707. It does so because the history of Scots culture since the Act, although relevant to the history of Scottish theatre, is not well-known outside the country; and yet without at least some acknowledgement of this history, it is impossible to gauge the impact of Thatcherism, and of the alternative theatre movement, on Scotland. Similarly, the history of Scottish theatre in the twentieth century helps to explain the importance of the fringe's impact in Scotland, but that history is almost completely unknown outside Scotland - and, until relatively recently, within Scotland as well.

## CHAPTER 1: THATCHERISM

"The thing that's so amazing about her is the size of what she's trying to do... I'm talking about you-know-who." Valance explained helpfully. "Torture. Maggie the bitch... she's radical all right. What she wants - what she actually thinks she can fucking achieve - is literally invent a whole new working class in this country. Get rid of all the old woolly incompetent buggers from fucking Surrey and Hampshire, and bring in the new. People without background, without history. Hungry people. People who really want, and know, that with her, they can fucking well get. Nobody's ever tried to abolish a whole fucking class before, and the amazing thing about her is she might just well do it if they don't get her first. The old class. The dead men. You follow what I'm saying... And it's not just the businessmen...The intellectuals too. Out with the whole faggotty crew. In with the hungry guys with the wrong education. New professors, new painters, the lot. It's a bloody revolution. Newness coming into this country that's full of fucking old corpses. It's going to be something to see. It already is." (1)

Margaret Thatcher is the longest-serving Prime Minister this century. She has led her party to three successive election victories, securing majorities of over one hundred in the last two. She has forced the Argentinians, the miners and the metropolitan councils into submission. When Spitting Image's 1987 election special restaged Tomorrow Belongs to Me as a Tory party anthem, any opposition laughter must have been very uneasy indeed: the prospect of a Thatcherite new age seemed to be very close. Thatcherism has styled itself as a new force in British politics; a break with the flabby crisis management of the 60s and 70s. It intended to reverse the rising tide of state intervention ( or "creeping Socialism"); in its place, the Government was to allow the keen wind of competition to blow across the country. Old values

were to be dusted down and reemployed; society was becoming soft, and the Prime Minister was certain that she knew why -

We are reaping what was sown in the 60s. The fashionable theories and permissive clap-trap set the scene for a society where the old virtues of discipline and self-restraint were denigrated... Children need, respond to, and too often lack clear rules. Only in this way will they grow up in a framework of certainty and learn the self-control necessary to cope with the problems of life.(2)

Thatcherism was the gardener, spraying weedkiller on the whole harvest of the permissive age; the soil in which the fringe theatre movement had germinated was to be scorched clean.

## THATCHERISM: THE IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.

It was Enoch Powell who first sowed the seeds whose harvest Margaret Thatcher reaped... What is now called "Thatcherism" was originally known as "Powellism"; bitter-tasting market economics sweetened and made palatable to the public taste by great creamy dollops of ideological custard. In his case immigration control was the custard, and it was a bit too rich for any but the strongest digestions. She was lucky to have the Falklands campaign handed to her on a plate, which did the same job much more effectively, turning far less stomachs.

But the original formula was Enoch's, and to his great voice should credit go for shattering the Butskellite glacié, the dissolution of which led to the avalanche.(3)

Custard, plates and avalanches aside, Worsthorne has a point. Thatcher's victory in 1975 (when she became party leader) was a vindication of the power of Powell's rhetoric in the 50s and 60s. Powell was a populist politician, as Thatcher is; and he was the first to blend the two main tendencies that were developing in right-wing thought into a whole. The Thatcherite project, aptly described by Andrew Gamble in the paradoxical phrase "free market, strong state", yokes together free-market liberalism and neo-conservatism. The history of this synthesis in the post-war Conservative party starts with Powell, finds a weak expression in the two-year ascendancy of Selston Man in the Heath Government of the early 70s, is carried through in pure form by Keith Joseph, and reaches the pinnacle of the party structure under Margaret Thatcher, Joseph's acolyte.

## FREE-MARKET LIBERALISM

The main proposition of this new liberal political economy may be summed up as follows: Intervention doesn't work; all alternatives to markets are deeply flawed; government failure is more prevalent than market failure; government intervention is unjust.  
(4)

The two economists most closely associated with the original, pre-1979 Thatcherite version of liberalism are Milton Friedman and Fredrich Hayek; together their work covers almost all of the intellectual ground the neo-liberals occupy.

Friedman is one of the economists associated with the development of monetarism as an economic doctrine in the 1950s and 60s-

The theoretical case for monetarism is based on a revival of the quantity theory of money, one of the oldest ideas in economics and one of the most commonsensical. It suggested that the level of prices was directly linked to the amount of money in circulation. Increases in the money stock, or increases in the speed at which money changed hands, would lead to a rise in prices if output of goods and services remained constant. In policy terms a revival of the quantity theory of money meant that "money matters". The Keynesians were credited with the idea that money does not matter, that what counted was always the "real economy", the output of goods and services and actual levels of investment and productivity. Money flows adjusted passively to changes in the real economy. For the monetarists, money was an independent power which could influence conditions in the economy, so a neglect of monetary conditions could have the most serious effects for the real economy.(4)

Therefore, any government that tried to create employment was fatally misguided. Its task was to regulate the amount of money in the economy: if "sound money" was assured, the economy would take care of itself.

The market was not considered perfect; for one thing it

could not utilise all its labour resources all of the time -  
an idea developed by Friedman and others into the doctrine  
of the natural rate of unemployment -

... This stated that imperfections in the labour market produced a level of unemployment which could not be reduced by government action to stimulate demand. Such increases in spending would only lead to increases in inflation. The trade-off in the Keynesian world is between inflation and unemployment. In the monetarist world the choice for governments to make is between price stability and inflation.(6)

Friedman skirts around the political implications of a monetary analysis; he claims that inflation is purely a monetary phenomenon, perpetuated by governments that receive bad economic advice. Friedrich Hayek does not share this relatively benign view of the world. For him, inflation and most other economic ills are the natural outcome of the erosion of the principles of the free market.

Hayek's critique of the state is, at least, refreshingly simple. Any state action that impedes or distorts the workings of the free market is, by definition, creeping socialism. The growth of state apparatuses and interest groups has led to a growth in state expenditure; the economy has been effectively politicised by increasing state intervention. It follows that the government not only has to remove itself from the marketplace; it has to ensure that others remove themselves as well. Trade Unions are to be curbed. They place an illegitimate restriction on management's natural right to manage; their power has grown too great -

Public policy concerning unions has, in little more than a century, moved from one extreme to the other. From a state in which little the unions could do was

legal if they were not prohibited altogether, we have now reached a state where they have become uniquely privileged institutions to which the rule of law does not apply. They have become the only important instance in which governments signally fail in their prime function - the prevention of coercion and violence.(7)

The market for Hayek is an engine which powers the transfer of information in the most efficient way possible. He argues that the whole idea of a centrally planned economy is flawed; the information needed to run such an economy is too vast and too complex to be stored in any one place. The market provides a way of assimilating this information by dispersing it throughout the system; no part of the system needs to know the whole, only what it requires to continue functioning. The market is also the hunting-ground of the Hayekian super-hero ( who is of course always male), the entrepreneur. It is only through the entrepreneurs' tireless quest for profit that society advances at all.

There is no room for redistribution in Hayek's market society :

What matters for Hayek is not the pattern of distribution established through the market, but that there should exist a market order, based on general rules, which guarantees everyone maximum opportunities. Actual distribution will be a lottery depending on skill and effort to a limited degree, but predominantly on chance - The chance of genetic and materialist inheritance and the manner in which opportunities arise.(8)

#### NEO-CONSERVATISM

The spectre haunting most ordinary people is [not] that of an authoritarian state, but of other ordinary people being allowed to run wild. What they are worried about is crime, violence, disorder in the schools, promiscuity, idleness, pornography, football hooliganism, vandalism, and urban terrorism...If one were to probe into

the hearts of many potential and actual Tory supporters - and others besides - one might well discover that what worries them most about contemporary Britain was not so much the lack of freedom as it's excessive abundance; not so much the threat of dictatorship as the reality of something unpleasantly close to chaos...The urgent need today is for the state to regain it's control over "the people", to reassert it's authority, and it is useless to imagine that this will be helped by some libertarian mish-mash drawn from the writings of Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and the warmed up milk of nineteenth-century liberalism.(9)

The second strand in the developing New Right project was the reintroduction of authoritarian Conservatism. As David Edgar has shown ("The Free And The Good", "Bitter Harvest") the Neo-Conservatives are a remarkably cohesive bunch; many of them seem to come from the same Cambridge college -

...In 1978, Maurice Cowling, Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, edited a selection of Conservative Essays, in which the essayists included Peterhouse graduates Roger Scruton, Peregrine Wosthorpe and George Gale, and the college's present [1986] dean, Eduard Norman. Other Peterhouse men prominent in the advocacy of social-authoritarian positions include John Vincent (like Scruton, a Times contributor), Colin Welch (like Wosthorpe, a regular writer for both The Spectator and the Telegraph group), novelist Kingsley Amis and Patrick Cosgrove, Mrs Thatcher's biographer.(10)

The common thread running through the writing of these and other Neo-Conservatives is that expressed by Wosthorpe above. Liberty equals decadence; the true conservative welcomes authority -

[It] is not freedom that the Conservatives want; what they want is the sort of freedom that will maintain existing inequalities or restore lost ones.(11)

The framework in which this authority functions is rigorously traditional. Its two premier institutions are the family and the nation; both are semi-mystical creations, arising naturally (it is argued) from human life -

The defenders of the family... assert always the privacy and independence of the family, its biological individuality and its right to live according to its natural instincts. It is for this reason that, even in societies where male supremacy is officially total, the family asserts its own maternal values...(12)

It is anthropomorphised; it has instincts, values that it can assert. It is a womb for the hunter-gatherer male; if the state increases welfare benefits to women -

...The man has the... gradually sinking feeling that his role as provider, the definitive male activity in the primal days of the hunt through the industrial revolution and on into modern life has been taken from him; he has been cuckolded by the compassionate state.(13)

The sweep of history is awe-inspiring; somehow, the male has survived the ages completely unchanged.

Family values reinforce traditional sexual values -

The liberal morality which tells us to permit the body's pleasures and to stifle the impulse of shame expresses, in effect, a peculiar metaphysical vision of the body as somehow detached from the self and outside the sphere of our true obligations... What a ludicrous mixture of moral truth and childlike superstition... Traditional sexual morality was an instrument whereby people came to terms with their incarnation and took moral responsibility for their flesh... We should never lose sight of this fundamental truth, that some uses of the body are sinful, and none more so than those which enable us to escape the obligations the body itself imposes.(14)

If your "true obligation" to yourself is to be gay, then that is just too bad; your "moral responsibility" is to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself.

The nation is treated in the same way as the family; it is a natural construction - like a hill or a sheep. No-one built it; it is just there. It does not need to submit itself to unnatural forces, like democracy -

...[The] Conservative attitude seeks above all for government, and regards no citizen as possessed of a natural right greater than his obligation to be ruled... It is basic to a Conservative view of things... that the individual should find his completion in society, and that he should find himself as part of an order, that is greater than himself, in the sense of transcending anything that could have been brought about by his own enactment. He must see himself as the inheritor, not the creator of the order in which he participates, so that he may derive from it... the conceptions and values which determine self identity.(15)

It follows that civil liberty is not a major consideration; quite the reverse - the pursuit of freedom by individuals or groups is an evil, and is to be resisted. Strikes, for example are -

... tantamount to rebellion...[The answer is to] reward extravagantly those servants who are essential; but make them servants. As for the others, let them strike, and permanently.(16)

Society has to be protected from strikers, subversives, ethnic agitators, feminist agitators, homosexuals, students who wish to march past the Houses of Parliament - the one thousand and one forms of that favourite reactionary bogeyman, the enemy within.

The concept of "the enemy within" threatening the nation explains the Neo-Conservative attitude towards race. "Straight" racism - the overt assertion of one race's superiority over another - is strenuously denied; institutional racism is not accepted as a relevant idea. Indeed, the Neo-Conservatives reverse the direction of the argument -

An educated person... would not assume that a teacher who endeavours to communicate the culture which is expressed in his language- and who is aware that there is no greater mental discipline than to understand the achievements and institutions into which one is born is a "racist" actively seeking to exclude "blacks" from privileges whose value he rightly tries to explain to them... Such a person...will... meet with the most virulent hostility and prejudice from the uneducated.(17)

The "Race Relations Industry" ( another favourite New Right phrase) are the true bigots; they do not allow teachers to teach, policemen to police, immigration officers to go about their lawful business.

This does not mean that Neo-Conservatives dream of a peaceful multi-racial society. Different racial groups, they argue, cannot live together simply because they are different; national pride is natural and cannot be countermanded. If an alien cultural unit is established inside a nation, then naturally there will be conflict -

... The West Indian community is structurally [Casey's emphasis] likely to be at odds with English civilisation. There is an extraordinarily resentment towards authority- police, teachers, Underground guards- all authority... Then there is the family structure which is markedly unlike our own; educational standards that are below those of all other racial groups... and the involvement of West Indians in a vastly disproportionate amount of violent crime... the West Indian life

style ... seems to include drugs and other unlawful activities... What is finally at issue comes out more clearly with the Indian community or communities-industrious, peaceable people, with most of the domestic virtues. Nevertheless, with their large numbers, their difference in culture, they are most unlikely to wish to identify themselves with the traditions and loyalties of the host nation. (18)

Overt racism, supposedly kicked out of the front door, has sneaked back in through the window. West Indians all bear grudges; British society has nothing to do with it- the resentment is inbred. They are naturally violent, stoned out of their collective heads ( a rasta smoking ganja stands in for the whole West Indian community) and culturally ignorant. Indians are better, but not perfect; their customs are strange, and there are so many of them. The only options that they have are repatriation or assimilation -

...We in the schools are also enjoined to believe that creole, pidgin and other non-standard variants have the same power, subtlety and capacity for expressing finer shades of meaning, and for tolerating uncertainty, ambiguity and irony as standard English.(19)

The immigrant (and to the Neo-Conservative, Blacks, Asians and others will always be immigrants) must learn the language of the educated English; his or her own language just is not good enough. This is part of a process that devalues any other culture than English. The English have a culture; the immigrant has a community. The English have civilisation; the immigrant has ethnicity. The English have a language; the immigrant has a "non-standard variant".

The two forces in New Right thinking might seem to pull in opposite directions, and to some extent they do. Worsthorne engages with "libertarian mish-mash"; Hayek's free market philosophy is, according to American Neo-Conservative Irving Kristol -

"ultimately subversive of the social order" because [it denies] the need for "the moral authority of tradition, and some public support for this authority"(20)

The two are connected, however. Hayek cannot bring himself to encourage the free market by abandoning immigration controls -

...[The] ordinary man only slowly reconciles himself to a large increase in foreigners among his neighbours, even if they differ only in language and manners, and... therefore the wise statesman, to prevent an unpleasant reawakening of primitive instincts, ought to aim at keeping the rate of influx low.(21)

As Edgar has pointed out, the Conservative constituency worker might not see any contradiction in moving the state from the boardroom to the bedroom. And the Neo-liberal definition of freedom is not a particularly extensive one -

Those who use the neo-liberal language of "getting the state off the backs of the people" believe that the market economy provides freedom and must be protected by law. But it is the emphasis on law that allows neo-liberalism to slide over into the authoritarianism of the neo-conservatives to produce Thatcherism. The New Right coalition is quite happy to see a strong state protecting the market order. What is at issue is not civil liberties but setting the capitalist free. (22)

So, we can begin to draw up the imaginary parameters of an ideal New Right Britain. It would be a country in which there was no culture but English high culture, no speech but R.P. One in which the individual could buy shares, but could

not sleep with the person he or she loved. One in which the husband, set free by a willing, biologically programmed wife, could go out and fight for red meat in the marketplace. A country proud of its identity; a country willing to fight, censor, and abolish to keep that identity safe. A country in which any minority would have to adapt or leave. A country in which the poor are poor because they are poor. A free market police state, missiles aimed at the world, machine-guns aimed at the slums.

#### THATCHERISM: THE NEW RIGHT JERUSALEM?

It seems almost unimaginable now, but Margaret Thatcher was not the automatic successor to Edward Heath in 1975 -

Thatcher had been a relatively junior member of Heath's Cabinet; Her experience had been confined to education. In 1974 she had become a front bench spokesman on Treasury matters and had considerably enhanced her reputation with M.P.s by her attacks on the Finance Bill. In Opposition she had become associated with Keith Joseph's critical assessment of the Heath Government through her sponsorship of the Centre For Policy Studies, but there was no stream of ideological speeches from her, nor had she opposed any of the policies of the Government when she had been in Cabinet.

Her emergence as the standard bearer of the anti-Heath forces in the Conservative party was unexpected, but just creditable enough to make her challenge a creditable one. Few at the outset expected her to win, but she did have certain advantages. Her campaign was very skillfully managed by Airey Neave, She had few enemies in the party determined to prevent her election, and she benefitted from drawing on all those who did not want her as leader but hoped that a sufficiently large vote for her would persuade Heath to resign.

Her campaign managers skillfully exploited this last factor, playing down Thatcher's chances of winning

outright and fanning the fears of those who knew that if Heath got a sufficiently large majority on the first ballot, it might be impossible to shift him from the leadership for a long time. The strategy worked perfectly. When the vote was announced the confidence of the Heath camp that they were heading for an easy victory was shattered. Thatcher had 130 votes, Heath 119, Hugh Fraser 16.

Heath now departed, and the way was open for all his loyal lieutenants to come forward to join the contest. But now another factor operated in Thatcher's favour. She had set up an irresistible momentum. The Daily Telegraph headlined an editorial "Consider Her Courage". Thatcher had made the all-important break with the Heath era. Her victory in the first ballot had created a quite new situation. As a result her vote did not diminish in the second ballot but increased. She now won 146 votes; Whitelaw received 79, Prior 19, Howe 19, Peyton 11. It was an extraordinary triumph but it was due mainly to the number of Conservative M.P.s wishing to vote against Heath rather than to the number wishing to vote for Thatcher. Almost by accident the New Right found they had captured the most important position in the Conservative party.(23)

Granted, there were, and still are, many right-wing pressure groups associated with the right of the Tory party; the Centre for Policy Studies, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Adam Smith Institute, the National Viewers and Listeners Association, and the Freedom Association. There have been Conservative M.P.s who have made an impact by ringing some favourite New Right bells; Harvey Proctor on repatriation, for example, or Patrick Jenkin opposing equal rights in an unguarded moment in 1977 -

... Quite frankly, I don't think mothers have the same right to work as fathers do. If the Good Lord had meant us to have equal rights to go out to work he wouldn't have created men and women. These are biological facts.(24)

But, to the chagrin of some New Right ideologues, the Thatcherite Tory party has not dismantled the Welfare State or privatised the N.H.S.

To claim that the Tory party has been hi-jacked by New Right terrorists is to forget the most characteristic feature of the party; it s innate pragmatism. Gamble has argued that Thatcher's statecraft is in the Tory mainstream - a mixture of Lord Salisbury and Joseph Chamberlain. His general conclusion is apt -

In the parliamentary party the strong personal loyalty to Thatcher as leader has not been based upon endorsement of the objectives of radical Thatcherism. Support for the Government's programme has generally been forthcoming, but backbenchers have not hesitated to rebel when particular constituency interests are threatened. The Conservative M.P.s themselves alone choose the leader of the party, and the ideological stance of the contenders is likely to play a small part in the choice. The Conservative party has not become a Thatcherite party. It has remained a Conservative party led by Margaret Thatcher.(25)

Her leadership has not been challenged for a traditional Tory reason; she is a strong leader. But the party that she leads has not been made over into her image. Hardline Thatcherites, by 1989, had largely faded from the party's front ranks; Keith Joseph and Norman Tebbit had left, and John Biffen was pushed (he made the mistake of warning the nation about the danger of large majorities before the 1983 election ). Others, such as Cecil Parkinson and Nicholas Ridley are unlikely to succeed her, either because of a previous scandal or sheer incompetence. The Prime Minister has come to rely on born-again pragmatists like Nigel Lawson, or mainstream Tory statesmen like Douglas Hurd and Kenneth Baker. She has drawn fire from senior Tories (Francis Pym, James Prior and Sir Ian Gilmour) and from former Prime Ministers (Lord Stockton and Edward Heath). The only section of the party to remain uncritically loyal to her is

the hang-'em flog-'em section of the Tory conference delegates; a section of the party previously rather despised by the leadership.

If Thatcher has not managed to convert her party fully, then it is perhaps not surprising that some of the institutions she has targetted have not been converted either. For example, the Conservatives have not managed to dismantle the largest of their designated enemies within, the Trades Union movement. They faced down the miners in 1984/5, stood by as Rupert Murdoch encouraged internecine warfare between S.O.G.A.T. and the E.E.T.P.U., constrained unions in key areas- strikes, picketing, and the closed shop. Striking unions now face financial penalties, most frequently sequestration of assets (as has happened to S.O.G.A.T., the N.U.M., and the N.U.S.). The idea of tripartite consultation between the government, the C.B.I. and the unions has been dropped. However -

... The Government still trod cautiously in this field. It rejected proposals to scrap all trade union immunities granted since the 1906 act. It abolished wage councils and minimum wage legislation, and weakened the closed shop, helping to increase the pool of casual part-time workers. Strikes dwindled to very low levels. But trade union organisation remained strong. Examples of union-free industries and no strike agreements remained rare; and earnings of unionised workers in permanent employment continued to rise faster than output and inflation. The Thatcher Government presided over a significant shift in the balance of power between labour and capital, but trade union organisation remained formidable. A union free economy did not look attainable.(26)

Indeed, one of the Government's pieces of union legislation - on secret ballots for political levies - backfired. Not

only did unions that ran political funds vote to continue, but some unions that did not voted to begin them.

The Government has not only failed to remove one of the major collectivist blocs in the marketplace; it has also failed to reform one of the major collectivist blocs in the state. After all, by the logic of the New Right, the civil service is one more staging post on the road to socialism. The Prime Minister sometimes gives the impression that she witch-hunts as easily in the corridors of Whitehall as she does in the rest of the country. Some of her policy advisers have advocated a major restructuring of the bureaucracy: John Hoskyns (who ran the Downing Street Policy Unit between 1979 and 1982) suggested reorganising the civil service along American lines. External Advisers were to be appointed and the traditional channels were to be by-passed; they could not be relied upon to be radical enough. However, these plans never got to Parliament; reforms have been minor:

The size of the civil service was cut, and a drive launched to make civil servants more productive. The Prime Minister used her powers of appointment to promote those civil servants who appeared ready to question Whitehall orthodoxies and had the drive and practical ability to carry through Conservative policies. Several senior appointments were made in this way, sometimes overturning normal seniority. But although such action shook up the civil service it hardly amounted to a major reform of the way in which the civil service was organised.(27)

The Prime Minister has left Parliament much as she found it. Cabinet meets less often, and there have been fewer Cabinet committees, but there has been no attempt to concentrate

more power behind the door of Number 10. However, it could be argued that so much power is already concentrated there that no increase is necessary. The Tory party has had a majority of over one hundred since 1983, making House of Commons debates largely academic, backbench revolts or no. The British constitutional system is heavily weighted towards the party in power.

This particular Government has practised it's odious form of laissez-faire in the economy and society with a rapid increase in state and police power over the individual. Few democratic countries with a written constitution would have got away with the Public Order Act, the tilting of court rules against the accused or the string of laws reducing trade union rights- to name a few recent offences.

But we have no constitution and therefore no defined rights. The State is happy to be prosecutor and judge in it's own case. Take recent events. The police smash down a journalist's door [Ascherson is writing during the Zircon satellite affair]. They occupy the offices of The New Statesman to search them. They also launch cavalry charges against demonstrators at Wapping, in the course of which a number of identifiable journalists doing their jobs are battered by clubs and trampled by horses. The Home Secretary is responsible for the police. But which authority in the land carries responsibility for the defence of press and broadcasting freedom? Stap me, if it isn't the Home Secretary again!(28)

Undemocratic, certainly, but perfectly legal. Thatcherism's authoritarian tendencies have fertile ground in which to grow.

Government economic policy has become ideologically impure; monetarism might be the official term used, but it no longer describes the practice. The Government began with impeccably Friedmanite intentions. It inherited an economy in which spending controls were already in place; a form of monetarism had been preferred economic policy since 1975. However,

the Labour Government's version of the new orthodoxy was combined with traditional state intervention. After 1979, monetarism was applied in a purer form -

...[The] policies that emerged in 1980 centred on a Medium Term Financial Strategy which had two target variables; the money supply (sterling M3) and the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. The growth rate and the size of the P.S.B.R. as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product were each to be progressively reduced over a period of years... The strategy was clearly a monetarist one, in the sense that it envisaged a reduction in money-supply growth as both a necessary and sufficient condition for a reduction in the rate of inflation. However, the targetting of P.S.B.R. had a much less clear position in economic doctrine. The focus on this seems to have been composed of a number of elements. First, there was a belief in the financial crowding out of private investment by the public sector via the interest rates offered on government debt. Secondly, there was a belief that the public sector was in some general sense a "bad thing", and hence should be reduced in size in all possible ways. Thirdly came the belief that there was some stable relationship between P.S.B.R. and M3, so that the reduction in the former would bring a reduction in [the rate of growth of the] the latter. Against such a linkage, monetarists such as Friedman argued that reductions in monetary growth and in the size of the public sector were both admirable, but had no causal relationship.(29)

Even by the Government's own preferred economic stance, there was no clear need to cut public spending. The idea of reducing the P.S.B.R. had more ideological appeal than economic sense. By introducing this dual approach, the Government (unintentionally) cast doubt on the effectiveness of monetarism as an economic doctrine. Grahame Thompson has noted that the M3 targets that the Government set itself have been continually overshoot; the Government cannot argue that it has squeezed out inflation by controlling the money supply. Rather, it has reduced the P.S.B.R., which triggered a recession, which deflated the economy, which brought down

inflation -

Indeed, this was something that was developing well before the Conservatives took office. Their "monetarism" had only a marginal effect on this. Clearly, if an economy is deflated hard enough and over a sustained enough period of time prices are bound to fall eventually. The fact that price rises are now in single figures is largely a result of this mechanism along with its attendant side effects, growing unemployment and declining production.(30)

There is a further irony to this: Rather than pulling out of the economy, the Government began by intervening in it on a massive scale.

However, the espousal of monetarism was not opportunist, designed to give legitimacy, and to some extent to cover, a concerted attack on organised labour. Rather, the Conservatives have claimed credit for the unforeseen results of their policies. They claim to have reduced trade union militancy, something in fact largely achieved by the high level of unemployment during the decade. Mass unemployment was not foreseen by the Conservatives in 1979; after all, it was they who used the "Labour isn't working" slogan in their election campaign. Rather than trying to hide their intentions towards organised labour, the Government made their approach perfectly clear; the unions were to be de-coupled from the economic decision-making process.

In this context - that of a war of position between different elements in the economy of the state - "monetarism" begins to take on a new meaning, as Tomlinson has argued - Such an analysis of policy, as a strategic "game" between government and private economic agents, is useful in highlighting one aspect of the Thatcher

Government's policies, the fact that monetarism was important not so much as a technical economic analysis, but as a political weapon to alter expectations... The case against Thatcherism cannot be that it deliberately created four million unemployed where otherwise full employment would have been easily possible. The underlying weakness of the British economy, reflected in the growth of unemployment since the end of the 1960s, makes such a claim unsustainable. Rather, the case must be that the policies pursued since 1979 have exacerbated rather than mitigated the impact of the world depression and its effects on unemployment; exacerbated, both by creating their own domestic deflationary push and by example encouraging others to do likewise, and hence in part precipitating the world depression. The policies have also exacerbated the harm done by cutting unemployment pay and by failing to improve the position of those most hard hit by unemployment- the long-term unemployed, who have grown rapidly in numbers.(31)

Monetarism as a signal of intent has remained in place while the more technical aspects of the policy have been quietly abandoned.

The man who presided over this withering away of the monetarist doctrine was Nigel Lawson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1982 onwards. His career is an excellent example of the Conservative tendency to pragmatism in power.

In 1979 Lawson was a committed monetarist; he was closely involved in the development of the M.F.T.S. -

...Mr Lawson said in May 1980 that, unlike previous attempts at... planning, the M.F.T.S. was based not on targets for the economy, but on targets for the Government. "Not on what we can't control, but on what we can," he said. He poured scorn on the idea that the exchange rate could be controlled: "You cannot fine-tune your exchange rate by this [exchange controls] or by any other means."(32)

This faith was shaken by events. M3 grew too quickly; over the first few years of the M.F.T.S. it rose by more than 70%- the Government had predicted a rise of 43% at most. By January 1981 Lawson had changed his mind. In a speech (given in Zurich) he said that, in order to prevent the rise of inflation -

...It is essential from now on to secure a lower rate of growth of broad money, and, indeed, over the three remaining years of the M.T.F.S. it might well be prudent to claw back at least some of the excess growth that has already occurred...

The heart of our economic policy is the Government's published and indeed quantified Medium Term Financial Strategy, the core of which is a steady deceleration in the rate of monetary growth over a four year period, buttressed by a gradual reduction in the size of the underlying budget deficit, which in turn is to be achieved by a steady reduction in the real level of total government spending.(33)

To achieve this reduction, the Tories drove the pound's exchange rate up; clearly, the exchange rate was now within the range of things that the Government could control. Interest rates were raised to uncompetitive levels, and Britain's manufacturing base shrank by 20%. The Government took credit for increased productivity- an increase caused by this once-and-for-all industrial holocaust. This bizarre logic, if pursued to its natural end, would have as its ideal economy two or three firms operating efficiently in the middle of a wasteland.

The recession of 1979-81 was deeper than even the most pessimistic Treasury forecasts had predicted. In the dark days of 1982 (before the Falklands boosted the Government's popularity) the M.F.T.S. began to unravel. Firstly, the M3

ranges were relaxed and different measures introduced; M3 itself was suspended in 1985. Then, the commitment to reducing public spending in "real terms" (e.g. after taking inflation into account) was dropped; spending levels were now to be held constant, or, if they were to grow, they were to grow by less than the economy's rate of growth- so that the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement would at least shrink as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product.

The much-vaunted cutback in public spending has not been as severe as Lawson has claimed it to be. The P.S.B.R. is affected by various factors, and as such it is a poor indicator of the effectiveness of tax and spending decisions; it is distorted by asset sales-privatisation revenues are counted as "negative expenditure", reducing the official size of the P.S.B.R.. It is also affected by the general state of the economy; it rises in recessions, as social security payments increase and tax revenues fall, and falls in booms, as social security payments fall and tax revenues rise.

If allowances are made for these cyclical effects, the O.E.C.D. measures of fiscal stance show a sharp tightening of policy between 1978 and 1981 (of 6.5 % of potential national terms) followed by a major loosening of 4.2%. On the O.E.C.D.'s measures, four of Mr. Lawson's five budgets have been reflationary...

In reality, Mr. Lawson has ditched his rule-monetarism in favour of a pragmatic economic policy which looks much more like old-fashioned right-wing or neo-classical Keynesianism.

He is even targetting the exchange rate, just as Keynes recommended under Bretton Woods.(34)

William Keegan, The Observer's economic columnist and a consistent critic of the Government's economic policies, took a jaundiced view of the Chancellor's shifting position. Writing after the Chancellor's 1988 Autumn statement, he noted that -

...from the point of view of the market, the cupboard was now bare. The man who once said all that mattered in economic policy was the control of the money supply, and later that exchange rate targets were the best monetary tools available, was reduced not so long ago to basing his monetary policy on something called M0 - essentially notes and coins in circulation.

The Mansion House speech, less than a fortnight earlier, had been notable for the lack of anything specific about monetary or exchange rate policy. The Chancellor tried to rectify this in a parliamentary debate the following week by saying that sterling M0 was "heading firmly back towards the target range I set at the time of the budget". And the Autumn statement? The operative word in the previous weeks promise was "towards". We are now told that M0 "may not return within its target range by the end of the financial year".

If I were a monetarist, I should be worried. Since this Government spent years trumpeting the paramount importance of its particular version of monetary policy, I am surprised there has not been more of an outcry...(35)

After the credit boom and record deficit of 1988, the talk was of any solution - a hard or (hopefully) a soft landing for the British economy - being engineered by 11 Downing Street; Mr. Lawson's idea of what governments can or cannot do has obviously altered somewhat over the past ten years. And yet, even though the policy might bear no obvious relation to monetarism as Friedman might understand it, the rhetoric has stayed the same. The condemnation of the public sector, the attacks on overspending councils, the attempts to interfere in wage disputes on the side of the management - the tone of Conservative pronouncements has scarcely changed

over the decade. Even their new-found commitment to Green issues reflects this. Hayek thinks that the market can guarantee freedom; the Conservatives think that it can ensure a clean environment as well.

There is little evidence, though, that this constant rhetorical barrage has altered people's perceptions, as far as key elements of the Welfare State go. Support for increased funding of the N.H.S. rose from 63% in 1983 to 87% in 1987. In 1988, half of all Tory voters wanted increased more spending on the N.H.S. The annual British Social Attitudes Survey (from which these figures are taken) has failed consistently to find any pronounced public support for the values of the enterprise culture either -

The Government has failed to instil the values of an "enterprise culture" into an electorate which regards the City with suspicion and believes that taxes should be raised to support the N.H.S., education and the welfare state...

Although people were in favour of private enterprise making profits they were critical of the uses to which the profits were put.

The report...said almost 60% of those questioned thought that profits were used to reward shareholders and senior managers. Only 3% believed that was right. Almost 75% wanted profits to be spent on cutting prices, raising the wages of workers and investment... The authors say that in an enterprise culture people would "regard the fruits of business investment and entrepreneurship as a legitimate reward for shareholders and top managers". They would reject job creation schemes and support cuts in social expenditure and the progressive privatisation of health and education...

There is no evidence that this is happening. Despite insistent exhortations the public had become more alienated from the goals of Thatcherism since the first survey in 1983. Half of those questioned wanted taxes to be raised so that more could be spent on the welfare state and only 3% were in favour of tax cuts and less government spending.(36)

The country is not stocked with more Thatcherite social organisations than it was in 1979; apart from the machinery of the state, little has been mobilised -

Where are the Thatcherite "new model" unions, the Tebbit Labour Front, the Thatcherite youth, the women's movement, Thatcherite sports leagues, rambling clubs, etc., that might consolidate and fix a mobilised working class? They do not exist, and this highlights a certain weakness for the Thatcherite project.(37)

This is still true: Eric Hammond's E.E.T.P.U., although it has been expelled from the T.U.C., has not reformed itself into a Hayekian workers social club; and the most prominent far right youth organisation, the Federation of Conservative Students, was abolished by the party. Legalising heroin was too free-market, even for the Prime Minister.

If the Government's values are not shared by the electorate, why have the Conservatives been reelected twice? The 1979 election was lost by Labour rather than won by the Conservatives, and in 1983 the Falklands had jolted some life back into the party. In 1983 and 1987 the opposition was divided and fighting itself as much as fighting the Government. These factors, though, cannot explain the Conservatives victory entirely; they do not explain the remarkable consistency of the Conservative vote in the past three elections.

The answer is hinted at in The Guardian's report on the 1987 Social Attitudes survey -

Mrs. Thatcher may win the votes, but "Thatcherite" values are becoming less popular, the survey finds. Support for new Conservative ideology stagnated between 1985 and 1986, following a gradual shift to the left over the previous two years. The key change in public opinion towards the political parties during the pre-election year was less to do with underlying values than with a sharp improvement in the electorate's evaluation of the economic situation. People became much more optimistic about inflation, unemployment and about their own household incomes. So they voted Tory.(38)

The depth of the 1979-81 recession (exacerbated by the Government's naive monetarism) has left huge scars on British society; high unemployment, increased poverty, deprivation, de-industrialisation and discrimination. However, the damage is not evenly spread. Unemployment, for example, is concentrated in some parts of the country, and varies according to the social position of the individual -

Regionally, the South-East now has 2% fewer jobs than at the time of the 1979 peak; the South-West has 2% fewer; the West Midlands has 10% fewer; the East Midlands has 3% fewer; Yorkshire and Humberside has 12% fewer; the North-West has 15% fewer; the North has 13% fewer. Only in East Anglia has the number of employees increased-by 9%...

Just as job losses and unemployment don't impinge equally on regions and industries, their impact on individuals within regions is uneven. Whatever the state of the economy, younger, experienced workers, in good health and possessing the skills and qualifications required by employers, will stand the best chance of finding jobs quickly. When unemployment is high and jobs scarce, anyone with a characteristic that makes them less attractive to employers than other job seekers risks prolonged unemployment. Such people include young, inexperienced workers, older workers in their final 10 or 15 years of working life, workers with no, or few skills or qualifications, workers with a record of poor health or disability and ethnic minority workers. Also, long term unemployment can become a formidable employment obstacle in its own right.(39)

There is a north/south divide in Britain, but this implies a more rigorous demarcation than actually exists. There are pockets of wealth in the north, and pockets of poverty in the south. However, as a broad term it is valid; Conservative support is concentrated increasingly in the south of England, where, in general people have become more prosperous in the past ten years. Those who have benefitted from Thatcherism would be more inclined to vote for it -

Over the period 1979-1987 there have been major changes... to Britain's electoral geography. A major reason for these changes appears to be the growing socio-economic polarisation of Britain; the divide between the relatively deprived areas and the more prosperous areas... is widening, and people are reacting to this. In the regions of relative affluence, they are more prepared to vote for the party in power, as a reward for the policies that have helped to produce that affluence which they and their neighbours are enjoying, and as a statement of faith that continuation of these policies is the best of the available courses for sustaining and enhancing the affluence. For the residents of the regions of relative deprivation, on the other hand, a vote against the government is more likely, because its policies can be blamed for either or both of the origins of the deprivation and the failure to remove it. People who are themselves not suffering, or are suffering less than others, may nevertheless identify the problems with that policy failure, and be prepared to vote with those who clearly are suffering, for the policies offered by an opposition party.

The changing geography of voting in Britain is thus a reflection of the geography of economic and social wellbeing. At its simplest, it is represented by growing support for the Conservative party in 1983 and 1987 in the more affluent regions and for Labour in the more deprived. But there are variations around this theme. Within the deprived regions, for example, there are areas where the willingness to vote Labour is greater than it is in others, in part it seems because of the long tradition of Labour support and organisation there. And in the affluent regions, those less satisfied with the Conservative Government have been more prepared to vote for the Alliance than for Labour.(40)

The electoral fortunes of Thatcherism are based, firstly, on the air of economic well-being that it has managed to generate in its political heartland. Thatcher is rather more in tune with Finchley than she is with Falkirk, and there is no incentive for her to change; she, and the party she leads, is sufficiently pragmatic to realise that at least one part of the country regularly produces a large number of Conservative M.P.s. But there is no indication that the country has drifted rightwards en masse. Peter Jenkins, writing in The Independent after a M.O.R.I. poll had shown, again, a strong public commitment to the principles of the welfare state, commented -

...That there may be something in M.O.R.I.'s distinction between a people more Thatcherist than Thatcherite, that is to say more accepting of the economic proceeds of the "Thatcher Revolution" than what they take to be its moral purposes or consequences.(41)

#### **THATCHERISM : AUTHORITARIAN POPULISM ?**

Thatcherite policies are "hegemonic" in their conception and project: The aim is to struggle on several fronts at once, not on the economic-corporate one alone; and this is based on the knowledge that, in order really to determine and restructure a social formation, political, moral and intellectual leadership must be coupled to civil dominance. The Thatcherites know that they must "win" in civil society as well as in the state. They understand, as the left generally does not, the consequences of the generalisation of the social struggle to new arenas and the need to have a strategy for them too. They mean, if possible, to reconstruct the terrain of what is taken for granted in social and political thought- and so to form a new common sense.(42)

It would seem as though the "Thatcher Revolution" is not the all-conquering tide of social forces that its supporters claim, and its enemies fear it to be. It has not swept all before it : there are areas where Thatcherism's moral brief does not run, and in the areas where it does run, it tends to run pragmatically. Why, then, should the left be so mesmerised by the rise of Thatcherism and the forces of the New Right ?

Partly, the reason is that the Conservatives in parliament are unassailable. As noted above, the U.K.'s skewed voting system and the divided opposition have delivered a majority for the Tories that is far more than comfortable. However, this does not explain the ideological dominance of Thatcherism in the 80s. To explain this, it is necessary to examine the way in which the Thatcherite message is put over.

Thatcherism has established itself as a series of reactionary discourses - on the family, on law and order, on the correct way to run the economy, on defence, and so on. These discourses are closely tied up with the figure of the Prime Minister herself; Beatrix Campbell has noted that her appeal

owes much to conventional notions of femininity -  
...She wants to be seen as a woman, but as more than a woman. She is not like a man; she is more than a man - she is a prime minister, a warrior, and a housewife. Men are prime ministers and warriors but they are not housewives. The undomesticated woman, especially the undomesticated bourgeois woman, is still always a woman. But the domesticated man is somehow unmanned (though wouldn't every wife wish she had one?). Part of many women's pleasure in Thatcher's power is everything to do with her gender: Thatcher is more powerful than all the men around her, she bosses them around.(43)

She is a strong woman, but a strong woman whose strength conforms to a male stereotype; a kind of housewife-superstar. Her appeals are couched, unvaryingly, in traditional terms -

...Perhaps it takes a housewife to see that Britain's national housekeeping is appalling.(44)

On foreign policy -

Ladies and Gentlemen, I stand before you tonight in my [green chiffon] evening gown, my face softly made up, my fair hair gently waved... The Iron Lady of the Western World? Me? A Cold Warrior? Well yes - if that is how they wish to interpret my defence of values and freedoms fundamental to our way of life.(45)

On the company as an extended family -

"Don't talk to me about "them" and "us" in a company", she once told the readers of Women's Own. "You're all "we" in a company. You survive as the company survives, prosper as the company prosper- everyone together. The future lies in co-operation and not confrontation.(46)

And, for a woman in power, her identified role-models and gurus are all male; her father, Winston Churchill, and the mythic male entrepreneur-hero that she, like Hayek, sees as the country's saviour -

We rise to the challenge of the adventure. But that has always been the British Way. This is a nation built on the success of the merchant adventurers. Men who sailed off into the unknown to carry our trade and bring back the wealth to our people.(47)

A bizarre vision: presumably women and children will gather at the quayside to welcome the adventurers home, as the Prime Minister looks on from the saddle of her white horse, muttering "I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but..." The logical outcome of this image-building is the

Prime Minister as the nation's mother, bending over hospital beds in the wake of Lockerbie and Clapham; a woman bringing comfort to her people.

Thatcher's rhetoric is pitched directly at the "common sense" of the electorate. Her statements are so "sensible" that to argue with them is seen as sheer folly; ideas are presented for confirmation, not debate. Anyone who opposes the thrust of Conservative policy is misguided, malicious, or stupid -

What is it that impels the powerful and vocal lobby in Britain to press for greater equality?.. Often the reasons boil down to an undistinguished combination of envy and what might be termed "bourgeois guilt".(48)

Dissenters are not considered part of the ordinary mass of people whose aspirations Thatcher always claims to represent. It is the implicit connection with "ordinariness" that allows her (in a 1978 television interview) to declare herself opposed to racism, while sympathising with ordinary people who feel themselves "swamped" by alien cultures. After that particular comment, the Conservatives' poll ratings increased by nine points.

Much of the Prime Minister's public persona rests on the coherence of this type of rhetoric. The persona is not sympathetic, but it does not need to be -

Polling data suggests that the nation at large regards the Prime Minister in much the same way as do her colleagues in Government; personally unappealing, but an unstoppable force of nature who commands respect. After Edward Heath, she is the second most unpopular premier since the war.

Yet, according to [Professor Ivor] Crewe, her warrior style - setting objectives, leading from the front, confronting problems, holding her position - is an essential ingredient of the Conservative's electoral strength. Cohesion, purpose and success take precedence over policy and ideology in voter's eyes: That is the lesson of Thatcherism's astounding success.(49)

A powerful force that isolates dissent while claiming to speak for the masses; an authoritarian populism.

The idea of Thatcherism as authoritarian populism is associated most closely with the work of Stuart Hall (who coined the phrase) and the journal Marxism Today. It is not a comprehensive account of every movement that the Prime Minister has made in her life; it does not seek to explain the fine detail of Conservative economic practice or foreign policy. However, it does provide a convincing analysis of the conditions that produced Thatcherism; and, crucially, it provides clues to the way in which the policies grouped under the name of Thatcherism are formed and enacted.

Hall's analysis places Thatcherism in the context of the developing crisis of the British state, a gradual breakdown in the social-democratic consensus in the late 60s and 70s. The various economic crises of the period, the rise in industrial militancy in the late 1960s and 1970s, and the rise of new social forces grouped around issues of sex and race polarised society, fuelling a backlash that the right

were                    quick                    to                    exploit                    -  
... Firstly, the backlash against the revolutionary ferment of 1968 and all that. Then, the bold, populist bid by Mr Powell - speaking over the heads of the party factions to "the people", helping to construct "the people" in their most patriotic, racist, constitutional disguise. Then - borrowing the clothes of his opponent, in the best Tory tradition - Mr. Heath: a politician instinctively of the soft centre, but not averse,

in the anxiety-ridden days of the early 1970s to going to the country with a programme to restore "Selsdon Man" - a close cousin of Neanderthal Man - to the culture of British politics. It was this Heath version of the backlash - a chillingly reactionary spectre in it's own way - which the miners and others stopped in it's tracks. But they did not cut short the underlying movement.(50)

This underlying movement - characterised by Hall as "The Great Moving Right Show" - was a general dissatisfaction with the apparatuses of the state, and with the Labour party, the party most closely associated with it. Thatcher's trick was to catch this dissatisfaction with a simple, effective description- socialism equals creeping institutionalisation. This was extremely simplistic, but not entirely untrue; part of Labour's strong Fabian inheritance was a commitment to using the state on the people's behalf. For those who were meant to benefit from this commitment, the experience of dealing with the state could be an alienating one -

...Whether in the growing dole queues or in the waiting rooms of an over-burdened National Health Service, or suffering the indignities of Social Security, the corporatist state is increasingly experienced by them not as a benefice but as a powerful bureaucratic imposition on "the people".(51)

Thatcherism took up the cause of "the people"; not in the class sense, as has been noted, but in the mythic, English nationalist sense. She asserted the rights of the individual against the state -

...It is "the state" which has overborrowed and overspent; fuelled inflation; fooled the people into thinking that there would always be more where the last handout came from; tried to assume the regulation of things like wages and prices which are best left to the hidden workings of market forces;above all, interfered, intervened, instructed, directed- against the essence, the Genius, of the British people. It is time, as she says, with conviction, to put people's destinies in their own hands.(52)

But "to set the people free", the Government must intervene; it must control the state before it can roll the state back.

Although she is committed to freeing the people, the Prime Minister's definition of freedom is close to that of Hayek-

...How is it possible to know whether a person is set free? Only by examining the extent of coercion. The greatest human freedom exists where there is the greatest absence of coercion...

This position has an interesting consequences. It means that to the extent that Britain is a market society, the homeless, destitute dosser on the Embankment is as free as the aristocratic revellers in Park Lane. But since the Soviet Union is not a market society, the Soviet worker going about his or her daily activities is as unfree as the inmate of a Siberian labour camp.(53)

Whenever the Prime Minister is asked about her record on rights, she invokes the right to buy a council house, or the right to buy shares in a privatised industry. Civil rights- the freedom to do, rather than the freedom from restraint- are de-emphasised. The economic unit is the family. There is no conception of the wider "social good", "collective provision" or "the community"; after all, the Prime Minister herself has announced that there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families. The Government is free to step into this vacuum, and to identify itself as the prime mover within the state; to construct a whole political, social and moral programme- in effect to make all the political running -

"Serious as the economic challenge is, the political and moral challenge is just as grave, and perhaps even more so, because economic problems never start with economics", Mrs Thatcher reminded us at the Conservative party conference in 1975. "They have much deeper

roots in human nature, and roots in politics, and they do not finish in economics... Those are the two great challenges of our time- the moral and political challenge, and the economic challenge. They have to be faced together and we have to master them both."(54)

and "to master them", the Government is prepared to use authoritarian methods.

It is a fight on all fronts, an attempt to create a Thatcherite hegemony in the country. It is not that the Conservatives in Government are leading the country towards fascism; it will remain a party within a social-democratic framework. However, it does mean that, given the chance, the Government will resolve conflicts in an authoritarian direction, while claiming an overwhelming mandate for the change -

Authoritarian Populism is a way of characterising the new form of hegemonic politics which emerged on the British scene with the formation of the "new right" in the mid-1970's. It described a shift in the balance of social and political forces and in the forms of political authority and social regulation institutionalised in society through the state. It attempted to shift the centre of gravity in society and the state closer to the "authoritarian" pole of regulation. It attempted to impose a new regime of social discipline and leadership "from above" in a society increasingly experienced as rudderless and out of control. However, the "populist" part of the strategy required that this move to new forms of social authority and regulation "above" be rooted in popular fears and anxieties "below". Central to this movement... was that the shift to greater social discipline should be made while retaining the formal paraphernalia of the liberal-democratic state.(54)

Thatcherism might not control the Conservative party outright, but it is the dominant tendency within it; its ascendancy is assured by Thatcher's leadership style. While this continues, the ideas of the New Right have an adherent at the party's highest level.

Those ideas, though, are not as pure in execution as they were when first displayed in the pages of the Salisbury Review. Thatcherism is not merely an amalgamation of the two main strands of New Right thought; it has transformed those ideas into the rhetoric of common sense. Thatcherism was to sweep away decadence, and fill up England with all that was best in the national spirit -

You can see the English psyche collapsing under the weight of the illicit pleasures it has been enjoying - the permissiveness, the consumption, the goodies. It's all false - tinsel and froth. The Arabs have blown it all away. Mrs Thatcher speaks to the "new course". She speaks to something deep in the English psyche: it's masochism. The need which the English seem to have to be ticked off by nanny and sent to bed without a pudding. The calculus by which every good summer has to be paid for by twenty bad winters. The Dunkirk spirit - the worse off we are, the better we behave. She didn't promise us the giveaway society. She said iron times; back to the wall; stiff upper lip; get moving; on your bike; dig in. Stick by the old, tired verities, the wisdom of "Old England". The family has kept society together: live by it. Send the women back to the hearth. Get the men out to the North-West Frontier. Hard times - to be followed, much later, by a return to the good old days. She asked you for a long leash - not one, but two or three terms. By the end, she said, I will be able to redefine the nation in such a way that you will all, once again, for the first time since the Empire started to go down the tubes, feel what it is like to be part of Great Britain Unlimited. You will be able, once again, to send our boys "over there"; to fly the flag, to welcome back the fleet. Britain will be great again. (56)

New Right ideas, stripped of the justifications that their academic proponents use by Thatcherism, stand revealed as the bunch of regressive cliches that they are. And it is as a form of cliché - a tight little group of catchphrases used to justify each policy decision - that New Right concepts are employed by the Conservative party.

So, to look for evidence of New Right purity in Tory party policy is too look in the wrong place. "Thatcherism" as a set of values does not vanish because a New Right programme is unfulfilled. Rather, it is a set of principles- a way of looking at the world- that informs the policies that the Conservatives promote. Tempered with traditional Conservative pragmatism, Thatcherism has been able to nudge an at best ambivalent society towards itself. For example, the continued popularity of the N.H.S. means that the Health Service will not be privatised entirely. Rather, the N.H.S. will be reformed so that it fits the Thatcherite cliché more closely; it will not receive the money that it needs to survive, so it will have to cut costs; it will be forced to tender out cleaning and catering services to outside contractors; hospitals will be encouraged to opt out of the national system; it will be told to set up an internal market with all that entails- the creation of a market enforced hierarchy of services and locations in an organisation intended to provide a uniform service.

Similarly, there will probably be no attempt to abolish welfare benefits outright (even though, according to the Neo-Liberals, such benefits encourage inflation). Rather, as the New Right cliché is that the individual should compete, the poor will be "encouraged" (that is, forced) to stand on their own two feet. Benefits are frozen. The status of payments change; block grants turn into interest free loans. School leavers are compelled to take part in badly-paid, and in many cases badly organised, work training schemes. After

all, the poor are no a problem to anyone but themselves. As the cliché runs, if they want to succeed, they should get their backsides on their bikes and stop whining.

There has been no concerted attack on civil liberties. However, as the cliché has it, the role of government is to govern. An authoritarian policing style during the miner's strike is in the "public interest". A whole tier of local government is swept away, and it is the local authorities' fault -

The Greater London Council is typical of [the] new modern divisive socialism. It must be defeated. Therefore we shall abolish the Greater London Council.(57)

Anti-homosexual legislation is justified because of "public concern". T.V. and radio have restrictions placed upon them; the Government claims that this is to stop Sinn Fein using the media as a soap-box. A documentary is made on a matter of public concern. The Government try to prevent the broadcast. An independent enquiry vindicates the programme; the Government rubbishes the enquiry's report. The offices of B.B.C. Scotland are raided; a journalist has his front door forced open; the periodical he works for has its offices occupied, all in the name of national security. The Government reforms the Official Secrets Act; the new act is even more restrictive than the one it replaces; and during the bill's passage through the House of Commons, Conservative M.P.s who defend it do so by identifying the interests of the state with the interests of the Government. In each case the Government assumes the right to intervene; that is what

governments are meant to do.

One could go on, multiplying examples of Conservative policies that have tended towards New Right objectives without quite crossing the line. However, this inch-by-inch movement is difficult to engage with. Thatcherism has fought few large-scale battles; indeed, the 1984/5 miner's strike is arguably the only one. It moves from skirmish to skirmish, fighting a war of position with no definite strategy, but with a powerful engine in the set of cliches it has abstracted from New Right thought.

Thatcherism is a view of the world, a belief in a system that can be run by good housekeeping and a firm hand; and, twisted, reactionary and authoritarian as this worldview is, it is more coherent than anything that the left has had to offer in the 80s. Thatcherism is unlikely to achieve its aim of changing the country; its electoral base is shrinking as it loses previously safe seats in Wales and Scotland. It has managed to offend whole sections of the establishment that were previously natural Conservatives; the Church of England, The Bar Association and the British Medical Association, for example, have all found much to displease them in various pieces of Tory party policy. Rather, the danger lies in the harm that Thatcherism might do before its tight little bundle of cliches lose their generating power.

In 1988 The Royal Shakespeare Company revived Howard Brenton's The Churchill Play. The play was written in 1974; in 1986 Brenton wrote -

I wish the play was pointless now. But too much of it has begun to happen, though inevitably in a different way and tone and degree to how the play describes it.(58)

In 1988, the play did not rely on internment for its relevance. What seemed most contemporary was the picture of a country that had quietly gone wrong -

JOBY:...Funny, in't it.

PETER: Yes. What?

JOBY: How freedom goes. When did freedom go? (SNAPS HIS FINGERS) thar, then, was it then?... Wun' evenin'. Y' were in pub. Or local Odeon. Or in bed wi' your Mrs. Or watchin' telly. An' freedom went. Ay, y' look back and y' ask... When did freedom go?(59)

## CHAPTER 2: THATCHERISM AND THE ARTS - THE ARTS COUNCIL.

In recent years, it has been said that the Arts Council has failed to make the case for the arts. All of us on the Council are concerned about such criticisms, but I must admit that, try as I might, I cannot find any evidence to support them... The Council always has a difficult path to tread between maintaining the confidence of the arts world on the one hand, and of the Government of the day on the other. It is a mistake for the Council to alienate either - it is sometimes impossible to please both.(1)

Luke Rittner, (Secretary General of the Arts Council since 1983) is quite right; the Arts Council does have to tread carefully between the demands of the artist and the demands of government. This balancing act is, at least to some extent, a thankless task. There is always a danger that a slight incline towards one will be seen as an irrevocable shift away by the other.

However, it is also true that since 1979 the Arts Council has come in for more sustained criticism - all of it from the arts world - than it has ever had to face in its lifetime. This criticism has come not only from the smaller-scale, experimental arts groups and artists, or from left-wing commentators such as Raymond Williams; in 1985 a meeting of theatre directors passed a motion of "no confidence" in the Council's willingness to support them. In the same year, Lord Harewood, the managing director of English National Opera, regretted that the Arts Council was "no longer a marvellous advocate"(2) for the arts. Melvyn Bragg,

in his report as President of Northern Arts for 1984/5, stated baldly that "The Arts Council appears to be, for the first time, no more than a mere arm of Government".(3)

This a significant shift: Previously, criticism came, as has been noted, from those who were not part of the arts establishment, and centred on the Council's role as part of that establishment. Raymond Willams, in a 1979 article, characterised the Arts Council's usual mode of operation as that of an inherently undemocratic kind of gentleman's club - decisions emerging from "the mellow dusk" -

There was one case where the Chairman of a Panel resigned from the Council; a successor had to be found. I kept expecting the matter to be raised in Council, but the next I heard of it was from an acquaintance who seemed to negotiating the scope of his task as the new Chairman with the relevant departmental officer...(4)

By the 1980s, the image of the Council as a smokescreen, obscuring its decisions from the arts world and from its own members, had been replaced by another image; that of a conduit, through which the Government's ideology flowed towards the arts. Even those who did not believe, as Bragg did, that the Council had slipped into the Government's pocket entirely, expressed concern over the Council's new style. Sir Roy Shaw, the Secretary General from 1975 to 1983, was suspicious of the Council's new leaders -

Mrs Thatcher was commonly said to vet people by asking "Is he one of us?"... The new Chairman, Sir William Rees-Mogg, clearly passed... As a former Tory councillor, my successor, Luke Rittner... also passed Mrs Thatcher's test and the appointment was widely seen as a political one... Tony Field, the Arts Council's... Finance Director for many years, said... during the period approaching his resignation which took place

after I retired, that in his early days at the Arts Council you neither knew nor cared what people's politics were, but all that had now changed.(5)

And it is that change, the "politicisation" of the Arts Council, that has informed the major decisions it has taken since 1979.

### THE ARTS COUNCIL 1945-1979

The Arts Council grew from the wartime organisation C.E.M.A. - the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts. Its first chairman was Lord Keynes; and , indeed, the Arts Council can be seen as part of the social structure established at the end of the war - a structure designed to provide a comprehensive system of welfare to the mass of the people. The Council's role was to be that of a cultural N.H.S., dispensing art as the N.H.S. was to dispense good health. The Council's present charter, drawn up in 1967, instructs the Council -

1. To develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts.
2. To increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout Britain.
3. To advise and co-operate with departments of government, local authorities and other bodies on any matters concerned either directly or indirectly with the foregoing.(6)

The Council was to be an assembly of the culturally important, appointed by the government and advised by a number of panels each with responsibility for an artform. It was to work independently of government, even though government provided it s money; an arrangement that came to be known as the "arm's length principle". It was to be a reactive funding body, giving money in response to artistic initiatives.

This raises a number of questions. Firstly, that of the Council's independence; even though the government might not stand over the Council checking each grant award that the Council makes, it effectively determines the scope of the Council's activities through the amount of money it gives the Council. Also, merely saying that the Council is a reactive funding body begs the question, what does it react to? Reactive funding will only work if the body in charge of funding decisions is as neutral as possible (full neutrality is probably impossible). Granted, different artforms will make different financial demands on the Council; but reactive funding implies that all artforms are given equality of access. It will not work if the Council regards one form as intrinsically more worthwhile - and worth funding - than another.

The Council has never been an automatic cultural dispenser, and one of the reasons for this has been financial. The amount of money the Council has received from government has never been great enough to meet the needs of the arts organisations and artists that have applied to it.

During the 1950s, the annual grant award to the Council doubled; however, the rise was from £600,000 to £1,218,000 - not a particularly vast amount of state money. The grant leapt upwards by 30% at the start of the decade, from £675,000 to £875,000 in 1951/2, the year of the Festival of Britain; but it fell back to 675,000 the next year. During the decade the number of organisations the Council funded did not follow the grant award figures and double; the increase was very small.

The Council's Secretary General in the 1950s was W.E. Williams. He pursued a policy that fitted in neatly with the prevailing government attitude to the Council -

High standards can be built only on a limited scale. The motto which Heleager wrote to be carved over a patrician nursery might be one for the Arts Council to follow in deciding what to support in the next few straitened years - "Few, but roses" - including, of course, regional roses.(7)

It is characteristic of the Council that "regional roses" are dropped into the argument as an afterthought. This policy remained constant throughout the decade. Williams' last report as Secretary General in 1961-1962, contains the same message, except that the roses have turned into institutions - due, no doubt, to a decade of determined cultivation -

The essence of the Arts Council policy nowadays is to sustain the best possible standards of performance at a limited number of institutions.(8)

The money available to the Council began to grow appreciably during the 1960s - reaching £8,200,000 by 1969/70. The grant began to rise steeply in the early 1960s ( more than doubling by 1963/4, when it reached £2,730,000); but it was not until 1964, and the return of a Labour government under Harold Wilson, that the Council had to deal with a government that had a definite arts policy.

This policy was detailed in a white paper - A Policy For The Arts-The First Steps. The white paper was written under the supervision of the first Arts Minister, Jennie Lee. The Council's relationship to the government had changed. Previously, it had been funded directly by the Treasury; in 1965, responsibility for the Council was handed to the Department of Education and Science. An office in that department - the Office of Arts and Libraries - was created, and given responsibility for library and museum provision, as well as the Council's grant. And, for the first time, the arts were given their own minister. However, this new post did not carry with it a place in the Cabinet - the Secretary of State for the D.E.S fulfilled that function. It was only when the Arts Minister had another post - for example, when Norman St. John Stevas was the Arts Minister, he was also the Leader of the House - that he could attend Cabinet as a full member.

A Policy For The Arts was, above all, an attempt to integrate art and society -

In any civilised community the arts and associated amenities, serious or comic, light or demanding, must occupy a central place. This enjoyment should not be

regarded as something remote from everyday life... Beginning in the schools, and reaching out into every corner of the nation's life, in city and village, at home, at work, at play, there is an immense amount that could be done to improve the quality of everyday life.(9)

It called for increased support for regional art -

Go-ahead local enterprises need more than encouragement and advice. They need more financial help.(10)

It stressed the importance of art in education, and of some kind of provision for the individual artist. Interestingly, given the growth of the community arts movement in the 1970s, the white paper addressed the issue of cultural elitism, talking of

...bridging the gap between what have come to be called the "higher" forms of entertainment and the traditional sources - the brass band, the amateur concert party, the entertainer, the music - hall and pop group - and [challenging] the fact that such a gap exists.(11)

although, as an example of good cultural practice, the paper cited the National Youth Orchestra. As an indication of this shift, the Arts Council was given a new charter in 1967; the commitment to "fine arts" in the 1945 charter had been changed to a commitment to arts alone.

The most immediate effect of Lee's white paper was an increase in the Council's grant: It rose from £3,205,000 in 1964/5 to £9,300,000 in 1970/1. The concrete result of this grant rise was, at first, literally set in concrete - new theatres were established in Exeter, Bolton, Greenwich, Leatherhead, Newcastle, and at various towns and cities across the country. But even this increase in funding was

insufficient, given the ambitious nature of the policy. Lord Goodman (Council Chairman from 1965 to 1972, a term which spanned the Council's years of expansion) said, on leaving the Council in 1972 -

...I shall leave the chair with a keen consciousness of the many necessary operations that for one reason or another - nearly always financial - still need to be undertaken.(12)

These expansionary years (even if they were only expansionary given the Councils past history) lasted until 1972/3, when the combined weight of an oil and a balance of payments crisis brought them to an end -

From 1976 onwards the result was yet a new series of cuts in the real economy leading to a new downward spiral; inflationary pressures leading to cuts, leading to unemployment, leading to increased Government spending on unemployment relief, leading to an enlarged public sector borrowing requirement, leading to more cuts, more unemployment, and so on, with the productive base of the economy being so reduced that it could not possibly deliver growth.(13)

- and the Arts Council suffered, particularly from the inflationary devaluation of its grant. In the period 1975/6 to 1979/80 the Council's grant rose by 24.46%, the highest five - year average in the council's history; in real terms, however, the grant rose by only 8%. In 1977/8 the grant fell in real terms by 1%.

The Council's money is tied closely to the performance of the economy, the government's response to the economy, and the government's response to the arts. In the 1950s, the economy was growing, but the government did not have an arts policy, so the Council did not receive an adequate grant.

The Council spent the decade tending its roses. At the time of A Policy For The Arts, a time of single figure inflation, the government could promise and deliver money to the Council; never enough, but more than it had previously received. In the absence of any other all - embracing policy documents, the white paper stayed in force, albeit piecemeal, through the 60s and 70s. Finally, the ferocity of the late 70s economic crisis, with inflation high, slowed down the dramatic increases of the 1960s considerably.

The Arts Council's internal politics between 1945 and 1979 have already been well documented by Robert Hutchison in The Politics of the Arts Council (1981), and the central plank of his argument is worth repeating -

...[The] arts are value-saturated, and to the extent that it controls resources which create, transform, and interpret society's values and norms the Arts Council is an intensely political organisation. (14)

The values that the Arts Council interprets are, by and large, the traditional cultural values of the middle and upper classes. Its largest financial commitments are to the tried and settled exponents of "high" culture - the English National Opera, the Royal Ballet, the National Theatre, and the Royal Shakespeare Company. In general, the Council does not believe that art grows out of experience, out of the normal interaction of people with each other. It believes in the cultural high ground - a concept of art being by its very nature difficult, unyielding; something that the ordinary person has to be introduced to carefully, in the presence of experts. Charles Landstone, the Council's first

drama director, describing the Arts Council's philosophy in 1949, could be speaking at any time from 1945 onwards -

[The Arts Council] must raise the standard of the arts and make them more accessible to the people, but it must watch lest the standard be raised so high that the people may not desire access. A constant balance must be kept between the artist's self-confidence and the public's fear of the unknown. It is like the climbing of a ladder. The artist, self-confident, glowing with a sense of beauty, stands at the top. At the foot stands the man in the street, a little apprehensive, yet aching with the desire to share that beauty. The man at the top must descend rung by rung until his down-stretched arm can be grasped by the upstretched arm of the would-be climber. Then together, rung by rung, they can ascend. The closing of the gap between the two out-stretched arms must be the constant task of the Arts Council.(15)

This vision - funding as a journey into the blazing light - may seem absurd; but it does touch on many of the Council's inbuilt assumptions. Firstly the artist, isolated and somehow internally lit. Art is never communal; it is always the reserve of the gifted, and usually single artist. It is always beautiful per se, always ennobling, always good for you. And the ordinary man is always at the bottom of the ladder, never capable of doing anything for himself.

This attitude spreads well beyond the Council. In 1976, Lord Redcliffe-Maud submitted a report on arts funding in the regions to the Gulbenkian Foundation; and the task he assigned to public patrons could have come straight out of an Arts Council report -

...Who should we public patrons help? "The many" and "the few" do not together constitute the whole population. They must be thought of... as the largest and smallest of a whole series of concentric rings. The innermost circle consists of the few people of genius... Wider than the circle of genius is the circle of talent... Still wider is the circle of those capable

of professional teaching of their art...though not quite themselves as talented as the professional performers. Outside that circle are the active amateurs... Beyond them is the still wider circle of those who enjoy the arts as an audience... and beyond them, the many...(16)

From Landstone's ladder to Redcliffe - Maud's cultural dartboard the implicit message is the same. Don't try the arts yourself. Stay where you are, and wait for the professionals to come and get you.

The logical outcome of this is that the Council is there to fund "the best" first. At the same time as A Policy For The Arts was talking of a challenge to the concept of high and low culture, Lord Goodman was joining battle -

...for the allegiance of young people between the attraction of facile, slick, and ultimately debasing forms of sub-artistic under-civilised entertainment, and the contrary attraction of disciplined appreciation and hard, rewarding work.(17)

Art is either fulfilling cultural discipline or fast food; there is nothing in between - and neither has much "attraction". There is also the implication that the outside world, the world that has no contact with the South Bank or Covent Garden, is a desert. The Council's role is to hold back the desert, to stop the cultural death of the country. For example, note the similarity between this quotation, from W.E. Williams in 1962 -

...Even if [The Arts Council's] income were larger, it would still prefer to consolidate those priorities [the funding of the "best" institutions] than to dissipate it's resources upon an extensive provision of the second rate. If the power-houses were to fail, there would be a blackout of the living arts in Britain.(18)

- with this quotation, from Lord Goodman's valedictory report in 1971 :

...Apart from these landmarks [the theatrical ones Goodman has previously referred to are the National Theatre and the earmarking of the Barbican site for the Royal Shakespeare Company] the artistic life of London is conducted in Roundhouses, basements, Nissen huts and artistic improvisations which are a sad reflection on a country so rich in material resources and performing talent.(19)

This rhetorical technique is one used often by the Council, and Hutchison has given it a name - "the false antithesis"; an argument bolstered by reference to an exaggerated, often apocalyptic, second option. Either the Arts Council continues to fund the centres of excellence, or art has to fend for itself, in Nissen huts, in the dark.

This cultural blindness affected the Council's approach to the new cultural and theatrical forms thrown up by the late 1960s. Lord Goodman greeted the arrival of these new claimants in an interesting and memorable passage -

But we had, rightly or wrongly, heard that a group of youngsters around the country had some new ideas and the rumours grew with disturbing persistence. Reverberations came from laboratories in London and nearby seaside resorts, from towns rarely associated with artistic explosions. From all over the place reports of quaint new phenomena were raced to us by carrier pigeon, mule and camel. We sat at the gates of the Arts Council to receive them...

So we established the Committee to investigate, primed it with a modest grant for its researches, and the eldritch process began. Meetings were invaded by demonstrators; long and protracted arguments about protocol, propounded by citizens of terrifying solemnity, and clamourings for justice, meaning thereby a large share of our depleted funds...

The Council debated the matter at considerable length. We have decided not to establish a new panel, but we have equally decided to give "new activities" a sporting chance. An Experimental Projects Committee has been formed to deal with applications from any activity that looks "new".(20)

The Council, it would appear, sat in state while the barbarians sent delegations to its gate (from Nissen huts, presumably). Once inside, this unwashed mass staged a mini French Revolution, which the Council managed to contain through sheer good manners. Throughout the passage, the idea of the new is unsubtly devalued; it is "quaint", "new" (always in inverted commas); its practitioners are "citizens of terrifying solemnity", who do not even have the decency to come from the "artistic" parts of the country. It is not that the Council was opposed to the funding of these groups; the Chairman might patronise them, but they would get at least some money. Rather, the Council did not want to be distracted from funding the centres of excellence by any new movements - particularly any movement that called its priorities into question.

The Experimental Projects Committee, once it was set up, did fund such groups as Portable Theatre and InterAction, but the money it had to spend was minimal - £53,000 out of a total grant of £9,300,000 in 1970/71 - and the grants were handed out under the rigid category headings of art, dance, drama, music and so on. A group like InterAction (see chapter 4) was funded under drama.

In 1974, the Arts Council set up a Community Arts Panel at the recommendation of a Community Arts working party chaired by Professor Harold Baldry.

In its first year, it spent £176,000 on 57 projects; in its second year, £350,000 was spread among 75 clients. By 1979, however, the Council was shedding its community arts clients to the Regional Arts Associations. In one sense, this is a reasonable allocation of clients to the funding body closest to that community; but given the Council's discomfort with the "new", it is hard to avoid the conclusion that it was ridding itself of an unwelcome obligation - in Kwesi Owusu's words, the Council "went for a divorce before the honeymoon was over".(21)

The experience of those who tried to influence the Council from the inside could sometimes be a frustrating one -

For instance, last year [1976], at a meeting of the touring committee, we discussed at great length the many elements that go into touring, a whole range of things that have developed in the past six to eight years, which have been initiated outside the Arts Council and were not an Arts Council initiative at all; companies, new venues, new audiences, new work, how all this related to the R.A.A.s, how this related to the Arts Council. After we had been talking about the actual relationship between the work and the audiences, the Finance Director came in and said "Well, I don't see what all the fuss is about. The Arts Council's policy is to keep the buildings open." Which was greeted with howls of laughter. Because, the whole discussion of the touring committee had been just the opposite. The reality is just the opposite. A policy had been set up and was being perpetuated without regard to reality.(22)

This account, from Malcolm Griffiths (a member of various Council drama and touring panels from 1971 to 1977) points up the institutional inertia that anyone wishing to influence the Council faced, and still faces. The Council will accept new initiatives and fund them, but it will not allow those initiatives to influence its own assumptions. In the late 1960s the Council could afford to be flexible; it had an increasing grant, and could take on some of these strange new groups with their strange new ideas. In the mid-to late 1970s, money was getting tight; and the Council rushed back towards its old priorities. Lord Gibson (Chairman from 1972 to 1977) wrote, in the 1976/7 annual report -

There is, however, a new creed emerging, to which we are totally opposed. This is the belief that because standards have been set by the traditional arts and because those arts are little enjoyed by the broad mass of people, the concept of quality is "irrelevant". The term "Cultural Democracy" has been invoked...to describe a policy which rejects discrimination between good and bad and cherishes the romantic notion that there is a "cultural dynamism" in the people which will emerge only if they can be liberated from the cultural values hitherto accepted by an elite and from what one European "cultural expert" has recently called "the cultural colonialism of the middle classes."(23)

One can hear the echoes of the 1950s - "few, but roses." If the people are "liberated", the results are bound to be terrible; how can ordinary folks understand art without the Council's help? We have returned to the world of the false antithesis; either we have the Council to guide us, or we mess everything up. The Council was not going to change under pressure from below; if pushed, it would stand its ground -

This year's Annual Report [1977/8]... is a very important document, because, for the first time, instead of bland generalisation, it actually comes down to hard and fast rules that it would like to see enforced. They were forced by the Drama Panel to recognise a changing situation, that their policies were inadequate for meeting the real needs of theatre, which requires different ways of looking at things, a different set of values, and a totally different administrative approach. There has been a joining together of the bureaucrats and policy makers of the Arts Council who bitterly resent this.(24)

## THATCHERISM AND THE ARTS COUNCIL (1979- )

Before the 1979 election, the Conservative party had made sympathetic noises to the Council over the level of its grant. Thatcher had written a letter to Lord Goodman in 1976, saying -

...she did not believe it would make sense for any government "to look for candle-end economies which will yield only a very small saving, while causing upset out of all proportion to the economies involved".(25)

And in 1978, Norman St-John Stevas, who was to become the first Conservative arts minister after 1979, edited a discussion document in which he described Labour's arts funding as "pared to the bone" -

The experience of recent years shows that we cannot continue to run the arts on a shoestring much longer, or the shoestring will snap.(26)

The document called for an increased role for business sponsorship of the arts, though as a bonus on top of state funding, not as a replacement for it.

However, on coming to power, the Conservative government decided to claw back £1.1 million pounds from the outgoing Labour administration's grant to the Council; and St-John Stevas, once in office, told the arts world to look for increases in funding from business and private sources. According to Sir Geoffrey Howe, the first Chancellor, the monetarist ground plan might take ten years to be fulfilled; Stevas promised an increase in the Council's grant when the upturn came.

To judge purely from the Council's grant, the much-touted economic revival cannot have happened. In the late 1970s, the Council's grant at least managed to rise by 8% in real terms; in the period 1980/1 to 1984/5 it only managed a rise of 1.4% in real terms.

For the first time, the Council has, after 1979, found itself dependent for funding on a government that believes public spending to be a bad thing in itself. What the public sector needed was a good dose of monetarism: and the Arts Council had to take its medicine with the rest. Since 1979, the Council has been put in the same position as the N.H.S. and the other apparatuses of the welfare state. Standstill budgets have led to cuts in provision, internal shakeups, efficiency drives, and despite Thatcher's expressed wish, a new desire to pare bones and save candle-ends. The old ethos - art is good for you simply because it is art - is still there. Speaking three weeks before a Government press-conference on new initiatives in the inner cities, Sir William Rees-Mogg (the Council's chairman from 1982 to 1989) made the Council's case for cultural regeneration -

[He] told a press conference in London...that many of the world's cities were dying and ridden with loneliness and crime. He regarded the arts as attractive and civilising elements which could help restore life in cities.(27)

However, at the same time, the Council's newer, more Thatcherite face was on display -

Mr. Luke Rittner, Secretary-General of the Arts Council, suggested that...new arts facilities acted as cultural magnets to attract businesses, tourist revenue, and, above all, jobs.(28)

The Council, in the 1980s, has swung uncomfortably between these two poles. the old argument - that art is ennobling and deserves money - has been tied to a new one - that the arts are a good investment.

The immediate effect of the £1.1 million clawback was, arguably, to force the Council into the business of making overt choices. Pressure from below had not worked; but the Council responded quickly to a different kind of pressure from above. In the financial year 1980/1, the Council cut 41 clients from its revenue (that is, its year by year) grant list. Kenneth Robinson (Rees-Mogg's predecessor as Council Chairman) said that the clawback, plus a grant for that year which stood still, had "left no margin for growth"(29). Sir Roy Shaw called the cuts inescapable; but, as John Pick has pointed out, the cuts marked a significant shift in Council policy, away from decision-making on purely artistic grounds

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The conflict between sustaining "the best" and also sustaining the geographically-well-placed, the well-managed, and the alternatively funded, was occluded by the vigorous assertion that the Arts Council was now "in the business" of making critical judgements. A series of words were now used by the arts bureaucracy to describe a process in which artistic evaluation was at best one factor amongst twelve or so others, but which implies that something apolitical, disinterested and rigorous is going on - "critical judgements" vying for a while with "evaluation" and then giving way to a current favourite, "assessment".(30)

One of the Council's favourite boasts - that it was reactive - had been abandoned. It was now clear that the Council would, if it were forced into it, make choices about the kind of clients it would support. For example, it would not

fund another major theatre company in London (Prospect Theatre had its grant cut). It would cut a group's grant, even if the group was doing well; Belt and Braces were performing their most successful production, Accidental Death of an Anarchist, in the West End when their grant was cut.

The fringe theatre circuit was hit particularly hard. As well as Belt and Braces, Incubus, the Pip Simmons Theatre Group, Stirabout Theatre, Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre, Temba Theatre Company and Unexpected Developments Ltd. had their grants cut; these companies had their funding transferred from the revenue grant list to the project grant list (a list of grants for one production or project only). This saved the Council £56,770; the companies lost secure annual funding. Although Temba had their grant re-instated, for groups such as Belt and Braces and Broadside the cuts proved ultimately fatal.

Whatever the reasons behind the Council's choices (and it seems highly likely that at least some of the choices were politically motivated - Sir Roy Shaw disparages left-wing art in The Arts and the People) the broad policy direction was to become more and more apparent in the following years:

[The] judgements presented in that report [the 1980/1 report]...were not critical judgements in any sense in which the term is understood in the arts world, that of being wholly concerned with artistic quality. Shaw himself pointed out...that "the needs of the regions" were considered to be of equal importance, and that amongst other criteria were "Box office returns", "the

companies success in raising local authority support and other income" and "efficiency in using available resources". Finally, it was the Council's policy "to give priority to funding full-time professional artists", so (notwithstanding the fact that what a professional artist is varies between art forms) a group which was impeccably regional, attractive to the public, aided by local authorities, and was mightily efficient in using its resources would nevertheless be ignored if it were not composed of full-time professional artists.(31)

Professional, efficient, successful in generating money - there is, already, a Thatcherite tinge to the Council's rhetoric. The notion of subsidy was being replaced by the doctrine of investment.

According to Sir Roy Shaw, the Council was also susceptible to the influence of Thatcherism in other, more direct ways. Shaw's account of Government interference may not be an objective and entirely reliable one. For one thing, he is hardly politically neutral (see pp. 173-4); for another, his account is liable to be coloured by his direct participation in events. However, his account of Government-approved appointments carries strong echoes of the Prime Minister's favourite phrases : appointees must be "one of us" -

One day in 1980, Kenneth Robinson and I [Sir Roy Shaw] went for one of our routine visits to see St-John Stevas... On this occasion , we discussed, as we often did, membership of the Council. St-John Stevas brought up the name of Alistair Mcalpine (later Lord Mcalpine). I demurred, on the grounds that Mcalpine had publicly expressed his disbelief in public subsidy for the arts... He [Stevas]...was unmoved, and smiling mysteriously said "I think you will appreciate that this nomination comes from a very high source," with the implication that it was therefore irresistible. It was obvious that the "high source" was.. in fact, Mrs Thatcher (I later learned that Mcalpine was on dining terms with her)...

I saw his appointment as an omen of the increasing politicisation of the Arts Council and the erosion of the celebrated "arm's - length principle"...Mcalpine's appointment (he was then treasurer of the Conservative party) did not mean the end of the arm's - length principle, but it seriously weakened it.(32)

In 1982, a "more significant step"(33) was taken; Richard Hoggart, whose political affiliation was to the moderate left, and who was, according to Shaw -

...the strongest critic on the Arts Council of any move by left-wing arts organisations to use art for political propaganda...(34)

was dropped from his post as Council Vice-Chairman, against the advice of Kenneth Robinson -

...Channon [Paul Channon, Arts minister from 1981 to 1983] told parliamentary questioners that Hoggart had served for an "unprecedented" length of time, and, in any case, membership of the Council was a privilege. In fact, most previous Vice-Chairmen had served longer (some much longer) than Hoggart, and the minister was himself breaking the precedent that the Vice-Chairman remained in office for as long as the Council found him or her useful.(35)

Shaw was, once again, concerned about the arm's length principle; as he saw it, his concern was justified -

...The minister had been telling his civil servants for some time that "Hoggart had to go," and when I asked him why, since this would deprive the Council of an invaluable member, he looked embarrassed and could only say that "No. 10 doesn't like him." I later learned that he told his civil servants that his back-benchers also didn't like Hoggart...(36)

The trend was confirmed by the appointment of a new Chairman.

Sir William Rees-Mogg had an impeccable establishment background. He was educated at public school and Oxbridge ( the public school being Charterhouse, the college Balliol,

Oxford). He made a career in journalism, at The Financial Times and The Sunday Times, and finally as the editor of The Times from 1968 to 1981. He is also the proprietor of Pickering and Chatto Ltd., the Chairman of Sidgwick and Jackson, and a director of G.E.C.. Rees-Mogg was also the Vice Chairman of the B.B.C. until 1986. He played a prominent part in the Real Lives controversy; he was in favour of banning the documentary - a study of the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland. According to both Shaw and Simon Hoggart(37) Rees-Mogg was appointed with the expressed approval of the Prime Minister.

Rees-Mogg's world view is, to say the least, strongly reminiscent of Margaret Thatcher's. In a 1985 lecture, he confessed that he was concerned about the spread of "twentieth-century collectivism"(39). He was

...depressed by the way in which any artists seem to be trapped in a dated and provincial set of values, the post-Fabian Guardian consciousness of genteel academic English collectivism.(39)

Which sounds like the distress of a Neo-Conservative Times-reading individualist. His reading of plays seems rather selective -

I [Sir Roy Shaw] was a little surprised when Sir William told me he had realised (whilst preparing a talk on Shakespeare and politics) that Shakespeare was not only a Tory, but a Thatcherite Tory.(40)

And, in a 1986 Guardian interview, he seemed not only to have buried the arm's length principle, but to be claiming

its' interring as a good thing -

I know I have Mrs. Thatcher's confidence. She's delighted. She thinks things have gone well in the arts, and I'm pleased because she's been very helpful and very interested.(41)

If there was one person likely to be Thatcher's representative in the arts, then Rees-Mogg was the perfect choice.

The first report that Rees-Mogg contributed to (the 1981/2 Annual Report) was the first in which there was a discernable difference in outlook between the Chairman and the Secretary-General. In his report, Rees-Mogg praised Kenneth Robinson for operating at a time "during which there was a major change in the economic climate for the arts" -

I inherited a system in which the first shock of the change in arts funding from rising to stable arts funding has been achieved. It has, I think, to be established that arts funding is not likely to rise substantially in the period ahead of us. The task of the Arts Council, and, more broadly, the community of the arts will therefore be to make better use of limited resources.(42)

Shaw did not share Rees-Mogg's calm -

The recent reductions in real terms of the Government's grant-in-aid to the Arts Council forced us to make unpleasant cuts to clients in 1981/2, and to our own directly funded activities in 1982/3. Many of our clients, including the largest, live in a state of constant anxiety about finance to a degree which has an adverse effect on creative work.(43)

Shaw's is the philosophy of the liberal consensus; the style that dominated the Council's pronouncements since the end of the war. Rees-Mogg is very much of the there-are-tough-

choices-to-make-and-we-must-live-within-our-means school of thought. The second viewpoint - the philosophy of the tightened belt - won the argument.

It could be argued that the Arts Council is still at arms length from the Government. The Arts Minister has never interfered in the Council's affairs directly (although he has gone outside the Council, as with the setting up of the Priestly Commission in 1983 to review the Royal Shakespeare Company's finances). However, when the Chairman of a Government-funded organisation is in agreement with the Government's aims and values, then, perhaps, no direct interference is necessary. As with the appointment of Ian Mcgregor to the chairmanship of British Steel, and then to the National Coal Board, and that of Marmaduke Hussey to the B.B.C., Rees-Mogg's appointment ensured that complaints would be less frequent. For example, Rees-Mogg's acceptance of the reality of stable funding had compromised any demand for a substantial increase in funding for the Council. The Cabinet was not freed magically from all trouble in the arts by Rees-Mogg's appointment, but it was assured of a substantially smoother ride.

The process continued with the appointment of Sir Roy Shaw's successor. Luke Rittner's appointment was immediately controversial; fifty members of A.S.T.M.S. working for the Council signed a petition addressed to Shaw that expressed

concern about Rittner's suitability for the post. The Department heads went further. They were worried that the dual appointments of Rees-Mogg and Rittner might produce a "Tory tinge" to the Arts Council.

For the previous five years, Rittner had been the director of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts -

...[In] his previous role he had quoted with approval more than once the warning to an American business sponsors conference that "The Government is spending more money on the arts, and the only way you can stop this is for you to spend more on business sponsorship.(45)It is not surprising, then, that Rittner's tone is close to that of the corporate prospectus

What do I see today?...On the whole, well-run administrations serving exciting and imaginative artists...growing involvement of local authorities...developing business support...better box office...and an export market that is the envy of the world. However, this small, though highly successful part of Great Britain Incorporated is once again under threat through lack of investment, and however positive I want to be I cannot ignore this fact.(46)

This new style, laced with Thatcherite buzz-words like "efficiency" and "investment", has been called by one of the Council's officers "speaking to the Government in the only language it understands"(47); and the picture it creates of an investor - friendly art world is the one that the Council is now keen to promote. The old vision of art as an uplifting experience has switched from the main reason for the Council's existence to the Council's main selling point. The audience now pays money and receives culture - experiencing art is now part of a financial transaction.

In 1984 the Arts Council published its first internal strategy document, The Glory Of The Garden. Rees-Mogg's introduction to it could, at some points, have come from the pen of any Council Chairman at any time in the Council's history -

One does not have to paint the modern world black to see one reason for [the demand for art]. Modern society - even in democracies and even more so in totalitarian states - is depersonalised by the scale of its organisation, a scale which is being exploded by information technology. The arts, human, creative, inspiring, individual, warm, alive, provide a natural healing to this sense of depersonalisation, and the appreciation of beauty can transcend the moon-like chill of an electronic world. For those of religious faith the human creativity of the arts can be a way of seeing the beauty of God's creation. Perhaps we demand the arts more than previous generations; perhaps we need the arts more than previous generations.(48)

It seems that the arts are an efficient way of turning alienated work-units into happy, fulfilled work-units, ready to slot themselves into their sockets and take part in the new high-tech world. To achieve this, Rees-Mogg was prepared to force through changes, no matter what -

The financial steps are the most difficult. The Arts Council recognises the financial constraints inside which Government is working. We have therefore decided to make a start even if it has to be a relatively small one out of our own existing levels of funding. That does mean painful choices, including transfers inside existing provision. Yet it has one great advantage: It demonstrates the determination of the Arts Council to carry out this strategy even though it involves decisions of great difficulty and hardship for respected clients.(49)

In other words, the Council was so aware of the Government's financial constraints that it was prepared to help the Government by harming its clients; the Council, or, more

correctly, the Council's clients were to fall on their swords to ensure that the Government did not have to worry. To say that "great difficulty and hardship" would be the necessary outcome of the review process would not commend that process to the Council's clients - the clients that the Council was meant to serve.

The Glory Of The Garden's main policy proposal was that resources should be redistributed from London to the regions

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The Council...believes it right to make increased and improved provision in the regions the central objective of its development strategy...It has...determined to increase the responsibilities of the Regional Arts Associations both by devolving to them responsibility for some clients and areas of work which it now funds directly and by providing them with a significant amount of development money in order to sustain and enhance their existing work, especially in areas of the arts where funding responsibility has already passed largely to them.(50)

The Council's relationship with the Regional Arts Associations has always been problematic. The Council's appointed task, to "raise and spread" the arts, has always conflicted with its bias towards the capital. In 1949, Charles Landstone took the Chairman of the Drama Panel, Sir Bronson Albery, to Salisbury to watch a performance of Tonight at 8:30 -

I knew that the standard was unchallenged by any company in the provinces... and when the curtain went up... I was prepared for the best. I was not prepared, however, to hear within two minutes a whisper from Sir Bronson, "This is magnificent, but it's far too good for Salisbury."(51)

During the 1950s the Council gradually removed itself from the regions; in 1955, the first Regional Arts Association was formed as a direct result of the closure of the Council's Midland regional office, and this pattern - regional office closure followed by the establishment of an R.A.A. - was repeated around the country. Even though the links between the Council and the R.A.A.s became firmer in the 1960s and 70s (in 1974 the Council formed a Regional Department and Committee, and towards the end of the decade Council nominees sat on R.A.A. management committees), something of the old paternalistic attitude stayed with the Council. Lord Goodman, in a House of Lords debate in 1972, said -

But when we hear the matter pursued on the footing that they [the R.A.A.s] are probably able to speak for the regions my answer is "Yes, but in some things and some things only." We are concerned with the Arts. This business with amateur theatricals, the crafts and the like is something about which one needs to be very skeptical indeed.(52)

And reaction from the R.A.A.s was equally wary - as Lord Feversham, the first Chairman of the Standing conference of Regional Arts Associations, pointed out to a Regional Studies conference in 1974 -

During the five years in which I have been involved with the business I have been constantly baffled by the expression of mystification which comes into the eyes of Arts Council mandarins at the mention of Regional Arts Associations. I cannot remember a time when I have had the feeling of being received at the Council as a colleague involved in the same business. Rather, one has the feeling that one is some kind of orange three-headed Martian with antennae sprouting from the forehead who has just landed by flying saucer in Green Park.(53)

In the 1985 lecture quoted above, one of the insults that Rees-Mogg hurls at his enemies is that of being "provincial".

The Glory Of The Garden was the first real attempt by the Council to devolve some of its powers to the R.A.A.s. Before Glory, the Council shed clients to the R.A.A.s without defining the terms under which the transfer took place. Now, the Council took responsibility for two broad classes of clients. The first were the "major" clients - the National Theatre, The Royal Shakespeare Company, and so on. The second was defined as -

...a variety of small clients who, for various reasons (whether because they are companies which tour throughout the country, or because they have an essentially experimental function, or because they have a minority appeal which is not located in any particular region) are of peculiar national significance.(54)

The R.A.A.s were to have responsibility for the groups that fell between these two categories. Forty-five clients from the Council's revenue and project lists were to be devolved to the R.A.A.s. In the Fringe theatre circuit, Eastend Abbreviated Soapbox Theatre, the Half Moon Theatre, the Oval House, Tara Arts and the Theatre Royal, Stratford East went to Greater London Arts; Hull Truck Theatre Company went to Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts; Interplay trust and Red Ladder Theatre Company went to Yorkshire Arts.

The Council's development programme identified five areas that it and the newly expanded R.A.A.s were to concentrate

on - Art, Dance, Drama, Music and Education; the emphasis was on traditional artforms, with no recognition of the increasingly blurred boundaries between those forms. In Drama -

...The purpose of the programme is to enable the major, existing building based companies...to achieve two broad objectives: to sustain the highest artistic standards of theatrical performance and to bear a much greater responsibility than they have in the recent past for enriching the theatrical experience of the wider community in the whole of their regions.(55)

which uncomfortably echoes Griffiths' Financial Director - "The policy of the Arts Council is to keep the buildings open". The Council was to spend £1.5 million of the £2 million it allocated to Drama on the regional reps, but the smaller companies were not to be entirely excluded -

...In return for its greatly enhanced funding, the Council will look to the companies...to play a full part in arranging activities extending beyond the staging of productions in their own main houses. Such activities might include, for example, expanded seasons of studio work (with particular emphasis on new writing), providing facilities for both small and large scale incoming touring companies, touring some of their own main house and studio work (especially, but not necessarily exclusively, in their own areas) and providing a focus for the provision of Theatre in Education and Young People's Theatre. Repertory companies will also be encouraged, where appropriate, to house independent small-scale companies in their studios and to provide them with access to their own much more extensive administrative, technical and marketing resources.(56)

Not only were the buildings to be kept open, but new life was to be pumped into them. The initiative seems more of an administrative than an artistic one; if as many companies as possible are under one roof, then it is easier to keep an

eye on them. But whatever the rationale for the idea, the attempts to take theatre out of the theatre, to establish drama in new spaces under new terms were not encouraged.

The Council decided to spend the rest of the £2 million on a range of options -

...just as important for [the theatre's] future health... Foremost amongst these other developments are the upgrading of companies due, in the course of time, to be brought into the programme of regional development, the strengthening of touring companies, increased funding for project awards, increased funding for new writing, a special fund for children's and young people's theatre and increased funding for Black and Asian drama...[In] the first year of the development programme, beginning in April 1985, the Council will allocate £500,000 to enable a start to be made in implementing them.(57)Half a million pounds for six initiatives, against £1.5 million for one; the Council's priorities are clear, and clearly biased.

The Council's attempt to regenerate the reps was to be financed, as has been said, by "great difficulty and hardship"; specifically, by the ten building-based and five touring companies whose grants were cut. The tone of the Council's explanation is rather apologetic -

This is a long list, but the Council currently supports 82 revenue clients in Drama, almost half it's revenue clients. Moreover, among the development proposals listed in the previous section...developments in Drama feature more prominently than any other.

Many of the companies on the list have done good work. But the Council does not place their achievements in the highest class. It hopes, at any rate, that a number of the companies, or at least the venues at which they are based, will survive without Arts Council subsidy. If any of them is unable to continue even as a venue the Council will consider whether, in the interests of the community which the venue serves, it might be possible to locate there an existing company which has no base of it's own.(58)

- again, the company might die but the venue must live. It is admitted that companies that have produced "good work", but the "highest class" they have failed to achieve is

its liberal inheritance. Perhaps the standard of some companies - 7:84(England) for example - had been in decline; but it is also true that 7:84 had been taking theatre into the regions increasingly in the 1980s, and were losing the high profile that a London show gives a company in the cultural establishment's eyes. Other companies who lost their grants were involved in "raising and spreading" activities of their own. C.A.S.T. presentations had set up community venues in Brixton, Cricklewood and Wood Green to serve the growing cabaret/new variety circuit in London. Given the Council's interest in boldly taking theatre where no theatre had been before, C.A.S.T. might seem the ideal client; at the very least, C.A.S.T. could have been devolved to Greater London Arts - an Association with a special interest in supporting community arts.

The decision to cut Temba's grant for the second time (the company was threatened with a cut in 1981 - see above) was a

dubious move, given the Council's new found commitment to funding Black and Asian theatre, and, indeed the decision was later reversed. However, the decision was a curious way of endearing the Council to Black and Asian theatre; and at the same time the Council was denying the "particular national significance" of groups like Steel'n'Skin, Aklowa and Tara Arts by devolving them to their Regional Arts Associations -

Most Black arts groups, it should be said, are of strategic national significance because, even when they are based in London, they do a lot of touring. Yet the number of groups who have the resources for touring, particularly their own transport, is very few. On the other hand, few Black organisations have enough money to invite outside groups on a regular basis. In effect, the Arts Council fails to recognise the present low status and underfunding of Black Arts and the need to take steps to remedy the situation.(59)

The Glory Of The Garden was not, on the whole, welcomed, even by the organisations that the Council had targeted for development. Fifty theatre directors passed a vote of "no confidence" in the Council in 1985, the first year of Glory's strategy. Derek Dougan, the director of Northern Arts, took issue with the Council's arithmetic -

...while the intention is to switch funds to the regions, £3.1 million of the rerouted resources of £4.5 million are coming from the regions themselves by the withdrawal or reduction of grants to a long list of regional activities and organisations.(60)

In Northern Arts' next Annual Report(1984/5), Melvyn Bragg, the Association's Chairman, who had the previous year given a cautious welcome to the policy proposals, had lost faith in both the Council and its policy document -

...[In] order to balance its monetarist books, the present Government has attacked the 40-year old bipartisan and generally expanding role for the state in the arts...Mrs. Thatcher, Lord Gowrie (the then Arts

Minister) and Sir William Rees-Mogg have decided - on evidence unknown to the rest of us - that a great plateau has been reached, and that for the state to hold on to that is quite good enough.

It must be said flatly and emphatically that such a plateau exists in the heads of the aforementioned trinity. Most of us know that we need more theatres, more dance companies, -more theatres...

The Glory Of The Garden - which many of us, at least in part, welcomed - has proved to be a hole in the ground. The Arts Council appears to be, for the first time, no more than a mere arm of Government. The only course open at the moment is to try every possible tactic in order to survive in the hope that the political diktat authorising this present, destructive policy will be, and can be, overthrown.(61)

In 1985, half of the Council's Drama Panel resigned, because their views were not being heard; they went so far as to write to Rees-Mogg, accusing the Council of "betraying the arts and lending itself to party politics by acquiescing to Government policies"(62). The Cork Report, published as Theatre Is For All (1986), found that -

[in] real terms, the effect of The Glory Of The Garden has been to restore theatres in Leicester and Sheffield to their 1978/9 levels of funding and to leave most other theatres slightly less well off.(63)

A major policy change for the theatre's good had resulted in a marginal drop in provision.

The Glory Of The Garden marks the turning point in the Council's development through the 1980s. It marks an end to the Council's involvement with the welfare state (even though the Council had always been more concerned with the welfare of the more established groups). Partly, this was a change in perception; as has been noted, the Council started on its economy drive long before The Glory Of The Garden,

and it was already using the new vocabulary of Thatcherism to justify itself. Certainly, after The Glory Of The Garden, the Council still remained formally committed to the idea of "raising and spreading" the arts.

But Glory did not achieve the federalisation of the arts funding world. The bias towards London was as great in 1988 as it had been in 1984 -

According to the Policy Studies Institute's Cultural Trends 1989... the Council spent £7.92 per head in Greater London in 1987-88. In the 11 other English regions, it spent between 65p (Eastern) and £1.94 (Merseyside) - an imbalance of between 12:1 and 4:1 in favour of London.

The London figure includes subsidies to the Royal Opera House, National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company and English National Opera, which are reasonably enough defined as national companies, but of which Londoners are greater beneficiaries than their country cousins. If you exclude these four, Arts Council spending in London is £3.92 a head - which is still an imbalance of between 6:1 and 2:1.(64)

The review was effectively killed by the Government. The Council's plan had been to start to implement its policy in the hope that the Government would be impressed enough to increase the Council's grant. This did not happen; Luke Rittner, by the time of the 1987-88 Annual Review, was still waiting for the crumbs that the Council had expected from the Government's table four years before -

We are disappointed that the gap between our funding of London and the rest of the Country is still as wide as ever. No-one in the Council wants to see the national companies held back nor do we want to stifle the arts in the metropolis; however, unless there were a dramatic increase in overall funding it is difficult to see how we can ever really get the balance more equitable...(65)

Perhaps the most lasting effect of the review was the mistrust that it engendered amongst those groups and artists who had previously had no quarrel with the Council. The fringe never had much faith in the Council; after The Glory Of The Garden, the arts establishment lost faith in the Council as well.

Most of the Council's initiatives after 1984 have been conducted in the name of increased efficiency, and increased value for money, in the arts. Whenever it has sought an increase in funding from the Government, it has done so on the Government's terms. When the Council joined with the R.A.A.s and local government to argue for enough money to cover the effects of the abolition of the metropolitan councils, it produced a booklet - The Arts: A Great British Success Story. When the Council was seeking a funding increase in 1987/8, it produced another booklet - this one called Partnership: Making Arts Money Work Harder. These booklets resemble nothing so much as business prospectuses, glossy brochures to tempt Tory ministers by playing on a weakness for patriotism, ruthlessness and success.

With the Council's grant on standstill, and local authority money squeezed by central government, the Government and the Council have looked increasingly towards the private sector to make up any shortfall in funding. On the face of it, the rise in private sponsorship has been impressive. In 1976 A.B.S.A. - The Association for Business Sponsorship of the

Arts - claimed a membership of 53 companies, who provided a total of £600,000 for the arts; by 1985/6, membership had risen to 159 companies providing £20 million. However impressive this rise is, however, it must be set in context; in 1985/6 the Arts Council's grant was £106 million. In that years' Annual Report, Rees-Mogg gave a breakdown of arts funding for 1986/7 -

In the coming year, the combined expenditure of the Arts Council and the Local Authorities will be £280 million with another £20 million coming from business sponsorship.(66)

The private sector was to contribute one fifteenth of the total arts budget.

And there is some doubt about the actual levels of business sponsorship -

...In 1985/6 figures between £15 million and £20 million were being mentioned by A.B.S.A. and echoed by the minister for the arts. Since businesses are usually very coy about revealing the amount of money involved in their sponsorship I can only regard A.B.S.A.'s figures as a guess. Furthermore, it is probably a rather optimistic guess at that, because, as far as I know, the only independent attempt to measure the extent of sponsorship was made in a 1980 report by three research students at the London Graduate School of Business Studies and they came up with a figure which was rather less than half A.B.S.A.'s for that year. Explaining that discrepancy, the authors said that although some of the difference may have been caused by the "volatility" of sponsorship, they considered A.B.S.A.'s estimate to be inconsistent with the data given in their report.(67)Business sponsorship is, by definition, less subject to control than state sponsorship. It is a contract drawn up for the supposed benefit of both signatories; the artistic organisation gets money, the company gets a public relations, marketing and advertising opportunity. A cigarette manufacturer can improve its public image by sponsoring a prom season; in fact, money for arts sponsorship tends to come from a company's publicity budget - as such, it is legitimate business expenditure, and claimable against corporation tax. And, as with any business contract, the companies are in it for what they can get

out of it -

David Maroni of Olivetti, one of this country's most imaginative sponsors, once appealed to his colleagues at a conference to admit that they were in sponsorship for reasons of enlightened self-interest. This brought a correction from another sponsor who said emphatically, "Brutal self-interest."(68)

Yet the Government and the Arts Council seem increasingly willing to hand the arts world over to the brutally self-interested.

In 1984 the then Arts Minister, Lord Gowrie, announced the first Government sponsored scheme to encourage arts groups actively to seek business sponsorship. Under this scheme - the Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme - any client who could attract between £7,500 and £75,000 in business funding would receive a Government grant equal to one-third of the money it had attracted. In the following year this was changed to a two-tier system. New sponsors donating £1,000 to £3,000 would attract an equal amount of Government money for the groups they funded. Those contributing between £3,000 and £75,000 would attract a one-third grant award from the Government for the groups they chose. In its first year, the scheme attracted 57 arts organisations, who received £691,000 out of the £1 million that the Government had set aside for the project.

The philosophy behind the scheme was outlined by the latest Arts Minister, Richard Luce, in a speech given to the Council of Regional Arts Associations on the eighth of July, 1987 -

Our economic policies, after eight years in office, have led to greater prosperity: and that means more in many people's pockets to spend on leisure, including the arts. We are determined to make that prosperity even more widely available.

The prudent restraint of public expenditure has been a key to success. Our aim is to ensure that public expenditure takes a steadily smaller share of our national income.

The arts cannot be seen in isolation from this dramatic change in the political and economic climate. There is no argument that enables us to claim that the arts are sacrosanct and should be insulated from the real world. I would be laughed out of court if I were to claim this to my colleagues in Government...

But there are still too many in the arts world who have yet to be weaned away from the welfare state mentality - the attitude that the taxpayer owes them a living. Many have not yet accepted the challenge of developing plural sources of funding. They give the impression of thinking that all other sources of funding are either tainted or too difficult to get. They appear not to have grasped that the collectivist mentality of the 60s and 70s is out of date.(69)

On the fifth of November of that year, he announced a 70% increase in the amount of money available for the B.S.I.S.; it now had a reserve of £3 million.

The end of the "collectivist mentality" has affected the groups on the fringe in a number of ways; these changes will be dealt with in Chapter 4. The Arts Council, however, has taken the new reality into its bones. It encourages "plural sources of funding", never mind the cost -

The Royal Court's Theatre Upstairs, from which evolves the theatre of tomorrow, tomorrow's playwrights for the mainstream, for television and for film, is being forced to close down for financial reasons. It cannot secure private subsidy. It has tried. Such a studio theatre is not, unlike the City of Birmingham Orchestra, a Tate Gallery exhibition or a National Theatre Hamlet, the stuff to win private sponsors. The local council, understandably, wants nothing to do with the Upstairs.(70)

The art's welfare state is suffering in the same way as its larger state cousin. The holes in the safety net are getting wider, and more and more clients are falling through.

Gradually, the different strands in arts funding in the 1980s - the new emphasis on assessment, the drive towards business sponsorship, the drive towards increased efficiency, the encouragement to live within your means - have come together in the Council's thinking. By the financial year 1988/9 all of the new elements, all of the emphases and slogans and buzz-words had been tied together into a comprehensive package that the Council's clients had no choice but to buy.

The package had three main parts. Firstly, there was a change in the way in which the Council was itself funded. At the same time as he had announced the 70% rise in B.S.I.S., Richard Luce had announced that the Arts Council was to learn of its grant over a three year period. From 1988/9 to 1990/1 the Council's grant was to rise by 17%; 10% in the first year, with the rest of the increase spread equally over the next two years. In a way, this was a good thing; the Council now had the opportunity to plan ahead. However, by the summer of 1989, inflation had risen to above 8%; the rising grant was converted, very quickly, into a familiar, long decline. By the time that he came to write his report

for the 1987/8 Annual Report, Luke Rittner had returned to an old Council theme -

As I have indicated, the government's decision to fund the arts on a three-year basis is a milestone in the Arts Council's history. However, recent signs of an unexpected rise in the rate of inflation could reduce the real level of our grant-in-aid below that which was intended. The unique and precious commodity that the arts represent may be inadvertently damaged if the rise continues. I hope the Government shares our concern.(71)

In 1988, the Council produced a three year plan for their new stable three-year future. The role that it saw for itself now was not that of the great provider, but that of the great advertising executive -

Only through greater wealth will the arts be able to achieve their goal - to bring the best to the most. Subsidy is, and will remain, essential to survival; but will not of itself bring prosperity. Money must be raised from other sources. For this reason, the financial self-sufficiency of arts organisations is an underlying theme of the Arts Council's Three-Year Plan. By placing a new emphasis on business planning and marketing, Arts managers will be able to increase sales and attract more private finance. In the coming three years we expect that the overall turnover of the subsidised arts will rise by at least £30 million.

If the Arts Council is to help arts organisations in this task, it must become less of a traditional funding body, mainly concerned with delivering government monies to a portfolio of clients, and more an advocate, an adviser and a policy-maker. During the life of this Plan, it will spend much of its energies on the provision of advice and information; the exchange of ideas and examples of good management practice among arts organisations; the training of arts managers and the mobilisation of increased support for the arts both on the public and private sectors and among the population at large.(72)

The Council, however, was not only concerned that it should promote the arts; it had decided to make sure that the groups it funded were worthy of promotion. In February 1988, the Council announced that it was to review twenty-one

touring theatre companies who were on the revenue grant list to see if they were fit to compete in the new, straitened post-collectivist age. In effect, it created a league table. The "best" of the groups - those who fulfilled the criteria the Arts Council had set - would be elevated to three-year funding. Those that the Council was unsure about, or thought worthy of a second chance, would be put on annual funding. Those that failed would be invited to apply for project status. Project clients who would have been candidates, in the times of plenty in the late 60s and early 70s, for elevation to revenue funding status were to be included in the review.

There is nothing wrong with the idea of assessment. There is no reason why a company that is not as good as it once was should receive funding, year in, year out, while other, better groups struggle to produce their work. However, the assessment that the Council was to conduct sounded more like an auditor's report than an artistic judgement -

What is meant by an "in-depth appraisal" ? The appraisal team and its officers work with the client, in close consultation with other funding agencies, to provide an audit of current management practice and to set objectives for future development - including, of course, retrenchment when advisable. Fundamental to this approach will be artistic appraisal of the client's work, based not only on the team's direct experience of it, but the Council's system of performance monitoring. At the same time, the team will be looking to the financial implications both of current activity and of future plans. Each appraisal team is asked to review marketing, education and outreach. Finally, guidelines are provided in order to monitor the client's relationship to the Council's Action Plans for Arts and Disability and for Ethnic Minority Arts.(73)

Even if the group had managed to achieve three-year funding status, they could not rest; they had to draw up a development plan for each of the three-year periods that the Council had decided to fund. This meant, in effect, that a group would have to start thinking about its next three years half-way through its current three years. The Council might expect its clients to be energetic; the clients might feel that the energy would be more useful elsewhere. And there was always the danger that a company might do almost everything that the Council wanted and still lose its funding; this, arguably, is what happened to Foco Novo (see chapter 4).

If three-year funding and new assessment practices weren't enough already, the Council chose 1988 to launch its own incentive funding scheme. Explained in another booklet - Better Business For The Arts - that, again, resembled a corporate brochure, the Council's scheme resembled the Government's B.S.I.S.. It is also a two tier system - the enterprise fund for long established groups, and the progress fund, for "organisations which may be small scale, newly-formed, innovative or community-orientated." -

The Incentive Funding Scheme is designed to encourage arts organisations to become more financially enterprising, to improve their commercial management skills and to strengthen their long-term financial bases- so permitting artistic development, quality and diversity. The Council wishes to help them improve permanently, and to strengthen their financial position by an orderly process of managed change.(74)

The Incentive Funding Scheme was to encourage groups to raise funds from all sources - local authority and box

office as well as private funding. Applicants would find themselves in the same world of efficiency, user-friendliness and resource management as the groups applying for three-year funding status -

When your application is approved, the Council (or our assessors) will identify your specific short-term requirements. You will then be asked (if you wish to continue in the scheme) with an independent consultant who can give you technical and specialist help in specific areas. These may include financial planning, merchandising or advertising.

...[You] will be encouraged to identify long-term aims so that by the end of it you should be in a position to produce a long-term artistic and business plan...(75)

The criteria that the Council were to use were artistic quality, access ("the organisation's commitment to maximise audience potential"(76)), impact ("...the difference that such a grant makes to the applicant and its situation."(77)), suitability, planning capacity, sustainability, and equal opportunities. A community group, touring a rural area, could play to capacity village hall crowds until doomsday without attracting either business sponsorship or (depending on the disposition of the local council) increased local government support; and to play arts centres in the larger towns to maximise audience potential would be to go against the group's original reason for existing. It is not surprising that the impact of the Council's funding scheme on the fringe has so far been almost nil (see chapter 4).

The effect of these changes - of the elements in the package - can be summarised as follows. The Arts Council knows - has known for some time - that it will not receive any large grant increases from the Government. Therefore, it is trying to get as much out of the resources that it has, while encouraging those companies that it funds to do the same. In other words, it is transferring the pressure that the Government puts on it downwards, onto the companies that it funds. It is not trying to destroy the arts world; it is trying to make it efficient, a good investment - a profitable part of Great Britain Incorporated. In doing so, it has placed the groups it funds in the same position as Thatcherism would like to place the individual in the ideal free market economy; the groups are being forced into the marketplace as the value of their state money decreases, and their future funding becomes increasingly unsure.

The old nostrums are still there; in his final report as Chairman, Rees-Mogg urged artists to remember that their watch-word should be excellence. But, steadily, the ability to turn a profit is becoming more and more important. You can do anything that you want; you can run workshops, you can tour to out of the way places, you can spend time rehearsing over 150 amateurs for a community play, but you have to be able to afford it. You have to be able, somehow, to make it pay. The Council's new, 1980s approach has little to do with the ladders and the dartboards it toyed with before 1979. The new slogan, used both by Luce in his July

1987 speech and by Rees-Mogg in his valedictory report, is the couplet written for David Garrick by Samuel Johnson. It asserts one, and only one, rule; that in Britain in the 80s the only thing worth pursuing is money -

The drama's laws, the drama's patrons give,  
And we that live to please, must please to live.(78)

### CHAPTER 3: THE GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (1981-1986)

Compare 1959 with 1987. Labour had suffered its third election defeat and many observers were prepared to speculate that Labour would never win again, because of the ways in which social trends were moving against it and recruiting new support for the Conservatives. This was still very much a two-party system, in the sense that although the Liberals had 16.9% of the vote in 1959, Labour was still in a position to challenge the Conservatives as an alternative Government.

This situation is different. Like the interwar period the Conservatives have a dominant position because of the way in which the opposition to them is divided. So long as the opposition remains divided and so long as the Conservatives can maintain their support above 40% of the electorate they will continue to rule.(1)

Labour's 1987 election campaign was a public relations triumph. The manifesto might have been both sketchy and muddled, but for the first time in the 80s the party's presentation was better than the Conservatives'. There were no embarrassing splits between the right and the left over defence, or over anything else, for that matter. The two sides managed to forget their antagonisms and pull in more or less the same direction for the duration of the campaign.

The style veered towards the presidential; the Kinnocks, the ideal welfare state couple, walking along clifftops and pointing at seagulls, were packaged as the safe alternative to Thatcherism. The party was painted a caring shade of pink; even the old red flag logo was replaced by a pastel rose. There was no mention of the Greenwich by-election (which Labour lost) or of the continuing row over Black sections. The party was determinedly user-friendly.

The campaign worked, but the party lost. It polled 32% of the national vote, its second-worst result since the war; the best that could be said of the result was that it was 4% better than the party's showing in 1983. The appeal was consistent, but it was an appeal to a country that had changed. The historical forces that had turned Labour into "the natural party of Government" (in Harold Wilson's phrase) - the formation of the post-war corporate state, the growth in trade unionism, and so on - were not as strong as they once were. Labour was playing an old song, but the audience was drifting away -

Politics does not reflect majorities, it constructs them. And there is no evidence that Labour's commitment to traditionalism can construct such a majority. Certainly, the consequences of Thatcherite re-structuring are horrendous. But larger and larger numbers of people no longer experience all this as "traditional Labour voters". Even less can they articulate their aspirations through the traditional Labour image. The question of Labour becoming in a deep sense the majority party of society is therefore not whether it can rally and modernise that past, but whether it has a convincing alternative scenario to Thatcherism in the future. It cannot build such an alternative by, however honourably, replaying "1945" in 1987. It can only honour its' past by aiming to move forwards. But to do so it needs a strategy for modernisation and an image of modernity. What the election suggests is that Labour, far from opening the hard road to renewal, largely turned its' back on it...(2)

Labour in the 1980s lacked a clear, identifiable image, and an agenda-grabbing set of policies to boost its popularity. It spent most of the decade merely opposing the Conservatives - fighting on ground chosen by its enemy. It tried to distance itself from its past; but it still remained vulnerable to Tory criticism - for example, the ritual invocation of the Winter of Discontent. Labour - or at least the

parliamentary party - tried to define those things that it was not; it was not in the unions pocket, it was not divided (unless that divide was between the "responsible", "moderate" leadership and the obviously insane left-wing), it was not extreme. But it had nothing to set against this pile of negatives; it never managed to define what it was.

### LABOUR'S INTERRUPTED MARCH

In 1978, Eric Hobsbawm delivered what was to become a famous, if controversial, analysis of the problems of the labour movement. In that year's Marx Memorial Lecture, published, with replies, as The Forward March of Labour Halted?, he concluded that -

...the forward march of Labour and the labour movement, which Marx predicted, appears to have come to a halt in this century about twenty-five to thirty years ago. Both the working class and the labour movement since then have been passing through a period of crisis, or, if you prefer to be mealy mouthed about it, of adoption to a new situation.(3)

Hobsbawm pointed out that, since 1951, Labour's share of the popular vote had been declining steadily (with one exception, in 1966). This coincided with the growth of sectionalism in the trade-union movement (a tendency to pursue the interests of one set of workers, irrespective of the wider interests of the class) and a change in the nature of the working class (a drift away from manual labour, a decline in the numbers of the industrial proletariat). Hobsbawm did not see this decline as inevitable; rather, the Labour party could have seized the initiative and shaped itself to the new movements in society. The workers had not been bought off by post-war prosperity -

...even at the peak of the "affluent society" and the great capitalist boom of the middle 1960s, there were signs of real recovery of impetus and dynamism: the resumed growth of trade unions, not to mention the great religious struggles, the sharp rise in the Labour vote in 1966, the radicalisation of students, intellectuals and others in the late 1960s. If we are to explain the stagnation or crisis, we have to look at the Labour party and the labour movement itself. The workers, and growing strata outside the manual workers, were looking to it for a lead and policy. They did not get it. They got the Wilson years - and many of them lost faith and hope in the mass party of the working people.(4)

The analysis sparked off a debate (conducted through the pages of Marxism Today) that was notable for the breadth of contributions - from the S.N.P., the Communist and Labour parties, from trade union leaders, labour activists and M.P.s. The controversy was not caused by the information that Hobsbawm had amassed; all of the facts and figures were in the public domain already. What startled was the conclusion; Hobsbawm's analysis cut at the roots of traditional Labour philosophy.

In the 60s and 70s, Labour had styled itself as the only party that could manage the corporate state effectively. When the political climate changed, it took time for the left to notice it.

...What was plain to some from the beginning, and for what very many is now [1981] slowly sinking in, is that we have recently lived through a major defeat...Who among us could have believed, in 1945 or 1966, or even in 1974, that at the beginning of the 1980s we would have not only a powerful right-wing government, trying with some success to go back to the policies and the economics of the 1930s, but - even worse - a social order that has literally decimated the British working class, imposing the cruelty of several million unemployed.(5)

The "major defeat" was, to a great extent, self-inflicted. Thatcherism was pushing at the foundations of the post-war settlement, but those foundations were already structurally unsound. In the period 1974 to 1979, the corporate state - the three-way union between government, management and the unions, the consensus that shaped the welfare state (and its cultural arm, the Arts Council) came crashing noisily down.

The 1945-51 Labour Government was, according to the demonology of the New Right, the time when "creeping socialism" first began to roll insidiously over the green fields of England. As Claus Offe noted in 1972, the description is at least half true -

...The Conservatives ...are partly correct in their assessment of the welfare state as "creeping socialism", not because it is socialism, but because it creeps. The welfare state is developing step-by-step, reluctantly and involuntarily.(6)



Labour in power never tried to build the bright new socialist machine; it tried to fine-tune a capitalist one. It is worth remembering that the economist whose theories were used in the creation of the welfare state - Maynard Keynes - saw state intervention in the market-place as the surest way of keeping the socialists out. After 1945, the working class did not find that it was suddenly powerful; Atlee and company were in charge, and the people were there to be ruled. Ruled benevolently; but still ruled -

...Even the Solomon of the left socialism of the day, Harold Laski, reproduced this assumption when he wrote, unguardedly, "the pride every citizen in this country is bound to have in the amazing heroism and endurance of the common people"...Fiscal policy, American loans, the cold war, the preservation of the existing constitution, and Britain's imperial role - all testified to a continuity of assumptions from the days of pre-1914 progressive Liberal imperialism. Globally and nationally, the post-war Labour government was the last and most glorious flowering of late Victorian liberal philanthropy.(7)

Labour's heritage as a party committed to taking power at the parliamentary level made this kind of thinking apparently logical; but what underlay it was an indifference - almost a contempt - for the grassroots supporters of the party. Part of the reason for the Forward March of Labour Halted controversy was that Hobsbawm called this attitude into question. It was assumed that, somewhere out there in the country, there was a large bloc of Labour voters who would get out of their council houses automatically and deliver their vote to the party. They were not supposed to have ideas of their own -

..."Labourism", or Labour socialism, has been marked from its' origins by its Fabian inheritance. The expansion of the state machine, under the management of

state servants and experts, has often been defined in this tradition as synonymous with socialism itself. Labour has been willing to use this state to reform conditions for working people, so long as this did not interfere with the "logic" of capitalist accumulation. But it has refused like the plague the mobilisation of democratic power at the popular level. This has always been the site on which Labour has been brought back from the brink into its' deep reverence for "constitutionalism". Nothing, indeed, rattles the equanimity of Labour leaders as the spectacle of the popular classes on the move under their own steam, outside the range of "responsible" guidance and leadership. The fact is that "statism" is not foreign to the trajectory of Labour socialism; it is intrinsic to it. Corporatism is only the latest form in which this deep commitment to using the state on behalf of the people, but without popular mobilisation, has manifested itself.(8)

If Thatcherism likes to see itself as a "hands off" philosophy, then Labourism's hands were on, at least in theory. The state and the economy were not to be restructured; Labourism saw the state as essentially neutral, a series of controls that the party in power operated. The crucial metaphor here is that of the Ship of State; a craft that can be made to sail sensibly, moderately and responsibly towards the horizon. After all, according to Antony Crosland (in The Uses Of Socialism) the socialist victory had already been won. The welfare state redistributed the wealth that the supervised market created; the ship could journey into the future, while the captain and the crew held her steady.

Ironically, corporatism's Indian summer was the 1950s when the Conservatives were in power. The world economy was stable, and steady growth seemed assured; the system looked as if it was working, delivering low inflation and high employment. As it was, much of that success was illusory; the stability of the U.S. economy had more to do with the U.K. economy's success than the U.K.'s corporate structure. When the world economy began to falter in the 1960s, the British economy followed the general trend; there was a balance of payments crisis in 1964, and sterling was devalued in 1967. Slowly, the three-way consensus began to break down.

The first major break with the post-war settlement was the two-year ascendancy of Selwyn Selousfield in the Heath Government from 1970 to 1972. The attempt failed; union militancy broke the main strut of Conservative policy, the Industrial Relations Act (which would have made unions liable for contracts lost during strike action). Heath retreated, adroitly executing the political manoeuvre that so enraged his education minister, soon to be his successor - the U-turn.

Heath lost power in 1974, and Labour took office. It had pledged, while in opposition, to improve incomes and benefits for workers, to increase the scope of the welfare state and the public sector, and to improve the economy by increased cooperation with the unions. A pact with the T.U.C. - called The Social Contract - had promised increased industrial and economic democracy in return for wage and

price controls. Labour came to power promising calm after the storm, much as Margaret Thatcher did in 1979.

At the outset, the unions were happy with the Social Contract. Jack Jones (the leader of the Transport and General Workers Union), in language reminiscent of the triumphalism of 1945, declared that the labour movement as a whole was heading for the New Jerusalem.

The new programme was a radical one -

The content of the Government's part of any future "social contract" was clear - radical and innovatory policy in the field of industrial relations, housing prices, social benefits, and investment and industrial democracy.(9)

The "radical and innovatory policy" needed economic stability to work properly. Unfortunately, economic stability was not exactly common in the mid-1970s. O.P.E.C. increased the price of crude oil in 1973-4, sparking economic crisis in the industrialised world. In Britain, Heath's chancellor - Anthony Barber - had engineered a spurt of growth that lasted from 1973 to the following year. In 1974 the "Barber Boom" went bust, and the U.K. economy faced another balance of payments crisis. The new Labour Government was caught, trying to respond to the world's problems and the local difficulties they had inherited; in these circumstances, the social programme suffered - a fact more depressing than surprising.

James Callaghan (who replaced Harold Wilson as Prime Minister in 1976) and Dennis Healey (the Chancellor) eventually called in the International Monetary Fund to bail the economy out -

The revision that was preached by Gaitskell and Crossland was killed, not by the left, but by the I.M.F., which simply said to the 1976 Labour Cabinet, "We are not allowing you to do that any more. Whatever you choose to do, we are not having this high level of public expenditure because we regard it as undesirable".(10)

Encouraged by the I.M.F., Labour began to cut public expenditure and to target the growth of the money supply; the party slid into monetarism three years before the Conservatives declared it to be the new political dogma.

Stripped of its social-programme aspects, the Social Contract became a simple wages contract. It was divided into four sections, or phases -

With inflation running to 26%, Phase One, initiated in July, 1975, called for an across-the-board limit of £6 a week on [wage] increases (a measure that would reduce pay differentials as well as control wage demands). Introduced in June, 1976, Phase Two set a 4.5% wage limit with a £4 maximum, to remain in effect until July 31, 1977. The strategy foundered early, however, hurt by the precipitous decline in sterling in 1976 (it dropped 50 cents against the dollar). Unemployment approached 1.5 million and inflation substantially outstripped wage increases. By May 1977, inflation had been brought down to 17.1% but with no official challenge to the 4.5% limit from any union, the rate of increases in wages was limited to 8.8%. This left a gap of more than 8% between the movement of prices and earnings, the largest such gap in the postwar U.K.(11)

By 1977, the unions had suffered two years of wage restraint; when Phase Three was introduced (in July of that year) some unions had already declared their opposition to

the 10% wage ceiling it imposed. There was a wave of unofficial action; skilled workers, whose pay differentials were under threat, struck at Ford, Leyland, the Port Talbot steelworks, and Heathrow. Phase Three only provoked one national strike, however. The Firemen's Union struck for eight weeks in 1977, before settling within the Government's 10% limit. The Social Contract's success or failure was still undecided; during Phase Three, wages rose by an average of 14.2% and prices rose by 7.8%, reversing the previous year's trend. Inflation was down, and the I.M.F.'s terms had been met.

Phase Four settled the question. The three way contract of the corporate state had already broken down; the Confederation of British Industries had already withdrawn from the Social Contract. Relations between the T.U.C. and the Labour Government had been strained by Phase Three; Phase Four proved too much for the unions to take.

Phase Four set a 5% norm for pay rises. It is hard to decide what logic underlay the Government's strategy; if a 10% pay norm had provoked a wave of unofficial strikes, then surely the quickest way to make those strikes official was to lower that limit. Labour, however, had decided that this was the correct policy; they were sure enough of it to enforce it without cooperation. The results were predictable.

At the T.U.C.'s annual conference in September 1978, the unions rejected any arbitrary pay limits. From there, it was

only a matter of time before the Government's wages policy was challenged directly. The "Winter of Discontent" - a gift to the Conservatives' public relations machine - hit the Callaghan Government just at the moment when it had begun to look for possible election dates. It started with a 9-week strike by workers at Ford; after that, most of the industrial action was in the public sector, where wage settlements were the Government's responsibility. Train drivers, civil servants, public utility workers, ambulance drivers, tanker and lorry drivers, local government workers and ancillary hospital staff all struck at one time or another. The right-wing press milked the situation for photo-opportunities; for a while it seemed as though there were dead bodies lying in piles of uncollected rubbish at every street corner. Five years previously, the Heath Government had been fatally wounded by industrial action; the Callaghan Government was receiving the same wounds - from what was supposed to be its own side. The irony has not passed unnoticed -

If the backcloth to the Labour Government's arrival in office in 1974 had been the successful miners' strike against the incomes policy of Edward Heath, the backcloth to the Government's departure in 1979 was a pay revolt of an even greater scale. The number of workers involved in strikes in January 1979 was the largest of any month since May 1968, and the number of working days lost the greatest since February 1974, at the height of the three day week...Four years of wage restraint may have given British capitalism a breathing space in industrial costs, but they gave the Labour Government in the end industrial unrest and electoral defeat.(12)

The irony runs deeper than that, however. One of Thatcherism's favourite images is of a Labour party peering out of a

union baron's pocket. Don't vote Labour, the slogan runs; you might as well vote for the T.U.C. In fact, the Labour Government of 1974-79 got into trouble, not because it was a plaything of the workers, but because it thought it could ignore the workers. Michael Rustin's description of Harold Wilson applies equally to James Callaghan in his last months in office -

[The] previously left-of-centre Wilson set his constitutional prerogatives as Prime Minister above any other claims on him, and asserted the power of Government over the claims of party. "The government must govern", he proclaimed, and this turned out to signify not the independence of Government vis-a-vis the International Monetary Fund or the United States, but vis-a-vis the Trades Unions and the Labour Party conference.(13)

#### **THE BATTLE FOR LABOUR.**

After 1979, the Labour party seemed to tear itself apart. Leadership and deputy leadership elections, debate over mandatory re-selection of M.P.s and electoral colleges, and right-wing schism, as the Gang of Three became the Gang of Four, and then became the Social Democrats - the party seemed to fragment. During the 1980-1 recession, when the Government was crippled and divided against itself, Labour spent more time tearing at its own innards than it did at the Governments'. It began to look as though the party was in terminal decline; as its vote dropped, Labour conferences and executive meetings became the sites of a struggle for the party's future.

This battle, for the popular press, the various centre groupings, the Conservatives and the right wing of the Labour Party, was a straight knock-down-drag-out fight between a moderate leadership and a voracious left-wing that had almost taken over the party completely. The struggle against the left served as a convenient scapegoat, and a macho test of strength for the Labour leadership -

An atmosphere was created, from the moment of Tony Benn's campaign for deputy leadership in which the left was publicly defined as the enemy, not only by the press but also by the Shadow Cabinet itself. Moreover, each successive party leader, first Foot and then Kinnock, went a step further and set as his test of leadership his prowess in felling the left. In the 1983 election and even more centrally in the buildup to the 1987 election the defeat of the left became an electoral strategy. The left was ill-equipped to counter this onslaught. The potential which existed in the early eighties to build on the democratic reforms, the revival of many local parties, the growth of political debate in the unions, to establish a popular socialism was lost. The exceptions, such as the G.L.C., Sheffield and Manchester City Councils, where the left had a platform independent of the leadership illustrate that the potential was real.

The weakening of the left was further achieved when the parliamentary leadership and the press alike blamed them for the 1983 election defeat. From then on, all that represented the left - the miners' strike, the Wapping dispute and local authority rate-capping included - was seen by the new leadership as an obstacle to electoral success.(14)

Michael Foot versus Peter Tatchell, Neil Kinnock versus Sharon Atkin or Derek Hatton; the battle-lines seem clear. The responsible leadership fighting off the wreckers. Trotskyist, feminist, gay, black or whatever; let them come. The leader crouches in his fox-hole, sten-gun cocked.

As one might expect, it was not that simple. The split was

not between the left and the right only, but also between the tradition of centralising socialism and the "new left" - a loose amalgum of forces working both inside and outside the Labour Party. In contrast to traditional centralism, the new left, or radical left, or rainbow alliance left, or whatever it was called, tried to redirect power back down the political structure to the grassroots.

The "new left" grew from the collapse of corporatism, and the disillusionment of many on the left with the Wilson and Callaghan Governments of the 1960s and 70s. The Labour party lost much of its potential support during this period -

When I [Ken Livingstone] first joined the Labour party in March 1969..., it was one of the few recorded instances of a rat climbing on board a sinking ship. I was swimming against a tide of disillusionment. All the high hopes of Labour's 1964 General Election victory had been squandered by the incompetence of Harold Wilson's first government. Not only were few joining the party, but many good socialists had resigned. Wilson's support for the American bombing of Vietnam, racist immigration laws, a wage freeze, cuts in the National Health Service and housing programmes, as well as anti-trade-union laws had triggered an exodus from the Labour party. The International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers Party), the Socialist Labour League (now the Workers' Revolutionary Party), and a whole range of single issue groups such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Shelter, and the Child Poverty Action Group all gained from Labour's loss.(15)

However, not all of these activists were lost to the Labour party for all time. Some stayed on, and others found their way into the party as the 1970s progressed; once there, they began to construct a new set of ideas and priorities far removed from Labour's traditional priorities - though not removed from all strands of Labour thought. Hilary Wain-

wright has identified two main strands to Labour party thought. The first, which she calls the "ameliorative tradition", is Labourism; the idea that the state is neutral, to be used by the government to govern. The second tradition, hidden to some extent by the post-war success of the first, is the "transformative tradition"; a tradition that sees the state itself as part of the problem, as something which has to be changed if socialism is ever to be achieved. As the failure of corporatism became more apparent, "transformism" started to attract converts from the "ameliorative" tradition -

Out of this combination has come a new transformative movement, allying with traditions entirely independent of Labourism - Marxism, syndicalism, pacifism and ecology. In practice, though too fluid and contradictory yet to produce a theory, this new tradition envisages a different kind of state as well as a different basis on which to organise production...(16)

Perhaps the new left's most visible manifestation so far was between 1981 and 1986 - the years when Labour controlled the Greater London Council.

## THE G.L.C.

Labour came to power in London on the 7th of May, 1981. On the 8th, a meeting of the new Labour ruling group ousted their leader, Andrew Mackintosh, in favour of one Ken Livingstone -

The worst nightmares about the Greater London Council and its new masters on the far left seem to be coming true even faster than we had feared. Mr. Ken Livingstone and his fellows have steamrollered their more moderate (and experienced) colleagues out of the way in record time...The truth which the left will never acknowledge is that they are operating on a non-existent mandate. Labour won the election under the moderate Mr. Mackintosh (and small thanks he got). The left's best known candidate, Mr. Ted Knight, was rejected out of hand by the voters of Lambeth, against the tide everywhere else. So now it is up to the Government, and in particular to Mr. Michael Heseltine (the Environment Secretary), Mr. William Whitelaw (Home Secretary) and Mr. Mark Carlisle (Education Secretary) to keep some measure of control over London's spending, policing and education.(17) The G.L.C. never enjoyed a honeymoon period with the press, or with anyone else. From the start, it was controversial. Its profile was kept high by the media, and by the Government; the G.L.C. came to stand in for all the supposed excesses of the Labour left. The leadership election provided the right-wing press and the Government with an immediate chance to denigrate the new Council. It was argued that what had happened in the G.L.C. would happen in the Labour party, if it ever managed to dupe the British people into voting for it: The supposedly unshakeable moderate leadership would vanish, and a bunch of joyless Trots would swarm out of the backrooms like cockroaches and infest the party. It wasn't important that the G.L.C. implemented the manifesto it had fought the election on; it didn't matter that Mackintosh's possible demotion was public knowledge (the Conservatives under Sir Horace Cutler had made great play of it in the campaign). In the rush to brand the new Council as extreme and dangerous, all this was forgotten.

As the G.L.C. developed, the rhetoric against it developed. Red Ken Kept salamanders. He spoke on gay rights. He spoke on Ireland. He put the rates up. He put propaganda on the rates he had just put up. He overspent. He overspent on strange, subversive things -

black groups, gay groups, women's groups, and the like. Never mind that the grants that the G.L.C. handed out never amounted to very much - £40 million spread over 1,000 groups in 1983, out of a total budget for that year of £867 million. The image was fixed; and those who helped to fix it knew what they were doing -

Cecil Taylor, the Tory deputy leader, had once bragged in the member's bar that every "queer-bashing speech I make is worth another 1,000 votes in Ruislip Northwood", his constituency. When we started to fund lesbian and gay groups, the press and several backbench Tory M.P.s kept up a constant stream of homophobic articles and speeches...

The worst press distortion came when we were asked by the Gay Teenage Group to fund a research project into the needs of lesbians and gays up to the age of 21. Immediately, the Tory rent-a-quote M.P.s were up in arms. "You are encouraging it", they screamed. But the G.T.G. report painted a picture of such despair and anguish that no responsible central or local authority could ignore it....

The press continued to focus their coverage on these issues to the exclusion of others, and gave the impression that you could only get funding if you were a disabled black lesbian peace activist. To prove how irresponsible we were being with ratepayer's money, The Daily Mail created a phony women's organisation to apply to us for a grant, but they never got beyond the first stages of the rigorous vetting procedure.(18)

It is impossible to over-estimate the amount of crude, basic prejudice that the G.L.C. excited. The response of the Tory party and the right-wing press was a strange mixture of revulsion, glee and panic; revulsion at the nature of the groups funded, glee at the provision of another stick with which to beat the Labour leadership, and panic at the thought that the G.L.C. was buying itself a permanent ticket to power.

The theory was that, by giving out grants to special interest groups, the G.L.C. was amassing a constituency on whose support they could rely; a kind of block vote of untouchables. This idea was put forward memorably by Richard Brew, who led the Tory group on the G.L.C. in 1982 -

In the May 1981 elections the turnout in the decisive marginals was about fifty per cent. This means that the Socialists were returned in such seats on a vote of below twenty-five per cent of the electorate. Livingstone is not interested in the support of "Londoners" - that is too difficult. He only needs twenty-five per cent of Londoners - and this is how he's going about it. Leaving aside the ideologically committed, he is seeking out the feminists and the gay activists. He is topping up these with the ethnic groups and the Irish. He is mobilising the anti-police brigade and he is seeking out the pressure groups - CND, Babies against the Bomb, and so on. In other words he is going for the nutters. As everyone knows, what nutters want is a plentiful supply of nuts. And these Livingstone is providing through the G.L.C.'s grants policy...In this whole question of grants, do not fall into the trap of mocking the Socialists over some of the questionable organisations they are funding. It is not at all a case of Livingstone having lost his sense of the ridiculous, as some people say, but rather it is hard-headed manipulation...It is vital that we Conservatives do not make the mistake of laughing too loudly at what we may feel are "own goals" being scored by the Socialists. They know exactly what they are doing and where they want to go - twenty-five per cent of the vote.(19)

From a party elected by one third of the total electorate, that has tried to create a "share-owning democracy" that will identify its interests with those of the Tories, this is rather hypocritical. But it also implies a view of the world that excludes whole sections of humanity. It is as though there are two groups of people; "ordinary people" and the rest. The rest are black, gay, feminist, disabled, Irish or otherwise unimportant; "ordinary people", being by definition none of these things, are the only kind of people worth representing.

The Conservative attack has some basis in truth. The G.L.C. did give money to the groups and cultures that the Tories had identified; not only that, but the Council encouraged representatives from these groups and cultures to come into County Hall and take part in the decision-making process. This was not, however, an attempt to buy votes from those who had not yet been exploited. The central idea behind the Council's grant decisions was typically new left; it wanted to send power back down through the structure, to democratise the decision-making process -

...From early on, many people in the G.L.C. came to see the working relationships which developed between the council and its' constituents as a crucial element - even the crucial element - of economic and industrial policy.

The new G.L.C. administration came in with an unusually detailed economic policy in its' manifesto. The aim was to create jobs and improve employment conditions, through the coordinated use of all the different powers by which the G.L.C. could influence the economy of London. The policies included the formation of the Greater London Enterprise Board (G.L.E.B.) to invest funds in the private sector, the improvement of employment and working conditions within the Council, and the use of Council powers such as purchasing and grant-giving as tools of economic intervention.

In addition, the manifesto sketched a commitment to an innovatory method of making economic policy. It was to be developed with the participation of working people. It aimed to strengthen the control of working class Londoners over resources and policy. In the manifesto's words -

Our vision of the future is a city in which the elected representatives take the lead in economic planning - with maximum community involvement - for a prosperous London.

And, somewhat more forcibly:

We shall set out to increase the element of democratic control over industrial decisions, control by elected authorities and control by working people in their workplaces.(20)

Although, as Mackintosh and Wainwright note, policy lagged behind philosophy -

The manifesto gave few details of how these very general aims were to be achieved, beyond a commitment to developing structures of industrial democracy beyond the Council, to trade union involvement in planning agreements that G.L.E.B. invested, and to support for workers' resistance to closures and redundancies.

Right from the start, therefore, economic policy at the G.L.C. contained an unresolvable tension: between on the one hand centralised, "strategic" economic intervention, run by an arm of the state, and on the other hand the democratising of economic policy, which meant giving up some control over economic policies and resources to those people affected.(21)

The Council's economic policy reflected its wider political and cultural approach; the emphasis of policy making was, at least in theory, to change - and the "unresolvable tension" between strategy and devolution was to replicate itself throughout the Council's history.

That history has already been well documented (in Livingstone's autobiography, If Voting Changed Anything They'd Abolish It, and in John Carvel's Citizen Ken). The G.L.C.'s time in office was never calm. It could have lived with a bad press; but its five years were marked by conflict, with the Government and with London's Tory-controlled boroughs. The Council fought over rate-capping, public transport and finally over its own future. However, the G.L.C. did not change course to give itself an easier time; the idea of

wider participation, of greater democratisation, stayed in place.

This determination to hold faith no matter what is reminiscent of nothing so much as the Thatcherite Tory party; and the two echo each other in other ways, too. Both mark an advance on their respective parties' traditional way of thinking. Unlike Labourism or One-Nation Conservatism, neither Thatcherism nor the G.L.C. took the state for granted; both saw the state as the site of struggle, as a series of positions to be occupied. Both came to power determined to give power previously held by the state to the "people".

Their conceptions of "the people", however, differed radically. Thatcherism, as described in chapter 1, sees "the people" as a series of discrete autonomous bourgeois families, who need only the freedom to operate in the market. The G.L.C. saw the people as heterogeneous rather than homogeneous; a collection of interlinked groups who had to be worked with, not for. And if that meant throwing open the gate at County Hall, so be it.

## THE G.L.C.'S ARTS POLICY.

The Conservative administration that Labour replaced in 1981 had geared its' funding policy towards large-scale, high profile cultural flagships - the National Theatre, the Hayward Gallery and so on. Under Labour, things were going to be different -

...Tony Banks, the chair of Arts and Receptions, lost little time in drawing up policy proposals for the Arts in London. In a discussion paper of June 1981, he argued passionately that the G.L.C. should bridge the gap between the arts and the people, and should go about this by funding community based arts activities...(22)

The G.L.C. was the first funding body to attach itself to the concept of community arts, and to change its funding policies accordingly. It did not prioritise artforms, except in very broad terms; it funded groups in relation to the audiences that the groups themselves wished to reach.

The Arts and Receptions Committee, in common with the rest of the Council, saw the community as an interconnected series of groups - women, young people, the various ethnic communities, the gay community, the elderly, the unemployed and so on. The Committee decided to prioritise these groups; after all, these were the people that traditional arts provision had ignored. The Committee did not treat these groups as separate from each other, with their own specific strengths and problems -

... Indeed, if there is too great an emphasis on separation there is a danger of creating social fragmentation...(23)

Specific targeting, it was felt, would at least help to redress the more obvious inequalities.

The G.L.C.'s arts policy set the committee's funding decisions within a wider cultural framework in which a community policy could flourish -

...In each of the cultural industries, powerful and disturbing tendencies can be seen; towards massive concentrations of power, towards narrowing of choice, towards a deepening of sexist and racist prejudices and the cult of violence, and towards an exploitation of the more passive forms of leisure. In parallel, however, the seeds of an alternative that the G.L.C. has done much to foster [are growing]...It is an alternative based on promoting diversity, on breaking down the barriers between makers and doers, and on using new technologies to enhance choice and participation...(24)

This analysis was based on the idea that the cultural process is largely determined by the social and economic structure in which it is made. Traditionally, art was considered as separate from the structures and forces of the market: Even the Arts Council's marketing strategies rely on the idea that art is somehow above the marketplace, and has to be introduced to the marketplace only after it has been formed.

These ideas were not the G.L.C.'s own. Placing the artist within society is a feature of the work of Raymond Williams; in The Long Revolution, for example, Williams is careful to establish the social, communal function of art as a means of communication within society -

The arts, like other ways of describing and communicating, are learned human skills, which must be known and practised in a community before their great power in

conveying experience can be used and developed. Human community grows by the discovery of common meanings and common means of communication...The individual creative description is part of the general process which creates conventions and institutions, through which the meanings that are valued by the community are shared and made active. This is the true significance of our modern definition of culture, which insists on this community of process.(25)

Moving art into the community derives, in part, from Joan Littlewood's concept of "fun palaces for the people". The community arts movement of the 1970s tied these two ideas together; the groups' work was determined by their own position within society, and they addressed themselves to specific audiences, usually those audiences who would not normally attend. The G.L.C. though, was the first funding body to take these ideas on board, and to try and act upon them.

That, at least, was the theory. However, as with other G.L.C. initiatives, policy lagged behind philosophy. There were considerable difficulties in getting the machinery in place, and, when it was in place, in getting it to work. The structure, and the theory behind it, emerged piecemeal, in response to the various pressures the Arts and Recreations Committee and its sub-Committees found themselves under.

Labour did not have an arts policy when it was elected. The only mention of art in their manifesto was not one likely to panic the arts establishment; Labour committed itself to maintain the G.L.C.'s holdings without raising prices. They did not commit themselves to any structural reform, either; from the manifesto, it seemed as though Arts and Receptions would remain subordinate to the G.L.C.'s Finance Committee, as it had been under the Conservatives.

The initial pressure for change came from Tony Banks, the first chairman of the Committee (a post he held for two and a half years). He inherited an arts budget of just over £9 million, of which approximately £3 million was shared between the English National Opera, London Festival Ballet, and the London Orchestral Concert Board -

The new administration decided that all this was to change. The new chair put forward the view that less should be spent on buildings and more on innovative arts activities. He suggested that the G.L.C. should open discussions with the performing arts unions about funding theatre co-operatives and that the G.L.C. should organise many more arts activities of its own. The original aim was to withdraw funding from English National Opera and the National Theatre and to hand these companies over to the Arts Council. This seemed a sensible plan as the Arts Council already provided these companies with most of their funding. In exchange, the G.L.C. would relieve the Arts Council of all responsibility for the London Festival Ballet and for the Greater London Arts Association...By taking over the functions of the Greater London Arts Association the G.L.C. would be able to fund local arts activities serving identifiable communities and have arts officers who could develop close links with the boroughs.(26)

These proposals fell through; but, already, Banks' thinking was clear. From the first he was determined to help redistribute arts provision, and to involve the artists themselves.

A month after Labour took power (June 1981), Banks drew up an initial discussion paper, in which he prioritised funding policies which recognised the need for increased community involvement, the need to alleviate unemployment, the need for closer links with the borough councils and the Inner London Education Authority, and the multi-cultural nature of the city. True to the G.L.C.'s new approach, Banks decided to hold a conference, to debate the discussion paper's ideas

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The conference was chaired by Lord Hugh Jenkins, a former Labour Minister for the arts. Over three hundred people crammed themselves into the National Film Theatre on the South Bank to take part in the debate. Not surprisingly, major gulfs appeared during the debate between the large arts bodies already being funded and the small non-funded arts groups, as well as between groups representing traditional forms such as theatre and contemporary forms such as film and video. The vast majority of those attending the conference supported the views of the original discussion paper, and spoke eloquently about the need for more money for ethnic arts and community groups.(27)

This description does not quite capture the flavour of the conference. The community groups found themselves seated at the back of the conference hall, behind representatives from the Hayward Gallery and the National Theatre. According to Alan Tomkins(28), this - and the feeling that they were not being allowed to speak - did not endear them to the new administration. Tomkins, who at that time was working with the Inner London Education Authority, spoke at the meeting not only about the low level of arts funding then available, but also about the tendency of those funds to gravitate towards white, middle-class groups. After he had spoken, he and the community groups left the meeting. As they left,

Lord Jenkins asked "Is there to be order or anarchy?" "Anarchy", they answered.

After the conference, Tony Banks contacted Tomkins; they met, and as a result of that meeting Tomkins became policy adviser to the Arts and Receptions Committee. The idea of a policy adviser for each of the G.L.C.'s committees was put forward by Ken Livingstone. Although the Local Government Act provided for the appointment of advisers, those that Livingstone appointed were to have a directly political role. They were to brief the chair on policy, cajole the bureaucracy, and open up the committee to public scrutiny. These appointments made the G.L.C.'s existing bureaucracy distinctly uneasy; not merely because of their explicitly political nature - it was felt that political motivation necessarily equalled inefficiency.

The first few meetings of the main committee and its sub-committees must have made the bureaucrats even more uneasy. When Labour came to power, Arts and Receptions was given full committee status with the power to determine a budget. As the Committee had not funded community or ethnic arts before, initially all that this new status meant was that it had the same approach with more power. As the initial conference demonstrated, the community did not have a high opinion of the G.L.C.; some felt that they should have nothing to do with the Council at all. If it was to reach these groups, the G.L.C. would have to change itself.

The setting-up of the Community Arts Sub-Committee was an exercise in power politics. Tomkins contacted the Women's Committee; they were receiving applications from women's arts groups that they could not consider because, at that time, funding arts groups was beyond their remit. Tomkins and Kate Crutchley (of the Women's Committee) sorted through the applications and chose those groups which met both the Arts and Recreations' and the Women's Committee's criteria. These groups were then submitted to the Labour group on the Council for funding; Tomkins and Crutchley told them that eleven of these applications were going to be forced through the next Arts and Recreations Committee meeting. At that meeting, Tomkins also pushed through the motion establishing a Community Arts Sub-Committee. The proposal and the groups it affected were packaged together; two potentially difficult committee meetings were collapsed into one.

The Sub-Committee's policy document, drawn up by Tomkins and the women's groups that he and Crutchley had chosen, was kept deliberately vague. A committee's policy document also served as its legal document, determining what the committee could or could not do; a vague remit, instructing the Sub-Committee to fund community arts without entering into a debate about what community art is, meant, in theory, that the Sub-Committee could fund as many groups as possible, legally.

The Sub-Committee consisted of the chair, Tony Banks (who co-chaired the main committee and the sub-committee), the

policy adviser, Alan Tomkins, one finance officer and one legal adviser, the officers concerned with the groups whose claims were to be assessed, the advisers to the committee, two Labour and one Conservative councillors, and, in the gallery, the public. The Sub-Committee's advisers were picked for the same reason as Tomkins was; they were broadly in favour of G.L.C. policy and they had experience of community arts. The drama advisers, for example, included Rod Brooks (who had worked with Freeform in Hackney), Jean Hart (who lectured on community arts, and had worked with the Women's Theatre Group and the Half-Moon Theatre), Jill Posener (who wrote Any Woman Can for Gay Sweatshop) and Liz Weston (who had worked with the Covent Garden Community Theatre Company and Beryl and the Perils). The audience, newly allowed into the committee meetings, mainly consisted of people in the areas the Sub-Committee was supposed to fund.

At its' first meeting, the Sub-Committee took four hours to process one grant; the meeting was disrupted by the advisers disagreeing. The advisers saw this as healthy discussion; to the newly admitted public, it looked more like chaos. It soon became obvious that a more unified Sub-Committee would not only speed up the grant-awarding process, but also inspire more confidence amongst the groups themselves. So, before each meeting, the advisers met to discuss the groups that would come before the Sub-Committee. This ensured that the Sub-Committee ran more smoothly; it did not ensure that

the decisions it took were not problematic. Some of the grant-awards that the Sub-Committee made proved unpalatable for the main Committee; the main Committee could not understand why it should fund a photography group, or a video-making collective. Eventually, Banks had to read the riot act (in Tomkins' words) to the main Committee; he told them that such groups were to be funded, no matter what.(30) The early history of the Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee was also troubled, and demonstrated, once again, the level of mistrust the G.L.C. had to combat. The Sub-Committee was set up in 1982 by the Arts and Receptions Committee in collaboration with the Ethnic Minority Unit. Again, the G.L.C. held a conference -

Contributions explored the possible ways in which the G.L.C. could put an end to underfunding, and help consolidate the fragile institutions of Black arts. They were focussed in their appreciation of the problems, and positive in their suggested solutions. The main contributors included Imruh Caesar of Kuumba Productions, who spoke on film and video; Jatinder Verma of Tara Arts, who spoke on Asian theatre; Farrukh Dhondy of the Black Theatre Co-op, speaking on Afro-Caribbean Theatre; Glen Noble on dance; Tara Rajkumar on Indian classic dance; Prabhu Guptara on literature; Ossie Gibbs on festivals; Jacques Compton on local authority funding; Errol Lloyd of M.A.A.S. [the Minority Arts Advisory Service] on visual arts and crafts; Helen Denniston on arts centres; and Wilf Walker on Black music...(31)

The Sub-Committee was meant to have a short life; the clients it funded were originally to be passed on, either to the main Committee or the Community Arts Sub-Committee. However, Ethnic Arts found itself dealing with so many clients that the Sub-Committee became permanent by default.

Its first few meetings were chaotic, and after two months the Sub-Committee collapsed. Banks and Tomkins consulted; and, after an informal gathering at which the groups and the G.L.C.'s officers had a chance to meet and talk, they tried again. The first meeting of the new Sub-Committee had Banks in the chair. Again, the meeting was long and heated; as with Community Arts, only one grant was awarded. The audience (consisting, again, of representatives of the groups concerned) watched the meeting warily; They doubted the Sub-Committee's ability to enforce the grant applications that it approved. The Sub-Committee's advisers shared this wariness; it is fair to say that, had the single grant that the Sub-Committee decided on not been awarded promptly, the Sub-Committee would have lost the confidence of the community. As it was, the grant (£6,000 to a Black photography group) was rushed out to the client as quickly as possible; the Sub-Committee hired a motorcycle courier to get the grant to the photography group quickly. At the second meeting, the advisers told Banks and Tomkins that, although they still had reservations about the Sub-Committee, they would continue to work with it; they saw that their decisions would be carried out.(32)

These initial problems were largely smoothed over as the Arts and Receptions Committee and its Sub-Committees evolved. However, as the structure settled, other problems emerged.

Chief amongst these was the sheer bulk of applications that the various committees had to deal with. A report written for the Community Arts Sub-Committee in April 1983 gives some idea of the problem -

Since January the first, over 1,500 applications have been sent...and completed forms are being returned at the rate of 6 a day, of which 4 a day relate to Community Arts...

...[In] view of the number of application forms that have been sent out and the number of applications that can be expected from applicants who received grant aid last year, I estimate that before our normal cut-off point in November, a further 400-500 will be received.(33)

The report pointed out that the amount of money needed to honour each one of these applications would be £5 million - or the total amount that the Sub-Committee spent between 191/2 and 1984/5. It went on -

If the Community Arts Sub-Committee continue to act as at present to consider about 20 applications each meeting, they will deal with a total of only 140 applications by the end of December, leaving a possible backlog of 600.(34)

Ethnic Arts, even though it had a better backup structure (which later evolved into a Race Equality Unit, serving the whole Arts and Receptions Department), was similarly overstretched. Ethnic Arts developed a routine; one hundred groups were selected at the start of the financial year, and those groups were split between the Sub-Committee's officers. The officers had to produce six detailed reports every three weeks; this put great strain not only upon the structure the officers worked within, but also on the officers themselves. An officer's life tended to centre on the groups

that s/he was responsible for; otherwise there would simply not have been enough time to assess all of the clients.(35)

In a way, this was a problem of success. The G.L.C. had transmitted the correct signals to the kinds of groups that they wanted to reach. However, the bureaucracy (whether through inertia or incomprehension) did not adapt itself to accommodate the increased demands that were being made upon it; sometimes the groups and initiatives Arts and Recreations were interested in ran into bureaucratic marshland somewhere inside the Council's structure. Community Arts had to go to court for a ruling on funding women-only activities (although in that case the Council's chief legal officer wound up supporting the Sub-Committee). The first few meetings of the Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee took place with no coloured legal or financial officers present; it was only after the appointment of a full-time Race Equality Officer to the Arts and Recreations Department that the balance began to be redressed. Ethnic Arts, as part of its brief, helped the groups it funded to deal with the Council's bureaucracy. There does not seem to have been any direct antipathy to the work that Arts and Recreations was doing; rather, the Committee seems to have developed its practices and policies with no help from a largely uncomprehending bureaucracy. The Finance Department, for example, could not see why a semi-commercial operation (such as a community bookshop) should be thought suitable for funding.

Even though the structure settled down, the form that it settled into was not an ideal one. Policy statements had to negotiate a difficult path before they were ratified. A statement would be drafted by the advisers; it then went to the legal and financial officers, then to the Sub-Committee, then to the main Committee, then to the Council. Communications between the two Sub-Committees were not good -

...Attempts to jointly fund projects did not succeed with the exception of one festival. Insufficient contact between the two Sub-Committees meant that a combined strategy was never formulated. There were Black advisers on the Community Arts Sub-Committee to ensure representation but they were less committed to attending than other advisers, since they clearly felt that the majority of work relevant to black art was being achieved by the Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee.(36)

The problem was one of definition. Ethnic and community arts are not precise terms by any means - and the grey area between the two Sub-Committees was only resolved arbitrarily

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...In 1984 the Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee, wishing to define its margins more clearly, eventually stated that it would solely be funding black arts. It hoped, therefore, to transfer some of its funded groups (Hungarian, Chinese, Turkish) to the Community Arts Sub-Committee but proposed to do so without any transfer of money. The Community Arts Sub-Committee found it impossible to take the groups without the associated budget being transferred. The groups were placed in a difficult position. Some were sustained by the Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee and some were not. In short, the development of work with small ethnic minority groups within London remained at a very early stage compared to the tremendous strides made by Black groups.(37)

To say the least, this was not a satisfactory arrangement; and it was not resolved before the G.L.C. was abolished.

The funding of women's groups was never satisfactorily resolved, either. The Women's Committee, in a 1982 paper,

placed responsibility for funding women's arts groups with Arts and Receptions; this ended an embarrassing four months in which officers shuffled grant applications between the two Committees. Some applications got stuck in the bureaucracy; grants for one-off projects eventually had to be scrapped because they were dealt with too late.

In effect, the burden of funding women's arts groups fell on the Community Arts Sub-Committee, which was not adequately prepared for them. The advisers, as they saw it, were not directly responsible for ensuring that women's groups were funded: They saw themselves as artform advisers first. And, perhaps more damagingly, there was no fieldwork done on the status of women's groups in London, and no work done to encourage women's groups to apply. There were no specialist advisers or officers dealing with women's groups on the Sub-Committee; and there was not enough time to remedy the situation before abolition.

Policy initiatives on women's arts were few. In 1982 the Women's Arts and Media Group - a group set up by the Women's Committee - produced a policy document called "Women in the Arts". In 1985, the Women's Issue Group was set up within the Arts and Receptions Department. It was made up of representatives from all the sections of the department. However, the group's terms of reference were never defined clearly, and because its members lacked the time to develop their ideas, the group ceased to meet later that year.

The G.L.C. was committed to increasing the role of women within London; but in the case of Arts and Receptions, the structure failed to convert concern into action. This inertia on an issue that the Council had itself prioritised must be counted as a failure.

As part of its funding policy, the Community Arts Subcommittee decided to favour what it called twentieth century artforms over nineteenth century artforms. Nineteenth century artforms (theatre, opera, classical music, ballet and so on) had, it was thought, an inherently bourgeois structure that excluded most people. Twentieth century artforms (rock, video, film, modern dance and so on) were seen as growing out of mass culture, and, as such, accessible to a mass audience.

This analysis is, however, a rather strange one. Granted, in terms of audience profile, its place in "high culture", its usual production and admission costs, an artform like opera has never been a mass cultural form. However, the "bourgeois development" of theatre - the growth of the West End, the creation of high-profile cultural shrines in the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company - is only one part of its history. Theatre has a long tradition of opposition; if anything, the developments in political and community theatre in the 1960s and 1970s should have alerted the Sub-Committee to this continuing tradition. After all, there is nothing inherently bourgeois in the experience of watching, performing in or devising theatre. Theoretically at

least, theatre can be staged anywhere at any time by and for anybody. It is open to influence from those forms the Sub-Committee designated as twentieth-century. A company like Lumiere and Son, for example, incorporates modern dance and modern music into its theatrical work. Arguably, also, the idea that theatre cannot reach the mass audience that video can is flawed. Here there are echoes of the theatre/television debates of the 70s between John McGrath, David Edgar and Trevor Griffiths: It could be argued that video, for example, might reach a larger audience, but that audience is atomised, and more difficult to influence. A piece of theatre might not play to so many people, but it plays to a collective audience.

But, perhaps most tellingly, theatre is cheap. To start a band, to buy or hire video equipment, to start a community radio station requires a cash base; not everyone will have access to sufficient resources. Theatre, at least in principle, can be set up on a shoestring; it is therefore likely to be chosen by those without much money to start with. Certainly, there seem to have been more theatre groups seeking funding than there were video groups -

..When I [Peter Reid, Community Arts Sub-Committee officer] was interviewed for the job...the pile of applications for theatre was a yard high; the pile of applications for photography was about six inches high for photography, and for film and video, about nine inches. In effect, you could argue that this was the community telling the Community Arts Sub-Committee that it had got its policy wrong. You could argue that.(38)

Ethnic arts did not prioritise one artform over another; it felt that ethnic arts as a whole were so discriminated against that each artform needed boosting. But there is no doubt that many groups applying for funding from the Community Arts Sub-Committee did not get it because they were drama groups. In its second year, the Sub-Committee decided not to fund any new drama companies; this meant that, for example, the women's theatre groups that had applied for grants during the Sub-Committee's first year, and had their applications shuffled off into bureaucratic limbo, lost their chance of funding.

The structural problems that the Arts and Recreations Department had did not prevent it from helping arts groups in areas that otherwise would not have received money or support. The Department's success in raising money from the G.L.C.'s central budget was impressive. When Labour came to power, The G.L.C. spent £9 million on the arts; by 1983, this had doubled to £18.5 million. Such an expansion could not but help the groups concerned; when Cartoon Archetypal Slogan Theatre were trying to re-establish music-hall traditions in London -

[Their] most generous ally was the Greater London Council, who loved the idea of helping to reintroduce Londoners to music-hall traditions, and who, in 1984, gave alternative cabaret its biggest boost to date when it shelled out £200,000 for C.A.S.T. to take New Variety shows to all 32 London boroughs...(40)

In a survey which the Community Arts Sub-Committee conducted for Campaign For A Popular Culture (answered by 153 communi-

ty groups- 54% of the groups funded) about one-quarter of the groups who responded said that G.L.C. funding was directly responsible for their foundation. G.L.C. funding allowed groups to expand, to buy equipment, and to set themselves up on a permanent basis.

However, even the money that the G.L.C. spent on the arts carried its' own set of problems. The grants carried conditions, as all grant awards do. The conditions that the Sub-Committees (and, increasingly, the main Committee) attached to the grants that they gave were part of the explicit, recognised contract between them and the groups they funded. These conditions - not only fulfilling artistic criteria, but also criteria based on racial and sexual equality, and so on - were either practised by the groups already, or were worked out by the groups and the officers together. The conditions the Finance Department set were imposed after the Sub-Committee had approved the grant. Sometimes officers working with the groups in drawing up their budgets helped the groups to draw up budgets that the Finance Department would like.(41)

Simply, the Finance Department wanted the maximum amount of product from the funded groups. Many groups (particularly theatre groups) were pressured into performing and producing as much as they could to keep the Finance Department happy -

A preliminary survey of G.L.C. supported community theatre groups reveals that individual groups have given up to 280 performances in a year - often of two or three productions. These figures often reflect conditions of grant aid as to numbers of performances

expected. There seems to be a danger that community theatre groups involved in process [sic] may be undertaking almost as many performances as those groups who are involved in what is often called the "hit and run" business of conventional touring theatre.(42)

Also, the fact that the G.L.C. were so generous to groups itself became a drawback: when the Council was abolished, groups that were solely or largely funded by it were left in trouble, because the Council had never encouraged them to seek funding from other sources.

#### THE EFFECTS OF THE POLICY.

The Arts and Receptions Department's policy was meant to achieve one main thing. Those usually separated from "culture" - that strange creation that only a privileged few gain access to - were targeted; but not because the Council wished to bring them to "culture" and make them appreciate it. They were to be encouraged to develop and explore their own culture. The Council's own research demonstrated the need for this; in a series of group discussions that the Council supervised in 1983 -

The "high culture" arts of opera, ballet or Shakespeare plays were never mentioned spontaneously. When introduced to the discussions, apart from two people who had actually attended, the older people became slightly defensive - "they are just for visitors and tourists," "Ordinary people just want a cinema and somewhere to go for special treats". The younger people seemed amazed that they should even be asked about these things; "if you're middle-class you might want something different", "we just want the video on my street", "that's for posh people."(43)

In 1986, after abolition, The London Strategic Policy Unit (an organisation set up by the Council) researched into the effect of the Council's arts policy. They found that, in the three areas they studied (Deptford, Dalston and Brixton), 42% of those questioned could name, without prompting, a community arts project in their area. As the report noted, this could be taken as a sign of success -

...Some of the key populations targeted by the G.L.C. programme are well represented. According to all three Focussed Population Surveys and the Users Survey, women visited projects or venues at least as frequently as men, while black people and unemployed people were conspicuous by their presence...

Respondents were also asked...whether they had become involved in activities in a more participatory way. This would involve organisation, creation or production, for example. Overall, one in every eight interviewed in the Focussed Population Surveys had become involved at this level, with women and men involved in about equal numbers.(44)

However, the report found that the Council had failed in one important respect -

...Both the quantitative surveys revealed a profound educational divide. In short, the more educational qualifications you have, the more likely you are to go to a community arts project. In the Focussed Population Survey, those with "O" levels or more were twice as likely to go to community arts activities as those with C.S.E.s or no formal qualifications. The Users Survey revealed even greater levels of inequality - 53% of users had a degree compared to only 12% with C.S.E.s or less.

This reflects the same class division that exists in the audience for the traditional arts, a fact that is perhaps less surprising than it is depressing.

The educational divide is not universal. On the one hand projects in some areas (notably amongst the Deptford sample) are less class based in their appeal than others. On the other hand the success of projects in appealing to middle-class black people is matched by their failure to reach working class black people.

On this evidence the community arts have, overall, failed to address what would appear to be the most fundamental source of inequality in arts provision. While this reflects no lack of will, it is certainly true that funding agencies like the G.L.C. have not recognised the divisions created by education and class as overtly as those created by gender and race in particular.(45)

The Council's commitment to the working class was implicit; it always assumed that the groups it funded would try to broaden their appeal to the working class and the poorer sections of society. However, the groups themselves did not necessarily understand how to go about broadening their audiences -

This is a marketing problem that most community arts groups seem, if they are aware of it at all, to have failed to solve. Many of the working class people in the group felt they were there despite rather than because of the marketing or promotion of a group or venue. Very few of the people in any of the surveys had heard about a project through conventional publicity channels like a local paper, a poster or a listings magazine (although magazines like Time Out or City Limits were fairly significant for the middle class educated audience). The majority were there either because a friend had told them about it, or they happened to be walking past.

Marketing is, therefore, not just badly done, it is virtually non-existent. Worse still, the group discussions showed how off-putting many of the places were to those who had found their way in. Somewhere that seems appealingly "homely" and "uncommercial" to middle class radicals will seem off-puttingly tatty or "second-rate" to working class people. A canteen which only serves vegetarian food will only appeal to some people and will put off a range of others who associate vegetarian food with a life-style of jogging and Citroen 2CV ownership. One group's "homeliness" is another group's colonisation. Too much political "right onness" put too many people right off. Price too is a factor - value for money may appeal to all but an appearance of cheapness (if that is the price of tattiness) will put off working class people who want a good night out.(46)

Problems also arose with involvement. As part of the survey, the researchers interviewed a group of Afro-Caribbean teenagers who were involved in the Albany Empire's Basement Theatre project in Deptford. On the whole, their experience had been positive; they had heard about the Albany through word of mouth, and had found the atmosphere welcoming. As one said -

"I was really scared at first...and then after I'd got in there, it was really alright, it was too friendly to be scared of...it just made you want to come more and more...it was welcoming."(47)

And having involved themselves, they came to feel that the centre was theirs -

"Yeah, we use the cafe...We come to other things here. whenever they've got something like a disco or a dance, we all turn out because it's good fun...and sometimes if we want to use the space for our personal use, like when we want to audition for college...we can book our own space and use one of the rehearsal rooms...we use it all quite well now.(48)

The Albany had given them a new attitude to life, increasing their confidence and giving them more pride in themselves

and their abilities -

"When we go out in front of 2,000 people, it brings you out, it's the best thing that could ever happen to you..."

"On the first night I was really scared, I mean half-way through I wanted to get away and go to the toilet, since then I've got over it...but it's just the feeling that you've achieved something..."

"Yeah, you're a person who's actually done something that other people might find pleasurable, they have to come and see it to get a pleasure out of what you are doing...it makes you feel good..Your friends start seeing you differently..."(49)

However, even though working at the Albany had raised their expectations, they were not sure if they could continue in the theatre -

"What it's actually doing is giving the underprivileged a taste of drama, or a taste of music...or whatever it is...they give you a taste but they don't give you any more." Or again,

"If the Albany wasn't there I'd most probably be very content with the job I've got now. It's because I've had a taste of drama I'm not content with my job now. I hate my job and I want to move out of it. I want to go to drama school and be an actor." And again,

"I came down to the workshops and I've been coming down ever since, and through that I want to be an actress...like the Albany gives you a taste of drama and that's it, once you've had it, you've got to have it and you can't get all of it...I mean they can't say, well, you've got a job in acting now you just come along and we'll pay you however much, you can't get it, and that's what you want now and you set your heart on it, and you go a bit downhill".(50)

They climbed over one barrier, only to find more barriers in their way. On the one hand, they had travelled to the U.S.A. on an exchange visit. On the other, the chances of making a living in the theatre at home remained slim.

## ABOLITION AND AFTER.

As the G.L.C.'s demise came closer, there were rumours of handouts: there was going to be a last great spending spree, and if arts organisations could arrange to be in the right place at the right time, they could benefit from it. As it was, the spree did not happen. The G.L.C. used its spare cash for the series of last-minute extravaganzas it staged. In fact, the G.L.C. disappeared still owing money; Temba Theatre Company nearly folded when it did not receive the money that the Council had promised it.(51)

To its credit, the Arts Council recognised the threat to arts provision that abolition posed, and requested that the Government set aside some money - £37 million - to keep the arts in London going. In 1984, the Government pledged £34 million, of which £17 million was to go to museums, and £1 million to the British Film Institute. The Arts Council spent the next financial year - 1985/6 - trying to raise the amount it was to receive to £35 million. The Government met the Arts Council roughly half-way, providing an extra £9 million, leaving the Arts Council £10 million short. The £25 million in "replacement funding", as it was called, was to decline by £1 million in each succeeding financial year.

Responsibility for administering the arts in London after the G.L.C. fell to a ramshackle amalgum of the Arts Council, the Greater London Arts Association, the local boroughs, and

the London Boroughs Grants Scheme. The L.B.G.S. was meant to deal with the London-wide co-ordination of local government grants. The committee is made up of local councillors; no party has a majority on it, and no clear funding policy has emerged. It has few officers (3 in 1987); those officers have to deal with all of the arts and recreations claims made on the L.B.G.S. It is not surprising that its grant awards are often late. The local authorities did not all wish to continue the G.L.C.'s funding initiatives; and those that did - Haringay, for example - were liable to rate-capping, or cuts in their rate-support grant, or both. To stay within Government spending limits, boroughs had to cut services. The Arts Council's main contribution was to create a quango in the heart of the city - the South Bank Committee. Greater London Arts had been developing a community arts policy through the eighties; after abolition, it took many of the G.L.C.'s former clients. This put a strain on the Association's structure; and it also found it harder to justify funding semi-commercial organisations (the Association could only fund non profit-making or charitable groups).

Overall, not only were the G.L.C.'s initiatives themselves not carried forward into the new structure, but the advantage of a single, London-wide co-ordinating organisation was lost. Abolition, for theatre and other art groups, opened up structural holes that they were in danger of falling through; overnight, securing funding in London became a far

more complex matter.

#### CONCLUSION.

As argued in Chapter 1, Thatcherism is, fundamentally, a distinctive way of looking at the world. It may be contradictory, it may march, resolutely, forward into the past, but it does have a recognisable set of ideas that it relies on for guidance.

Labour, which (centre groupings and re-groupings notwithstanding) has remained the party of opposition throughout the decade, has not had a corresponding vision. The "Labourist" Ship of State, in the late 1970s, had been holed below the waterline. The leadership has spent much of the 1980s below decks, manning the pumps to keep the old craft afloat; they only began to wonder about which direction to sail in after their 1987 defeat (when the leadership initiated a series of policy reviews).

The G.L.C., at least, had a coherent strategy and worldview. It tried to put that worldview into practice; honestly, and reasonably consistently, it tried to democratise the structures of the state - in arts funding as in everything else.

And, despite the structural problems the G.L.C. encountered, its arts policy did have an effect. There was a distinctly healthy atmosphere in the arts in London when the G.L.C. was

in operation. Clients knew that a local authority, interested in the work that they were doing, was attempting to encourage the development of a city-wide network of arts organisations. Even theatre, dismissed as a nineteenth-century artform by the Community Arts Sub-Committee, flourished.(52)

The Council also managed to be approachable. When Common Stock (a Theatre-in Education group) ran into financial difficulties because their G.L.C. grant was late, the group's administrator wrote to Peter Pitt (Banks' successor as Arts and Recreations chair), after she had been introduced to him through Hammersmith and Fulham, Common Stock's local council. Pitt gave her notification of the grant (that is, he literally wrote a note confirming that Common Stock received a G.L.C. grant); the administrator used the note to arrange an overdraft.

However, as one might expect, structural reform sometimes fell foul of the structures that it sought to reform; and, arguably, the structures that the Council evolved could themselves have done with some more thought. To a great extent, the problems that Arts and Recreations faced arose because the arts policy itself was insufficiently planned; most of the time, policy turned out to be what it was - ad hoc decisions stuck, omissions were not dealt with.

Arts and Recreations suffered from the structural contradictions that Mackintosh and Wainwright described above.

"Strategic planning" will tend to favour those who are ready to take advantage of it; that is, those who are already

organised. Those who are not are far more difficult to reach

...There is an inherent problem for people in relatively weak social and political positions becoming involved in a relatively unreconstructed local state, however many well-meaning individuals are trying to change it from within. Many community based groups, especially among women and in the black community, have a well founded alienation from the local and national state, and from the labour movement, and put a strong emphasis on autonomy. How far can a part of the state go in supporting truly independent organisations in order that they might put more pressure on the state and thus increase conflict?(54)

As the London Strategic Policy Unit report pointed out, even a campaign for popular culture comes fitted out with its own cultural codes; and these are not necessarily going to be appropriate ones. The overall strategy that the Council pursued, to some extent, worked against its desire for greater democracy, in Arts and Recreations as in its other departments. This contradiction may very well be unresolvable. The G.L.C. might encourage grassroots democracy, but, unless the state structure itself was reformed completely, the Council would still have ultimate power; and the Council's cultural philosophy would be the most important one. It decided what kind of policy it wanted; it decided what to prioritise - anti-racist and anti-sexist initiatives - and what not to prioritise - marketing strategies.

However, this is not an argument for scrapping all of the ideas that the Council developed; Rather, it is an argument for greater consideration, greater preplanning, and increased consultation. The G.L.C.'s cultural policies had not

been thought through sufficiently; it was almost bound to make mistakes. As Mackintosh and Wainwright conclude -

...The G.L.C. did not institute "popular control" or anything like it. And there was always a conflict within the G.L.C. between its' sweeping, strategic aims for sectors of the economy, and its' principle of working with outside groups. But the fact that more than one person, reflecting on the institution from the outside, could describe the G.L.C.'s interest in, and openness to, the ideas and needs of ordinary people as a "revolution" in the attitudes of the state to its' citizens suggests a path for change.

...The experience was rich in lessons and insights, at least as much from the failures as the successes.(55)

#### CHAPTER 4: ALTERNATIVE THEATRE

One might assume that the fringe would shrink, or at least stop growing, in the cold fiscal climate of the 1980s. This has not happened. In fact, there has been a steady growth in the number of fringe theatre groups. In 1986, membership of the Independent Theatre Council was 180, by April 1988, membership was over 230. Philip Bernays, the I.T.C.'s administrator, estimated that there were at least as many groups outside the I.T.C. as inside; a reasonable estimate would therefore be that there were between 450 and 500 small-and-middle scale groups in Britain in 1988.

So, it seems, a movement which was born in the 1960s - Thatcherite demonology's witching hour - has somehow managed to survive into the Thatcher decade; surviving, it might seem, in spite of the times rather than because of them -

...Mrs Thatcher and her ideologues could and did present her economic policy as emancipatory (releasing the nation from the bonds of statism) and the political attack on the left as libertarian (freeing the people from the bully-boys and commissars). Her cultural policies admit of no such interpretation. They are essentially, inherently and inescapably reactionary, restrictive and indeed censorious. Far from opening up options and choices, she is seeking to close them down. Having seen off the nanny state in the economy, she is now [1988] emerging as the Platonic Guardian of the culture, with her satraps sifting through the school books for anything that might be said to "promote" homosexuality, and the Broadcasting Standards Authority seeing to it that we are all in bed by nine.(1)

It is hard to generalise about a field as large as the fringe now is; but it is true that the vast majority of

companies do not share the Prime Minister's worldview. There is a notable lack of groups prepared to tour community centres with monetarist agitprop. Therefore, given the Conservative Government's march on culture as described by Edgar, it might seem that the fringe is in the front line. It is likely to produce work that the Government would not approve of; and it is financially vulnerable. If central arts funding is cut, the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company will complain, cut back and try to negotiate a sponsorship deal; a fringe company would stop work altogether.

And yet, somehow, the fringe is still there. Many of the most famous groups of the 1970s - Belt and Braces, 7:84 (England). North West Spanner - no longer exist; but many still do, even if in an altered form - C.A.S.T., Red Ladder, Monstrous Regiment, Temba Theatre Company, The Women's Theatre Group, and the Combination, for example. These groups have been joined by others, formed in the late 1970s and 80s; the Theatre of Black Women, Resisters, Hard Corps, Remould Theatre, Scalet Harlets, Consenting Adults in Public, Framework Theatre Co-op, Roots Theatre Company, Graeae Theatre Company, Outcast Theatre Company, Strathcona, The British Asian Theatre Company, and so on. Some of the companies receive Arts Council funding, some receive local authority or Regional Arts Association funding, many receive some combination of these three. Many receive no funding at all, and fund themselves from the dole, or from Government enterprise schemes, or by working part-time.

It has been argued, however, that the political climate has affected the content of the fringe's work; that it, and the British theatre generally, is going soft -

...Given that there is no commitment or intention to maintain the Welfare State or return to full employment, it seems logical to assume that the government will not continue to fund a theatre that bites it. But the worrying aspect of the present day theatre is that it lacks any real "bite" anyway.

This seems to illustrate a lack of direction and purpose at the point where theatre is most at risk in the first place. Perhaps theatre is simply mirroring what seems to be the lack of a credible language of opposition in society as a whole. As Michael Billington put it, in The Guardian of 27 December 1986:

What I missed in 1986 were plays that addressed themselves to the particular spirit of our times: most especially, the privatising greed and ingrained racism that seem part of modern Britain...It is almost as if the present is too vile to be properly encompassed...(2)

One could take issue with Billington: one could quote opinion polls on the unpopularity of greed in Britain in the 1980s. One could question the need to portray "privatising greed and ingrained racism" regularly on stage, as if by rote. After all, by 1986 there had been seven years of Thatcherism; surely at least some companies would be looking for new material by that time. One could argue about the "lack of a credible language of opposition"; one could say that the vagaries of the British electoral system have had more to do with the continuation of Thatcherite hegemony than any national seachange. One could say that the history of Scotland over the past ten years has been of the formation of a credible language of opposition (see Chapter 5).

However, it could also be argued that there is some truth in Gottlieb's analysis, at least as far as the fringe is concerned. There are fewer groups taking an overtly Marxist stance in their work; fewer companies advocating revolution in factories. More companies are turning to the "classics" for their material; in 1988, Temba Theatre Company toured Romeo and Juliet, and in 1989 Tara Arts toured The Government Inspector.

So where does the fringe stand now, some twenty years after it started, and ten years after the political atmosphere in which it worked changed so dramatically? Has it changed, and if so by how much and why?

## FRINGE THEATRE : 1968-79

...With twelve million people voting Labour, twenty-two million people going to work, with x million belonging to trade unions, [The Labour movement] is, to put it simply, a big target...It is clear to us that there are potential audiences hungry for the service of the theatre, theatre that is prepared to gear itself to the foundations of, for want of a better word, the community...We are invited to union A.G.M.s, to towns and pubs, to places where nothing has ever happened before, to political debates, workplaces, youth clubs and to the venues we like best of all - working-class socials.(3)

This is, perhaps, the classic conception of 1970s fringe theatre. It has been immortalised in A Good Night Out - John McGrath and 7:84 (Scotland) taking theatre to the workers in the Glenrothes C.I.S.W.O. It is foregrounded in Dreams and Deconstructions; the chapter on political theatre is the first of the chapters on specific topics. The other major history of the period - Stages In The Revolution - deals more or less entirely with the overtly political theatre groups.

But it did not begin like that. The original impulse behind the fringe was broadly based; it only began to split when the unified purpose behind it vanished.

Thus, in the first years of the 60s, the infant political theatre movement reflected the fragile unity that existed between the various forms of the New Left, as differences were sunk in the interests of the struggle against the Vietnam War. While hippies and yippies, the funkies and tankies demonstrated and worked together...the equally disparate branches of the avant-garde (from performance artists to social realists to agit-propagandists) felt artistically and politically as one in the project of undermining the cultural assumptions on which imperialism was based.

In the early 70s, however, this unity fragmented. Like the burgeoning Trotskyite groups, some political play-makers saw the working-class militancy of the Heath years as a spectacular confirmation of the traditional Leninist prescriptions. Others, like the libertarians and anarchist groups, were attracted to increasingly radical forms of social experimentation...And, as the counter-cultural underground became progressively disillusioned with the notion of political change per se, so performance art retreated into its own, separated circuit, sustained by its own devotees.(4)

The fringe did not start, therefore, when a group of theatre workers spontaneously and simultaneously decided to turn Das Kapital into a short, snappy show for the local workers. This impulse was there, but it was only one in a whole range of impulses: and even at the fringe's inception, there were other approaches, other ways of working. David Edgar's experiences in Bradford in the late 1960s and early 1970s give an idea of the sheer complexity and richness of alternative theatre in its early days -

...Here, performance artists were careering around the city on pink bicycles ridden in Red Arrow formation [This group was called John Bull's Puncture Repair Kit]; there, Howard Brenton's Scott of the Antarctic was being performed in the ice-rink, with myself in the small but nevertheless significant role of the Almighty; while, somewhere else, Portable Theatre was presenting an early David Hare or Snoo Wilson. Welfare State were enacting a pagan child's naming ceremony - with real goats - and Albert Hunt's Art College Theatre Group were staging a full-scale mock-up of an American President [sic] Election - with live elephant - in the streets of the city. And, somewhere else again, in clubs and pubs, agitprop groups were relating contemporary labour history and joining, in their own way, the general and universal call for the overthrow of all things.(5)

Given this diversity, one might ask why only one of these traditions has come to stand in for the whole movement. The answer lies, perhaps, in the general political atmosphere of

the time. As Edgar notes above, the unity in diversity of the early fringe was fragile, resting more on opposition to the war in Asia than to any shared political agenda.

The political situation in Britain in the early 1970s, though, seemed tailor-made for those companies who believed that direct intervention was the correct course of political action. As noted in Chapter 3, the Heath government had made the first break with the post-war settlement; it had set itself up as a target for the whole labour movement, from the parliamentary Labour party to the worker on the factory floor.

Agitprop, in these circumstances, seemed like the most appropriate style for those theatre companies that wanted to be part of the struggle. The time did not seem right for complexity: groups chose a style that could transmit the ideas that they wanted to express as clearly and unambiguously as possible. The "National Cake", or the red ladder (describing the structure of society in terms of the relative position of actors on a ladder) and the other metaphors of agitprop were meant to be transparent; the audience were only to think about what the images described, not about the images themselves.

One of the benefits of the form, at least in the political climate of the early 1970s, was its immediacy; a group could put together a show about a current event and perform it to the people that it affected quickly, while the event was still relevant. For example, government legislation could be

transferred on to the stage, and explored -

Rent, or Caught In The Act (General Will, 1972] Edgar described as " a classic example of the bedrock way political theatre can work". It was a simple, unsophisticated show which explained what the Housing Finance Act was all about. It was devised for and played to tenant's groups, giving them the information in the Act in an entertaining way. Edgar: "I mean, how many working people have the time to sit down and read an act of Parliament? Providing information is an important function of political theatre. It can also create a rich and total and three-dimensional political vision that ultimately can change people's minds." The task with Rent was to take a group of people through the various situations in which the act would affect them. They felt this to be impossible to do naturalistically, so decided on the form of Victorian melodrama, with music-hall acts. Edgar: "Not because it was a popular cultural form, but because it was funny, and because it was a very good odyssey form". Thus there was a family called the Hard-Done-Bys - Joshua, Lydia, Honest Tom, and Lydia's fiancée - who were thrown out of their ancestral home. There was a lawyer called Devious from the firm Devious, Devious, Devious and Downwright Dishonest, and some villains called Paynorm, Hiveoff and Sir Jasper Price-Stroke. Edgar: "we put them through private landlords, a squatting scene and then into a high-rise flat in Camden. Honest Tom became the borough councillor and sold out. And Lydia's long-lost brother returned at the end to become a tenants' activist. It was quite funny".(6)

Agitprop as a form is, of course, necessarily limited. It is almost by definition unsubtle; if a group had to stop and explain their work to the audience at the end of each scene the simple transfer of information would be interrupted. Subtlety is not a virtue in itself, but a theatrical style that relies on the particular form of unsubtlety that agitprop does - the direct one to one correspondence of image and meaning - needs the correct political atmosphere in which to work. At a time when a movement needs the information that the company dramatises, and needs also some sense of confirmation, of shared goals and approaches, agitprop has flourished (as it did in the U.S.S.R. in the immediate post-revolution period, and in the U.S.A. and Britain during the depression). When the political climate changes, and some of the certainty and unity of purpose goes, then agitprop becomes less appropriate. Perhaps most damagingly, agitprop companies run the risk of appearing to talk down to their audience; of giving the impression that they have solved the audience's problems for them, and are making that answer simple enough for the audience to understand. At a time of rising left-wing confidence this failing can be ignored; but if the atmosphere changes, what once seemed celebratory might seem patronising.

Indeed, this is largely what happened. The large-scale confrontations of the Heath years had subsided by 1974; in the changing climate, agitprop's weaknesses became more and more apparent. Companies such as Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre, who had split from Red Ladder in 1974 with the

intention of producing agitprop, found their style and approach changing -

We went on to develop a multi-faceted multi-pronged approach, the result of demands from the movement and also our own analysis of what was needed. We eventually came to use continuous characters who develop throughout the entire play, realistic scenes (in the Brechtian sense), dealing with complex issues not tied up in slogans.(7)

Theatre companies could no longer cry "smash the government", and expect the support of the whole labour movement; after 1974, Labour was in power, and the unions were co-operating with it in the early stages of the Social Contract. Mass confrontation was out; when it returned, it did not unite the left (see Chapter Three).

The changing climate also affected the internal politics of the groups. In the early 1970s, agitprop companies were highly politicised; discussions about direction and political stance took up much of the groups' time. Red Ladder, for example, met once a week to discuss their internal structure; once, when the group could not decide whether to run through a play before performance, the issue was decided in a hastily convened meeting in the back of the van on the way to the venue.

Again, there is nothing intrinsically wrong in this level of democracy; the groups were committed to their politics, and this commitment was reflected in the way in which they were organised. However, when the groups came to discuss the political theories behind their work, hierarchies based on education began to appear. Knowledge of theory could be used

as a weapon; those who had the knowledge could use it to dominate those who did not -

This emphasis on political analysis and discussion tended to favour the most articulate and politically educated. These were often the people who had more experience of directing and writing. At the same time it tended to militate against the "inspirational" actor who, uncluttered with intellectual baggage, might well get straight to the actual point of the performance. It also militated against people who had more experience of working-class life but less book-learning. People in both categories might feel unease at the intellectuals "right-lineism", but if they dared to voice an objection, they might well find themselves out-argued. This in turn fostered an anti-intellectualism not far removed from the resentment of Oxbridge old-boy dominance which is rife (and not entirely unjustified) in the subsidised sector. In some ways the divisions of conventional theatre were coming to be reproduced even within this supposedly egalitarian system. However strong the British anti-intellectual tradition, those who felt insecure in their political education found themselves looking over their shoulder, afraid to speak for fear the company guru (and there was usually at least one, fresh from the mountain, carrying the tablets of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Althusser or Lacan) would jump down their throats. Once again it seemed to be the university educated middle-class who led and those with the most direct and immediate experience who followed. Not only actors from working class backgrounds, but also certain women, gays and black people felt that their experience of oppression was being glibly packaged not in the commercial "panel game" but in terms of political dominance.(8)

- a state of affairs that resembles nothing so much as traditional Labourism; those who were being oppressed were to sit back and let the educated people make everything alright. In the early 1970s, when the labour movement was more or less united, the tensions within the fringe did not show themselves, although they did exist; as the decade progressed, the women, the gays, and the blacks became less and less happy with the roles that they played. They began to work for themselves.

## THE GROWTH OF COMMUNITY THEATRE.

I'm very hesitant to talk about "masculine" and "feminine" qualities and principles. The biological trap works in both directions. We've been trapped by it in the past. But when I think of what I, in the recesses of my mind, consider to be "male drama", I think about a sweep of history, something broad and heavy. The Belt and Braces play Weight, about coal mining, would be the archetypal male play, not just because it's about coal mining, miners and physical work and dirt, but because it's like taking a chunk out of a mountain and sticking it down on the stage, really solid. That's what I see when I think about maleness in plays. The male playwright's sensitivity is often like an empire builder - it wants to consume the world and then spit it out again in its own image. I think there's a tendency amongst male left-wing playwrights - because of their desire to write about capitalism which is a global phenomenon - to ignore the minutiae of everyday existence: the women's movement has always maintained that the personal is political.(9)

This critique, by Gillian Hanna of *Monstrous Regiment*, can be extended outwards from the bounds of a masculine versus a feminine approach to political theatre. At its core, it is an argument for increased sophistication. As argued above, agitprop's simplicity was appropriate to the peculiar set of historical circumstances of the early 1970s, a time of relative working class unity. The new social movements of the late 1960s - Women's Liberation, Gay Liberation, Black Power, and so on - demanded almost as a prerequisite a far more complex view of the world than the old rigidly traditional class-based analysis. They stressed the importance of community; they argued that their communities needed not only external help and encouragement, but an internal sense of purpose and worth. The theatre associated with these new social forms, almost by definition, had to be

more than a means of passing on information and confirming the audience's political stance; it had to become somewhere to explore the nature of a community, somewhere to give a community a sense of its own identity.

This idea - working with the audience rather than working at the audience - was as old as the fringe itself. Its earliest forms developed at the same time as class-based agitprop. However, in the early 1970s, the struggle of the workers against the government occupied the attention of the left, and indeed of the whole country. The groups whose work embodied ideas of community only rose to prominence when the political situation changed; when the idea of a unified working class struggle became harder to maintain. New concepts, like feminism and black consciousness, seemed as strange to traditional labourites as they did to the most intransigent Tory; indeed, in some sections of the labour movement, they still do. The agitprop companies at least had the benefit of working more or less within the labour movement tradition. This does not mean, however, that the groups had necessarily to wait until a political seachange before they could make an impact. Some managed, from the first, to establish themselves against the agitprop tradition. One of the earliest fringe groups was InterAction, formed by Ed Berman in 1968. Berman's approach was to put process over product -

I am suspicious of statements on politics which are not borne out by actions. I believe that structure and personal action are more important than what you say. It doesn't really matter to me what statements you make. If you don't live it, or put it into practice in the structure of your work or in your personal life,

then the statement is just bourgeois titillation and self-deception. And that's really where the dividing line has come between me and most of the so-called political theatre which I think is usually posing. If not, they often postulate things which are either impossible to achieve or impossible to live by, by people who have never tried to do either. I think it's action that's needed, and structural changes. I think that can happen in the theatre, but it has to be thought about. Acting is no substitute for action.(10)

InterAction was not a theatre group; it was an umbrella organisation that used theatre as a means of establishing itself within a community. InterAction ran, at one time or another, the Ambience Lunchtime Hour Theatre Club, the Other Company, Doggs Troupe (for children), The Old Age Theatre Society, and the Father Christmas Union. It was the first community resource centre on the fringe, foreshadowing the work later done (for example) by the Combination at the Albany Empire in Deptford.

InterAction was not the only group to attach itself to a specific community. The AgitProp Street Players (the group that later became Red Ladder) started out as the theatrical wing of the AgitProp Information Service - an organisation that provided an entertainment booking agency, a lawyer's group, a music group, poster and print workshops and a library. North West Spanner grew from a community arts project (Inroads, originally based in York before moving to Salford in 1971). However, both those groups developed into full-blown agitprop theatre companies. InterAction did not; it concentrated on forming organisations that the community could use, and helping outside organisations.

One of the venues that InterAction ran - The Almost Free Theatre - was the site for a series of theatrical festivals that helped to establish the other developing trends in community theatre. The first of these festivals was a women's theatre festival, in 1973.

This is not to say, though, that feminist and gay theatre in Britain was somehow kick-started by one theatre festival. In the early 1970's, feminist and gay theatre existed, and moreover, used agitprop theatre techniques; The first two companies - The Women's Street Theatre Group and the Gay Street Theatre Group - took social taboos out into the open for a walk -

The Women's Street Theatre Group formed during the summer of 1970. Their first main event was at the demonstration to celebrate International Women's Day on 6th March 1971. The group danced along with the marchers...while a record player in a pram played "Keep Young and Beautiful". The march ended in Trafalgar Square, and the group performed their first "play", Sugar and Spice, satirising the way women are trapped (a) as sex objects...and (b) as wives and mothers within the family. A bold imagistic approach featured such intimate objects as a huge deodorant, a large sanitary towel, and a gigantic red, white and blue penis...They staged one event in the ladies lavatory in the "Miss Selfridge" shop in Oxford Street, pretending to shave their faces in front of the mirrors in an attempt to get other women to examine their own narcissism in using makeup; another took place in the London Underground, where women, dressed as a dolly bird, an academic and a housewife were auctioned off to the crowd.(11)

These early shows combined agitprop's directness with the surreal imagery of performance art groups like the People Show and Welfare State. They dealt with images of sexuality and sexual conditioning, using those images to question the

need for that conditioning. The images, therefore, were not just tools in the analysis, as they were for C.A.S.T. or Red Ladder; the images were the argument.

The Almost Free season was not an unqualified success. Of the six plays produced, only one, Parade Of Cats by Jane Wibberley, was by a new writer; and although the season was supposed to be run by women, Berman insisted on the right of final selection. However, the season did at least draw attention to the developing feminist theatre movement; and it did lead directly to the next stage in that development.

After the season finished, the group that had organised it split into two. The Women's Company (the company that included most of the theatre professionals that had worked in the season) mounted two productions before folding in 1976. The other group, calling themselves the Women's Theatre Group, built up a network of small theatre venues, youth clubs and community centres to take its work to.

An Almost Free season of Gay theatre in 1975 (again with Berman having the final right of selection) gave birth to Gay Sweatshop. The company's first touring production - Mr. X by Drew Griffiths and Roger Baker - was mounted later that year. At first the company was exclusively male; it had no female members until 1976, when a second Gay theatre season was mounted at the I.C.A..

Black and Asian theatre also had roots in the 1960s -

During the 1960s an embryonic Black theatre was held together by a group of actors and actresses who also worked in the white theatre: Alton Kumado, who later founded Temba Theatre; Carl Campbell;...Norman Beaton; Oscar Abraham; Pearl O'Connor; Alfred Fagan; Allister Bain; and others. As the sixties came to a close, this small movement was superseded by a new movement distinguished by its commitment to the ideological and political positions of the Black Power movement...

In Britain, the Black Power movement brought to the fore new artists who were committed not only to their "art" but to their community and the struggle to build autonomous institutions. Including artists like Obi Egbuma, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Mustapha Matura, Farrukh Dhondy, Tee Bone Wilson, Archie Poole and Imruh Caesar, this new movement of Black artists in Britain was prolific and engaging in its refusal to succumb to institutional racism. Many others, who had made the transition from the less rugged politics of the 60s, reinforced the ranks of the movement, which became well known for the high quality of individual and collective interventions in the politics of the arts. Some artists, like Mustapha Matura, were even feted by the dominant media. In 1971, Matura won the George Devine and Whiting Awards for his play As Time Goes By, and was voted the "most promising playwright" in 1974 by the Evening Standard for Play Mas.(12)

In the 1970s, theatre companies specifically concerned with the Black and Asian experience began to form; the Black Theatre of Brixton and Temba Theatre Company in 1972; Tara Arts in 1976 (in response to the murder of six Asian youths in Southall); and the Black Theatre Co-operative in 1978.

A pattern had emerged; a new social movement formed, initially seeking direct political expression (Women's Liberation, the Gay Liberation Front, Black Power); it then began to diversify into other spheres, including that of culture. On the fringe, this led to an expansion in the number of groups working in a specific area. Traditional

practices were called into question by these new groups, as they sought forms of their own; forms that could be loosely grouped under the term "community theatre".

After a decade of Thatcherism, one might have expected the fringe to have disappeared altogether. One might expect its history to take the form of a curve: an initial surge in the late 1960s and early 1970s, reaching its apex in the mid-to-late 1970s, before tailing off gradually during the 1980s.

But those traditional practices were sometimes reluctant to change. Noel Greig, working with the General Will in Bradford in the mid-1970s, was involved in a struggle between the old and the new -

Although the group continued with its newspaper-agit-prop style, other influences began to test the limits of that method. Feminism was beginning to challenge political groupings and organisations in the town, and radical gay politics was to follow close on its heels. The day of the "objective" male appraisal of the world was over, and it was becoming clear that a strictly applied Marxism was no longer going to be a mallet to whack us over the head and into line. The General Will struggled valiantly to respond to these debates, but it was on a losing wicket from the start, since it was composed mainly of men, all of whom were heterosexual apart from myself. There were attempts to incorporate more women into the group, and I got up the nerve to introduce a couple of gay songs into our cabaret show; but the more we attempted to reflect in our work the debates going on at pubs, parties and meetings the more of a tangle we got into. Radical politics in the town had outstripped us.(13)

Greig found that any attempt to change the group's practices ran into trouble from the town's established left -

The basic facts are that as the General Will lost the inside track in the developing radical politics in Bradford, radical lesbianism and gay male politics were

opening up new debates. A town-based G.L.F. became focal not only in the area of debating sexuality, but in vigorously making its presence known in local politics generally, particularly in anti-fascist work. Traditional left groups and parties - I.S., I.M.G., W.R.P., C.P. etc. - could not turn a blind eye to this...yet could not deny that it was the lesbian and gay movement in the town, of all the radical groups, which had a large, active working-class support. By this, I mean that the movement consisted of working-class women and men from Bradford. It's amusing - in a wry sort of way - to look back at conversations with left politicians who talked about "building a movement in the class", and seeing the look of blank incomprehension when they were told "but that's what we're doing in the G.L.F"...(14)

Sometimes the incomprehension was leavened with basic prejudice: Greig heard that the changing situation was explained by some as the queers taking over. Eventually, though, the General Will began to reflect the changes in the town -

...A policy was made whereby not only lesbians and gays had access to the resources of the company, but ethnic minorities, women's groups and young people. For about a couple of years, there was a mini-boom of work (plays, new writing, music, schools projects) coming directly from the town. The work had a rough, rumbustious quality (of the kind which often, in the hands of "professional" left groups attempting to woo the working classes, can seem painfully strained).

The work was upfront, usually without being simplistic, and generally eschewed the slightly apologetic tone of much Left theatre. Some of the heterosexual men from the "old" General Will came back to share their skills. The events had in fact cleared the logjam which the company had been stuck in and, for myself, proved that "community theatre" (with the overtones of jolly, rapid knees-ups to keep the people happy) could also be radical theatre (whose practitioners were so often groups of graduates on a grant, descending with the message out of the night, then back to London in the Gulbenkian van). These are stereotypes and I know there were/are all shades inbetween, but they bear a certain validity.(15)

As the 1970s progressed, "community" theatre ideas began to filter through the fringe. Local theatre companies - companies

dealing with a specific geographical area - formed; the Avon Theatre Company, the Covent Garden Community Theatre and Orchard Theatre in Devon. Red Ladder relocated themselves in Leeds; Welfare State took up Mid-Pennine Arts Association's offer of a residence in Burnley in 1972. Feminist ideas began to influence the work of companies such as Red Ladder and 7:84 (England), even if the results did bear an uncomfortable resemblance to Brecht's The Mother.

The move away from simple, exclusively class-based agitprop and the growth of "community theatre" was a general trend; but it was not an absolute, invariable line of development. It could be argued that 7:84(England) went in the opposite direction; John McGrath's work tended more and more towards agitprop as the decade wore on. Other companies followed their own lines of development; Joint Stock pioneered new ways of devising theatre, Foco Novo and Paines Plough formed to promote new writing. By the end of the decade, the fringe was still a complex, unclassifiable beast.

#### THE FRINGE AND THE STATE 1968-79

After A Policy For The Arts, the Arts Council had more money to spend than it had ever had before (see Chapter Two); The fringe formed just in time to benefit from this growth. It is not that the amount of money available was ever enough; throughout the 1970s the Council came under pressure from the groups themselves and the new organisations that repre-

sented them (the Independent Theatre Council, The Association of Community Theatres, and so on) for more money. By the end of the decade, touring groups still only received £872,000; even so, groups starting up in the early-and-mid 70s could be reasonably sure of getting money, if they were good enough - as John McGrath recognised ruefully in 1989 -

For government sponsorship to work, liberal values must be respected, says McGrath. "When I was on the Arts Council drama committee in the seventies those values were quite clear: a company was free to make any political statement - as long as the quality was high enough, they were supported.(16)

One is tempted to read the quote again; John McGrath endorsing liberal values is not something that happens often. During the 1970s, though, his judgement as more or less correct. Sandy Craig, who worked with 7:84 in its early days, was also a member of the Drama Panel in the 1970s; and although he recognised that dealing with the Council could be problematic, he felt that there was something to be gained from it -

Of course, the Arts Council is not monolithic. Nor is there a conscious conspiracy at work within the Arts Council to implement a policy either to axe experimental theatre or to incorporate it...Certainly, the groups were not passive spectators in the process of increasing subsidy...The Arts Council opened the door to subsidy because the groups were already banging on it. The touring schemes that were set up by the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations, were set up in response to the initiatives of the groups. Similarly, the unionisation of this area of theatre was the initiative of the groups, an initiative that forced the Arts Council to recognise that grants had to be based on minimum union-agreed wages. And the emergence of the Theatre Writers' Union has been instrumental in forcing the Arts Council to pay writers adequately. Besides, the dependency of the groups is by no means total. Many alternative theatre companies continue to use their system of subsidy for their own aims rather than the Arts Council's.(17)

Some groups managed both to develop in the direction they wished, and to increase their Council subsidy. Joint Stock first produced Fanshen in 1975: -

...The success of the production coincided with depressing news from the Arts Council. An application for £21,000 was met by an award of £14,400. It was an increase, but not enough to support the wage rise the company was determined to implement. Worse, it threatened the plan to install workshops as the basis for future shows. The group was incensed. A campaign was hastily organised, M.P.s canvassed, Arts Council delegates lobbied. Nothing came of it. Joint Stock refused to compromise, insisted that the quality of their work depended on workshops and cut their programme. As a result, the second season [of the company's life] consisted of one show (Fanshen) which played for a total of 14 weeks - only three more than it took to prepare. Set against the first year - five shows over 27 weeks for less money - it looked like the surest way to lose a revenue grant. Remarkably, when the company presented an unreformed budget for 1976/7, they won their case. The Council granted a 300% increase (£40,000) with the proviso that shows played for at least as long as they were rehearsed. There are few opportunities to feel nostalgic about the Arts Council. This is one of them. From unpaid acting classes, a partnership between two directors and a group of actors had evolved that was to create a new approach to making plays. Fanshen exemplified the virtues and the Council responded. They even got a new van.(18)

However, some on the fringe were not convinced that taking the state's money was the right thing to do. Bruce Birchall (who was involved in the early stages of the fringe, organising the West London Theatre Workshop in 1970) argued that by the end of the 1970s the fringe had sold out, become institutionalised and lost its dangerous edge -

You can't have islands of socialism in a sea of capitalism. It is one of the deepest illusions of reformism that such havens are possible, as they would seem to offer the prospect of a letup in waging class-struggle, of replacing conflict by consensus, and living happy and unalienated lives within them.

The actions of the reformists within the socialist

theatre movement were guided by this illusion. They have sought to construct such illusory havens by transforming the socialist theatre companies, which were set up as weapons to wage class struggle, into refugees from the stormy blasts of actor unemployment and casualised labour. In other words, refugees hermetically sealed off from the living content of the continuing class struggle outside them (blunting the theatre companies as weapons).(19)

In other words, better an unemployed revolutionary than a quisling in work. Birchall is, at least, unambiguous; any contact with the state - any contact at all - is enough to remove all socialist intent from a company. The state is, for Birchall, completely monolithic; if you deal with it, you automatically take on all of the state's attributes. One wonders what he made of the development of 7:84(England); as noted above, their socialist message became more and more overt during the decade - and that message was underwritten by the Arts Council.

The effects of dealing with the state were more contradictory than Birchall recognises. The Council was baffled by the new groups that it now dealt with. It had problems, for example, in dealing with the collective structure that many groups adopted. Monstrous Regiment could not see any reason why the full collective should not turn up en masse for meetings with the Council. When they all arrived, the Council officers were hard pressed to find chairs for all of them. The Council assumed that the director of Monstrous Regiment's first show was the leader of the group; when she left, the Council was sure that the group itself was going to split up.(20)

Craig is quite right in saying that there were no plots to suck the fringe into the workings of the state; but, as noted in chapter 2, the Council had its own way of working - and it assumed that it could deal with the new groups without changing its' approach. Owen Kelly has noted (in Community, Art, and the State) that the Arts Council's original report on community arts, chaired by Harold Baldry, tried to reconcile the radical nature of the community arts movement with the Council's basic "raise and spread" philosophy. The Council also attempted to incorporate Black and Asian art into its Eurocentric world -

...When the Council received its' first Charter, most of the countries from which the post-war black immigrants came were still colonies. The relationship then was simply one between a "mother country" and her children. The "children" had the right to learn from the "high cultures" of the West, and the "mother" was obliged to teach them...

The limiting perspectives of the 1946 Charter are repeated by the 1967 Charter. If the test of goodwill lies in practical support there is very little to show for it. Currently the Arts Council has only three black revenue clients: Black Theatre Co-op, Temba Theatre and Pheonix Dance Company. Their grants, put together, barely equal those of a single major white client...(21)

However, although dealing with the Council in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a problematic process, the problems were not insurmountable; whatever the rights and wrongs of state funding, it at least looked as though it was available. A group might not get on to the revenue list, but there was enough money for a project grant from the Council; failing that, the groups knew that, if they kept trying, they stood a reasonable chance of success.

From 1976 onwards, as the more substantial forms of state subsidy began to dry up, the Council (in Sir Roy Shaw's phrase) went into the business of making choices. Monstrous Regiment were one of the last groups to get on to the Council's revenue funding list, and the Council left them in no doubt that they were lucky to be there(22). The regime had changed, even if the reasons behind the decisions remained hidden -

Throughout the late seventies the Arts Council strenuously denied that it acted in any way as a political censor. When challenged, it would always point to "standards"...Consequently it refused or cut grants to the poorer, less industrious companies who did not attract the most gifted actors and who, by going into the toughest areas to find their audiences, could not point to high box-office takings. It took an attack by Sally Oppenheim on an Any Questions programme in January 1983 to elicit from Sir Roy Shaw (after he'd left the Arts Council) the admission that if a companies' work seemed too much like socialist propaganda, it was cut.(23)

#### THE FRINGE 1979-

The sector has two main funding problems -

(a) One is that a number of companies do not, because of the present funding situation, consider it is worth approaching the Arts Council for support. They say the application is too time-consuming and the likelihood of success is low (Only 25% of applications actually made at present succeed in gaining the project funding required, despite the admitted quality of projects rejected).

(b) The second major problem...is that the squeeze on funding of regional companies has resulted in a blockage of the process by which companies have been taken on as annual revenue clients. Between 1975 - 1980, for example, 11 companies were adopted as annual revenue clients and 1 had funding withdrawn; between 1981 - 86, 2 companies were adopted and 13 lost their funding. While Regional Arts Associations and some of the Metropolitan Counties before abolition have provided signif-

icant alternative funding sources for such companies, the security of annual funding has in effect ceased to be possible in this area.(24)

By the end of the decade most of the areas of fringe activity had been mapped out. One need only look at the chapter headings for Dreams and Deconstructions - political theatre, feminist theatre, community and ethnic theatre, Theatre-In-Education, children's theatre and performance art. In all the years since the book's publication, perhaps only alternative cabaret and large-scale community plays could be added to the list; and even these two additions have their roots in the 70s.

During the 1980s, the divisions between the forms, never very clear even in the 70s, have become even more fluid; the field, in effect, has been playing a set of variations on 70s themes, filling in the areas sketched out in the 70s. For example, David Edgar, in his 1982 essay "Public Theatre in a Private Age", comments on the developing synthesis between feminist theatre and performance art -

We know that performance art is going through a major revival - Rational Theatre, Hesitate and Demonstrate, and so on. But what seems to me to be most important is the way that, hand in hand with alternative cabaret, performance art has influenced the new feminist theatre (and indeed vice-versa) to create a style of presentation of radical ideas which owe nothing to the increasingly arid forms of cartoon agitprop, but is by contrast wacky and individual and lively and forms at least the basis, perhaps, at last, for a synthesis between the literary, cerebral, intellectually rigorous but visually dry work of the university-educated playwrights, and the visually stunning but intellectually thin experiments of the performance artists in and from the art schools.(25)

As examples of this synthesis, one could cite the work of Blood Group, or Claire Downie's Adult Child/Dead Child. Indeed, One could argue that the fringe has spent the decade synthesising itself; differing parts of the developing tradition have been used by different groups as the need arose. C.A.S.T. have moved into theatre management, serving the new cabaret. Hull Truck no longer perform improvised plays: Under the influence of John Godber, their artistic director, they now present plays drawn largely from local working-class experience, in their own theatre at Spring Street in Hull. The Combination, as well as presenting plays (Sara Daniels' Gut Girls, for example) at the Albany Empire in Deptford, provide services for the local community; they also run the Basement Youth Arts Project, the Second Wave Women's Arts Project (to encourage new women playwrights) and Half Price Children's Theatre. Tara have opened an Arts Centre. Temba Theatre Company run workshops, and has involved itself with the Notting Hill Carnival.

And, even in the beleaguered 1980s, the fringe is still capable of producing work capable of "real bite". Kay Adshedd's Thatcher's Women (presented by Paines Plough); Trouble and Strife's Now And At The Hour Of Our Death; Ruth Harris' The Cripple (presented by the Theatre of Black Women); Caryl Churchill and David Lan's A Mouthful Of Birds (Joint Stock); Tunde Ikoli's work with Foco Novo; Monstrous Regiment's British premiere of Wendy Kesselman's My Sister In This House; Philip Osment's This Island's Mine (Gay

Sweatshop); Tara's adaptation of part of The Mahabarata (Exile In The Forest); the fringe in the 1980s, it could be argued, has produced a large body of work that is at least the equal of much of its output in the 60s and 70s.

And yet the fringe is beset by problems, and most of those problems are financial. The question is no longer "how do we feel about taking the state's money"; but rather "How are we going to get enough money to survive ?

One of the most interesting theatrical developments of the 1980s has been that of the large-scale community play. The form is most closely associated with the work of Anne Jellicoe and the Colway Theatre Trust. Jellicoe started the organisation by herself in 1978, when she wrote a play for her local comprehensive school in Lyme Regis. The play - The Reckoning, about the Monmouth rebellion - caught the town's imagination; Jellicoe found herself in the middle of a tide of interest -

...I engaged a young designer, Carmel Collins. She was paid virtually nothing (we both received £250) and lived in my house. The job was so huge that we were forced to look for help. The woman who does costumes for the Lyme Regis Amateur Dramatic Society began to take an interest. She is a true "gate opener", a key figure in the town...So dozens of people began to help make costumes. We set up a wardrobe workshop in the bowels of the school so that the kids could help too...There was so little money we had to apply for materials. The town council allowed us to make use of their duplicator and the clerks ran the appeal off free; all the kids took a copy home from school and we distributed others wherever we could. People brought materials...and, significantly, the people wanted to know what it was all about.

From this it was a very short step to asking for every kind of help. There began to be movement all over town. The museum loaned a damaged lectern, and the school woodwork department mended it...The Lifeboat Society lent their street barrier and someone else repainted it; a third group asked if they could borrow it later; and so another resource became available to the town. A builder loaned his lorry and someone drove it free. The Town Council lent the elaborately carved chairs from the guild hall, and the town banner...Free accommodation was found for the Exeter students [from the University of Exeter's drama department]. The police loaned truncheons, farmers gave straw. In hundreds of ways, people began to help and so made contact with each other; and as they gave their goods and skills, so they became interested in what was happening.(26)

It sounds very much like a community theatre company's dream; a piece of work that involves and excites the whole community. The pattern established by the first play was developed in the next few years. The Colway Theatre Trust would commission a professional playwright (Howard Barker, David Edgar) to write a play for a particular village or town; the place's history was researched, and a suitable subject found. The play was then written with the full cooperation of the community (which provided the actors, the materials, the venue, and so on). The play, and the experience of working on it, certainly drew those involved closer together -

We were a motley collection of people - from a window cleaner to a University lecturer, from factory workers and unemployed to top professionals in various fields, from schoolchildren to ancient people...As a result of this, new relationships were formed, old ones renewed, history was re-lived, there were new interests, a fresh sense of comradeship, of belonging, of achievement and an acceptance of us "furriners" by the original Kirktonians. In fact, Crediton really came alive. It is a wonderful feeling to walk down our High Street and be hailed as a friend by so many people, young and old.(27)

One might think that work like this would have money thrown at it; surely, the Colway Theatre Trust would be an excellent advert for the local councils and for South West Arts - the local Regional Arts Association. Unfortunately, in the 1980s this has only happened rarely. Even the most successful company can find that its future is suddenly insecure, due to the politics of the arts funding world -

Contrary to popular belief it takes much more effort to raise money from Regional Arts Associations than from other fund-raising bodies. You have to argue, to justify, and account for money far more punctiliously

with R.A.A.s than with trusts, businesses and even Local Authorities and the Manpower Services Commission. The Regional Arts Associations have the money - it's their job to give it away - but getting your hands on it is no push-over. They really make you sweat for it. At this time [1981] South West Arts were having one of their perennial campaigns to make District and County councils pay their contributions to S.W.A. S.W.A. were asking for a contribution of 0.1% of the product of a 1p rate; in the case of West Dorset District Council, who of course did not pay, this was £800. S.W.A. now threatened to cease funding new initiatives in any county not paying their contribution. This would have been disastrous for C.T.T..I organised a series of meetings with representatives from the larger towns of West Dorset and we drafted a strong letter to the W.D.D.C...I also lobbied and spoke to every councillor on the relevant committee. This obviously helped...(28)

In 1985, when the C.T.T. were performing The Ballad Of Tilly Hake, South West Arts decided to cut the company's grant by 50%. Typically, it did not inform the Colway Theatre Trust that such a cut had been proposed -

...I found out about the proposed cut by chance five days before it was due to come up for final ratification at the S.W.A. Executive Committee. There was no time for the vapours; I had to act quickly and methodically. Day 1 was spent getting out a duplicated appeal for people to write to S.W.A., and particularly any town or district councillors who might be sitting on the Executive Committee. Day 2 was spent lobbying the Committee by phone. Here I was extraordinarily hampered by the fact that the South-West is a huge geographical area stretching over distances as great as from London to Aberystwyth. Very few of the Committee members had ever seen our work. The S.W.A. Executive is easy to lead from the centre because each member only knows about their own corner. Day 3 I contacted the local and national press and local T.V.. Day 4 was spent lobbying miscellaneous "influential" people and generally plugging gaps...Each night, during the performance of The Ballad Of Tilly Hake we asked people to sign a petition. As a result S.W.A. received over 160 letters and telegrams of protest and I was able to present a petition signed by more than 1,800 people. There was, too, considerable coverage in the media including TSW and The Sunday Times. Not bad for five days.(29)

Understandably, Jellicoe was angry at South West Arts' decision -

...No explanation was (or has ever) been given for the cut. It outraged every funding principle of S.W.A. and the A.C.G.B.; it was made without notice (four S.W.A. officers came to see The Ballad Of Tilly Hake and failed to warn me). I was now raising twice as much money elsewhere as we asked from S.W.A. and, at the same time, creating innovative work and employment of very high social value in a poor rural area with few resources...Yet we were also achieving very high artistic standards worthy of national comparison. If this was the support I could expect I had had enough, and announced that I would resign as Director of C.T.T. once I had fulfilled my commitment to Dorchester [the site of the next play].

The upshot was a stay of execution: the Executive Committee referred the decision back for further discussion. It was beautifully handled; Three months is a long time in public life; there was no way we could sustain a campaign for that time and get on with our work. After a while, the decision finally slipped through...(30)

Jellicoe's experience is, in many ways, typical of the times. As money has become more difficult to find, the amount of time spent hunting for it has increased. Schemes have proliferated - progress funding schemes, touring schemes, business sponsorship schemes, and so on - each scheme complete with its own set of forms. At the same time, the number of companies employing full or part time funding officers to deal with this complex tangle of conditions and obligations has remained small; the Independent Theatre Council estimated that, in 1987/8, there were only 10 funding officers amongst their members.

The Arts Council is not entirely deaf to the needs of the

fringe. But, as noted in chapter 2, they now want companies to be super-efficient, cost-effective culture factories. For example, the Council now expects its clients to draw up business plans. One consultancy has produced a one-size-fits-all business plan for any theatre company that can find the £1,500 to pay for it. There are business planning seminars, designed by the Council to help its' clients into the new age -

Bill Burnett (not his real name) is the widely respected and greatly underpaid director of a multi-faceted Arts Venture in the North of England...

He spent much of his Christmas break pouring over long documents issued to him by the Arts Council of Great Britain's new Incentive Funding Department. His ears were still ringing with the terminology of management theory, because earlier in the month Bill had been to an Arts Council Business Planning Seminar.

He went because he had to. He was "targetted" for this day conference - however good the Venture was in artistic terms, it would have been deemed unenterprising and totally lacking in incentive if he had not attended...

At the seminar Bill joined some 30 people from other ventures, some of them high-powered and famous, all in need of public or private financial help, all Incentive Funding applicants. Firstly they were introduced to the department team; Howard, its Director, and Brian, Geoffrey, John and Alice, the course presenters.

Bill formed a good impression of Howard's brightness and smiling energy, but wondered why he so proudly let on that before doing this job he had been "a civil servant concerned with matters nothing to do with the arts". The others were also agreeable people, who responded with tolerant laughter when their credentials were questioned; Brian came from I.B.M., Geoffrey and John were Manchester accountants, Alice was an analyst in a management capacity.

Next, the assembled applicants were treated to a slide show in which the case for Business Planning was projected onto a wall: "A Plan is..." "Why Plan?..Boring Answers...Attractive answers..." and so on. Then they were all asked to discuss the "mainstream measures of success" for their organisations.

The issues were all handled in the abstract, and according to the rules of Business Planning. When it came to looking at case studies, the seminar considered two fictitious organisations, invented for the occasion, which seemed to Bill to have no basis in reality. They bore little relation to his experience, his practical down-to-earth task of getting the best out of staff, performers and facilities in the Venture...

During the afternoon session (more fictitious casework, and guidelines, and blueprints), Bill sat next to a well known woman with a formidable track-record in the theatre. She said she was prepared to suffer condescension bordering on insult to obtain money for her venture. "Humour the dickheads", she suggested. "It won't be for ever". But she believed those ridiculous processes would lead to some wrong decisions. The wrong people would get the money; ability to write the new jargon, and produce columns of plausible figures, was not the same thing as running a magazine, a drama company, an arts centre or a jazz group...(32)

The Arts Council might have accepted that Incentive Funding is not the best way forward for the fringe; only two small-scale companies - London Bubble Theatre and Durham Theatre Company - have managed to qualify for it. But the thinking that produced incentive funding - get your ship in shape, stand on your own two feet, and so on - has not changed. Indeed, the chances of changing the Council's mind on anything, according to Roland Rees, have declined substantially. Funding policy is now being imposed from above; the general rule by the late 1980s is that the Council is not to be argued with. In Rees' words, "You either live with it or you take early retirement - but without a pension".(32)

The Government, through the Arts Council, is pushing the whole arts world in the direction of business sponsorship, as noted in chapter 2; but the chances of the fringe attracting any business sponsorship (inside or outside any funding scheme) are slim. Even if one ignores the problems many groups have in reconciling their aims with the aims of the market, the fringe is not liable to be an attractive proposition for the private sector. Business moves into sponsorship for publicity - and a small Theatre-In-Education company is not nearly as appealing as the R.S.C.. A table of 120 companies' income for 1986/7, compiled by the Independent Theatre Council, gives some idea of the relative unimportance of private sponsorship to the fringe -

Total public subsidy to member companies-	£4,937,969.
" private funding " " "	- £ 461,855.
" fees and box office income	- £2,076,627.
" other earned income	- £ 288,072.

Only 6% of the total (£7,765,072) comes from sponsorship.(33)

But it is not only that business sponsorship gravitates naturally to the largest, most visible companies; it also shies away from associating itself with a product which is in some way dangerous. In a Guardian article of September 1987, Philip Headley, director of the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, described the problems that the theatre had in attracting sponsorship -

...[The] vacancy we gave up advertising three years ago is that of fund-raiser.

Anyone experienced enough to do the job would know, for example, they were on a hiding to nothing in trying

to raise commercial sponsorship for our autumn plays.

The title of the first play, Pork Pies, which opened last night may look promising for making approaches to meat manufacturers until they realise it is rhyming slang for lies, and the show is based on a real-life story about a copper who has made allegations about the way his colleagues are fiddling the figures to show a higher rate of solved crimes. The only firm currently showing interest is that of the Police Federation's solicitors, representatives of which will, it is reported, be mingling with its audiences this week.(34)

One of the theatre's fund-raisers was shown the door by a local bank manager, whose parting shot was "No, you do plays against Mrs. Thatcher" -

Always the answer was that new plays were risky, we were occasionally controversial, we weren't prestigious enough, and our audiences were too mixed in race and class to be a good target market. We made a final assault on show sponsorship when we planned to stage a Shakespeare, the rehearsal period for which included an educational project in local schools. We pulled out all the stops. We contacted any friends of influence. But even this worthy combination of Shakespeare, education, a poor district, and letters signed for us by two peers of the realm, produced nothing.

We've given up the serious search for commercial sponsorship for shows now. It hasn't proved worth the considerable investment of time, imagination, money, and the loss of a degree of self-respect that we've had to put into it.(35)

As Phyllida King has noted -

The lack of sponsorship in most cases bears out the theory that sponsors like to back a reliable product, played to an easily identifiable audience with spending power. These companies [the companies King is referring to are Bedside Manners, Black Theatre Co-Op, Eastern Angles, Joint Stock, London Bubble, Medieval Players, Mikron Theatre, and Paines Plough] and many others like them present often innovative work and tour to a mixed audience in a variety of venues. They are simply not a good marketing prospect for sponsors. Natural Theatre Company stresses the difficulty of finding sponsorship and, like the Medieval Players, spends several months a year abroad where the financial recognition is much greater. Eastern Angles, which was set up to tour

villages, has come to realise that "the profile in that area of work and the income is simply not high enough to sustain a company these days i.e. we have to play the towns and the arts centres if we are ever to attract sponsorship, which we must."(36)

Some groups do not survive. Foco Novo ceased work in September 1988, just before they were scheduled to open a play called Consequences, designed to show the company's commitment to new writing; it was co-written by nine authors - Howard Brenton, Nell Dunn, Tom Stoppard, Joshua Sobol, Snoo Wilson, Tunde Ikoli, Nigel Williams, Olwen Wymark and Trevor Griffiths.

The quality of the company's work was not in noticeable decline; their previous show, Savannah Bay had been a critical success. Rather, Foco Novo fell victim to funding politics. In 1988 the company was told by the Arts Council that £20,000 of its' grant for 1988/9 was to be cut. This represented 24% of the company's total subsidy: -

...It comes at the culmination of the three most successful years in the company's history.

The company's income derives from theatre guarantees and box office, and from Arts Council funding. Despite acknowledged standards of excellence, the contemporary nature of our work does not readily attract private sponsorship.

Immediately this cut means that we will have to reduce our output to only one small show this year and that we must abandon a two year project to produce a new version of The Tempest by Tunde Ikoli. Not only have we already spent commissioning money on The Tempest but ironically the A.C.G.B. has already invested money in awarding a writer's bursary to Ikoli.

We are currently repaying a not uncommon theatre deficit over an agreed three year period. The A.C.G.B.'s cut, combined with this deficit is forcing us to take the loaded gun and do the job for them.(37)

No company has an automatic right to continued funding if it is simply not good enough to deserve the money. However, there is a considerable difference between artistic stagnation and economic stagnation - the cash-induced limbo in which a company has enough money to survive, but not enough to develop and progress. This financial pressure does not encourage companies to slim down their administration; this is usually pared down to the bone already (Foco Novo had only two full time workers). It is felt most acutely in the work that the companies do; or rather, in the amount of work that the companies are not able to do. The Women's Theatre Group, for example, is funded by the Arts Council partly to promote new women's writing in community and small-scale venues, but it has only enough money to commission two new plays a year. If one commission falls through, they have to produce the other one, no matter how good, or bad, it is. (38)

Foco Novo's grant cut was particularly ironic; the objectives that the Arts Council were currently advocating had been promoted by the company for years -

We have a particular interest in Black writing, having premiered plays by Mustapha Matura and Alfred Fagan in addition to six plays by Tunde Ikoli whose continuing relationship with Foco Novo has seen the development of one of our finest young writers. At a time of increasing "ghettoisation" in the arts, this relationship of a black writer with a white company is of special significance...

We have taken our work to both rural and inner-city audiences. Our plays have been seen at the Haymarket Theatre, Leicester, and the Bell's Garden Estate, Peckham, The Royal Court in Sloane Square and the Miner's Welfare Hall in Mexborough.

New plays, black writing and touring are all priority areas for the A.C.G.B. evidenced in their document Glory Of The Garden and in the Cork Report. Foco Novo is actively fulfilling these policies. We have put forward a programme to expand them and we have been cut...

The argument is made that established companies must step aside to make money available for new blood. I agree, the practice of our work exhibits this. However, increased Government Grant-Aid to the A.C.G.B. has been diverted to other areas [Incentive funding, for example - see Chapter Two] - Foco Novo and other pioneering companies are suffering.(39)

Foco Novo were one of the first seven companies to have their grant reassessed under the Council's new three-year funding scheme; the others were Paines Plough, Joint Stock, Lumiere and Son, Red Ladder, Temba Theatre Company and the Natural Theatre Company. Foco Novo and Joint Stock lost their revenue grants. Joint Stock decided to continue, and to apply for project funding; Foco Novo folded.

Another one of the assessed companies - Temba - have had a particularly turbulent funding history. Their revenue grant was cut in 1981, then reinstated just in time to be threatened again by The Glory Of The Garden. The threat was never carried out; instead, the Arts Council discovered equal opportunities. The Glory Of The Garden itself committed the Council to funding Black and Asian theatre; and in 1986 the Council drew up an Ethnic Minority Arts Action Plan -

...which would, over a two year period, enable it to make shifts in financial resources in favour of ethnic minority artists and arts managers. A minimum of 4% of the Arts Council's expenditure will be committed to the development of Afro-Caribbean and Asian arts by the end of two years.(40)

Temba benefitted from this; their total income rose from £98,192 in 1984/5 to £239,882 in 1986/7 - an increase of 144%. Within that total, its Arts Council grant rose from £72,000 to £131,000 (an 83% increase). Its G.L.C./L.B.G.S. grant rose from £14,609 to £37,500 (157%): Its Greater London Arts Association grant rose from £734 to £14,055 (1,815%). Temba have always paid close attention to the marketing of their plays; in June 1988 their marketing technique was featured on a Channel Four programme - The Marketing Mix. In 1986/7 they received a grant from the Office of Arts and Libraries marketing scheme.

The company drew up ambitious expansion plans. These included hiring a full time dramaturg; increasing the company's education and community work; moving into other media (T.V. and video); running a London residency and research centre, and increasing its touring output, to take in middle scale venues and performances overseas.

However, even though by 1988 the company had an increased grant and were planning ahead, they were not immune from the problems of the field. Production costs rise more quickly than income for all companies, and Temba's expansion plans would incur a larger increase in production costs than was usual. The company expected their income from grants to rise by 2% in the next three years; with inflation running at 8% by 1989, this was in effect a cut. Although the Arts Council had been encouraging, other funding bodies were not. The L.B.G.S.' officers had between three and four times as many clients to deal with than the officers who worked with Greater London Arts (see Chapter Three). In Temba's case, this meant that their L.B.G.S. grant was subject to delay. The company's first middle-scale tour - a version of Romeo and Juliet set in Cuba in the 1870s - did not receive its promised L.B.G.S. grant until it had been running in London for two weeks. And even though the Arts Council were making encouraging noises to the company, Temba had to wait until June 1989 before they heard that they had secured three year funding.(41)

The fringe is rarely affected by Government legislation directly; as described above, it suffers mostly from the deflected consequences of the squeeze on the whole arts world.

However, there are exceptions. Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act expressly forbade any local authority from promoting homosexuality intentionally. The bill was

introduced, firstly, to limit the scope of sex education in schools -

I [Tory M.P. David Wilshire] have seen examples of literature circulated in schools in the name of AIDS education which describes and illustrates a homosexual practice and carries the caption "enjoy the pleasure with a friend". Such material is the deliberate target of the clause. Councils will remain free to explain that homosexuality exists and to describe what it is in a neutral way. Regarding help given to homosexuals, this will be able to continue. After all, nobody claims that the Samaritans promote suicide.(42)

The section rests on a series of imponderables. How do you define promote? How do you define intent? How do you tie these two definitions together, assuming you can actually find them? This general vagueness has meant that instances of outright prosecution and censorship in the act's first year were few: -

But the real power of Section 28 lies in what people are not doing, not saying. Talk to any local authority worker about the section and they boom "self-censorship" at you, as if its power is understood. Certainly it's understood by the Tories. Sue Saunders of the Stop the Clause Education Group says "Jill Knight (Tory M.P.) always said that the section would be effective enough because of self-censorship".

But what does it mean exactly? "It just means, you watch it, you're always looking over your shoulder. you're very aware of the enemy," says one local authority member. In policy terms, says another, "It means anything with any lesbian or gay implications must run the gauntlet of checks. They must go through the legal department, the financial department, the lot."(43)

There have been mass demonstrations against the section; 50,000 people marched through London; an arts lobby was formed to protest against the section's likely impact on the arts. The Arts Council was moved sufficiently to deplore the section's possible effect publicly. Once the bill became law, however, local authorities were legally bound to en-

force it: -

...The London Boroughs Grant Scheme... added the stricture "Grant money may not be expended for any purpose which constitutes the intentional promotion of homosexuality". All L.B.G.S.- funded groups had to submit a copy of their constitution to check that this intention to "promote" was not explicit in their constitution.

There were voices against this. The Voluntary Service Forum campaigned to get the L.B.G.S. to remove the clause. And Philip Hedley, director of the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, wrote letters of protest to the Arts Council, Greater London Arts and Equity. He also staged Lorca's The Public in defiance of the section precisely because, as he explains, "Ten years ago a critic described it as promoting love between men".

Groups affected by the new restriction include Outcast Theatre Company who were initially refused funding in July 1988 because a clause of their constitution was so explicit in its aim - "to promote positive images of homosexual life"...(44)

For Suad El Amin, of Gay Sweatshop, Section 28 has separated the sheep from the goats: there are still places funded by local authorities that will take the company - the Drill Hall, the Green Room in Manchester, or the Albany Centre in Bristol.

Sweatshop's response to the clause was hampered by its funding status. As a registered charity, it could not be seen to indulge in political campaigning; so over Section 28 the company could organise an arts lobby, but they had to withdraw from it as soon as they had set it up. The Section has also affected the company's work. When the Local Government Act was passed, Gay Sweatshop were arranging a tour of Twice Over - a play for 14 to 18 year-olds - to schools and youth centres. They had to re-schedule the tour into adult venues. The show was a success, but it was not what the company intended.

In effect, the company has learned self-censorship; why bother applying for money when you might not get it anyway, due to Section 28?(45)

Theatre-in-Education has the uneasy distinction of suffering from all of the problems of the fringe in the 1980s. The movement had its roots in the late 1960s; the first T.I.E. company was set up as part of the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in 1965. It grew through the 1970s; but in the 1980s it has had a less certain life. Its position - outside the main fringe/touring circuit - has made it rather more vulnerable to pressure from outside; its sources of funding - most usually a mixture of Regional Arts Association, Manpower Services Commission and Local Education Authority money - makes it peculiarly vulnerable to direct censorship -

Theatre-in-Education deals with socio-political subjects...The commitment to such subject-matter has led the Gazebo T.I.E. company in Wolverhampton to refuse Manpower Services Commission funding as that particular Manpower Services Commission area made several demands on the company about the subject matter they selected. Action T.I.E. in Cardiff has recently been closed down. The reasons given were various. The company feel it was a case of censorship. They have continued working in schools for no money...(46)

And, of course, T.I.E. is as vulnerable to cutbacks and the general vagaries of funding policy as the rest of the fringe. The growth in the field was effectively halted in the early 1980s as local authorities began to cut back: Companies turned increasingly to the M.S.C. to pay their wages. The Glory Of The Garden promised money for the regions, and for young people's theatre in general; but any

funding increase was at least partly offset in many areas by the effects of rate-capping.

And, on top of all this, the Education Reform Bill (or General Education Reform Bill, or Gerbil, as it is also known) proposed a core curriculum. This could leave T.I.E. groups in no-man's land; will "socio-political issues" fall inside or outside the new core? Some individual schools could become self-governing. On the one hand, this could encourage T.I.E. groups to form closer ties with the schools they visit; on the other, it could add another tier to an already rickety funding structure - and make the task of setting up a tour extremely difficult.

If survival has become so much more difficult in the 1980s, how has the fringe managed to survive?

For one thing, the fringe has formed a network for itself. By the time that companies such as Hard Corps and the Theatre of Black Women formed, in the early 1980s, there were theatres such as the Albany Empire for them to play in, organisations such as the Independent Theatre Council where they could get help, and directories such as the British Alternative Theatre Directory in which they could place a contact address. Indeed, the two companies mentioned above formed with the help of a fringe venue - the Oval House in Kennington, London.

For another, the areas that the fringe has moved into in the late 1970s and 80s - that bundle of ideas and practices loosely bound up in the term "community theatre" - have been those that the left, or some parts of the left, has begun to explore -

...The truth is that energy, in theatre as in the socialist movement, has gone into new channels and new forms. Influenced very particularly by the politics of the feminist, Black and gay movements, the Left's idea of the "underclass" has broadened from a single focus on the working-class to a complex focus on the diversity of groups who are disadvantaged and excluded from power. Amongst those would be women, Blacks and Asians, member of other ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, the aged and disabled.

As the Labour local authorities of the 1980s may be seen to be putting into practice policies which positively discriminate in favour of such groups and in so doing recognising the diversity of communities in their geographical area, so political theatre in the 1980s has redefined itself as community theatre.(47)

This, though, could create its own problems. These groups are ghettoised within society to a greater or lesser extent; there is a danger that they could be ghettoised within the theatre - concentrated within the fringe, unable to penetrate the larger stages. In 1983 the Conference of Women Theatre Directors and Administrators conducted a survey on the status of women in British theatre -

The findings of the survey confirm the subjective experience of many women in theatre, and accord with the general position of women in other decision-making areas of British society. This may surprise "lay" people, and some men in the theatre, who would assume the theatre would be more progressive. The survey demonstrated clearly that the more money and more prestige a theatre has, the less women will be employed as directors and administrators; the less likelihood that a play by a woman will be commissioned and produced, excepting Agatha Christie; and the less women there will be on the board. It is therefore clearly demonstrated that women play a meagre role in determining the "Agenda", and contribute very little to the

production of the cultural matter in the most influential theatre institutions. This is in painful contrast to their majority in Higher Education Arts courses, in audiences and in the supporting roles in offices...It is shown that women do not feature well in fringe theatre, who, given their radical history, might be expected to be more conscious of women as equals. It may be that the fact that many of them now have an established importance and are comparatively better funded, brings the traditional reasons into play. The greatest concentration of women occurs in the Alternative and Community categories of theatre. These are the least subsidised and least well-equipped, and offer the smallest stages, the smallest audiences, the least predictable and controllable venues, the smallest budgets...;in other words, the most difficult circumstances in which to produce art...(48)

By 1987, the picture had not changed at all. A report by Caroline Gardiner, commissioned by the Women's Playhouse Trust, found that with regard to Arts Council funding -

The research seems to show that for every level of appointment that might be expected to have a significant impact on theatre policy, where women hold such posts, they are disadvantaged financially and therefore artistically, compared with men in the same posts. In most posts, women are more likely than men with the same job title to be working with small companies without a permanent building base, or in theatres with small auditoria, and they are less likely than men to find employment outside London.(49)

Gardiner's report found that 11% of all works performed were new plays by women - the same figure as in 1982/3.

Kwesi Owusu has noted the same problem in Black theatre -

Fringe theatre is...interesting because, emerging as it did at the same time as the new movement in Black Theatre, its politics implied sympathy with the needs and demands of Black Theatre. By the 1980s, however, it had used state funding to consolidate its previously weak infrastructures and open up several theatres in London. Many of its leading playwrights and directors had become the "new radicals" of the Royal Court, National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company. The irony of this "success" is that fringe theatre's cradle-mate, the Black Theatre movement, did not have a single home to its' name. Despite their copious and growing talent, Black playwrights and directors were the new perennial "artistes"; dusty manuscripts and sometimes no money even to pay the water bills!(50)

Sometimes the prejudice is overt. Gwenda Hughes of the Women's Theatre Group applied for a post with the National Theatre only to be told - by the male interview panel - "we're looking for people like us"(51). The circle closes; work in larger spaces depends on previous work in larger spaces, and those who are not "like us" are not included.

Still, the fringe continues. It has not been easy; the history of the past decade has been of financial pressure causing pressure on administration and artistic output, with some companies folding and others being forced to change their way of working. And yet there is still enough energy left in the field to keep it moving. In the 1980s the fringe draws its' strength from a range of movements that are, perhaps, not as visible as the mass working-class action of

the early 1970s or the counter-culture of the 1960s. However, it is not just that feminism (for example) is less likely to be bought off by a pay-rise or a Labour victory. Community has become more important; as argued in Chapter One, Thatcherism has smashed the already fragile sense of national unity in Britain: The forces that generate much of the work on the fringe have, as the basis of their philosophy, an awareness of the social complexity that the idea of "National Unity" used to hide.

But the lack of adequate funding has meant that the fringe is in a kind of stasis. The Independent Theatre Council compiled figures on its member clients since 1984/5 - figures on income, success in raising funds, and so on. It sent these figures to the Policy Studies Institute for analysis in 1989. The P.S.I. found that there had been no change in the fringe's status since the figures were first compiled; after all the funding initiatives, sponsorship schemes, exhortations to stand on your own feet, nothing much had actually happened(52). The fringe, in England at least, is running a Red Queen's Race; forced to move as fast as it can, just to stay in the same place.

## CHAPTER 5: NATIONALISM AND THE FRINGE: SCOTLAND.

Mr. Ridley advocates a total remoulding of Scotland's political culture: "What is so silly about the Scots is that..."

He quickly changed tack: "I'm not sure sitting here in Westminster listening to what the Scottish Labour M.P.s are going on about, that I have the faintest idea of what the hell it is they are after apart from destruction and criticism. If that is expressing the views of the Scots I am left in total bewilderment as to what they are..."(1)

It is easy to see why the Conservatives regard Scotland with Nicholas Ridley's mixture of bafflement and anger. The 1987 general election left them with 10 M.P.s in Scotland - barely enough to staff the Scottish Office. The 1988 local elections saw them pushed into third place behind the Scottish Nationalist Party, with less than 20% of the vote on a higher than average turnout. Scotland may not have had the highest Labour vote in 1987 (Wales and the North of England were higher) but it did have the lowest Tory vote. Somehow, the Thatcherite bushfire refused to catch north of the border -

What really exasperates Ridley and his Downing Street cronies is that all those Scots who by now ought to be voting Conservative - council house purchasers, Morningside housewives, electronics operatives - just somehow are not. The economy is "doing well", at least by comparison with other regions. Yet appropriate gratitude fails to be expressed. As local Government Minister Michael Howard moaned on election night, the North Britons still will not grasp the advantages of "joining in the mainstream" of the new British way.(2)

The Scots showed their lack of "appropriate gratitude"

memorably in the late spring of 1988. Thatcher dispatched herself - an action that, in Tory terms, is equivalent to a tactical nuclear strike - on a flag-waving tour of her North British domain. She lectured the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on "personal morality"; the speech was politely deplored. She presented the Scottish Cup to Celtic at Hampden Park; her appearance was greeted by boos, cat-calls and the waving of symbolic red cards.

To some extent this antagonism is personal, as Christopher Hardie noted -

...[After] the [1987] election results were out, the term "bloody English" was on a lot of lips in Scotland, and I found myself falling into this, probably to the concern of my English friends. Thatcher seemed to be hated so intensely north of the border because she personified every quality we had always disliked about the English; snobbery, boorishness, selfishness and, by our lights, stupidity.(3)

This is undeniably true. The Scots have their stereotyped image of the English, and the Prime Minister fits the stereotype alarmingly snugly. It is also true that anti-Englishness itself is a factor in Scots life; Scots define themselves, on at least one level, as not English in the same way that Canadians define themselves as not part of the U.S.A.

However, this can be over-emphasised; after all, during the nineteenth century the Scots were happy to lend their talents and support to the empire-building Victorian state. Nor can one draw much comfort from the myth of a fundamental

psychological split between the selfish English and the cosy, communal Scots. The Lowland Scots were active in the suppression of Gaelic culture in the 1700s; and the central belt of the country (the home of four-fifths of Scotland's 5 million population) has a long history of occasionally violent division along religious lines. The idea of Scotland as a nation/family does not survive a trip through the housing estates of Easterhouse in Glasgow or Craigmillar in Edinburgh; the people who live there have formed themselves into communities despite their local authorities rather than because of them. The football fans who threw their Rangers scarves down outside Ibrox Park, in protest at the signing of a Catholic, Manurice Johnson, proved, if nothing else, that religious division is still a part of the culture of the West of Scotland. If Scotland is a family, then it can be a careless and unforgiving one.

And yet, there must be something in the demographic identity of Scotland that impels it, every four or five years, to reject the current right-wing tinge to politics down south. Granted, the working class has its pantheon of Marxist heroes - John Maclean, James Maxton, Willie Gallagher, and Harry McShane. Arguably Scotland's best modern novelist, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, and indisputably its best modern poet, Hugh MacDairmid, were Marxists, even though in MacDairmid's case the definition's terms have to be stretched. But this does not explain, for example, the Scottish bourgeoisie's diffidence in the face of Thatcherism -

The problem is, indeed, one of identity... The national identity with which Thatcherism has so unwittingly collided is the product of a long material history...

What that history generated in Scotland was a predominantly institutional middle class. Organised since 1707 largely around kirk, law, and the education system - the three bastions of Scottish civil society - this service bourgeoisie was also well placed to exploit all the institutions of an expanding British state and empire. Coming from a society with no modern political identity it was politically inept: "running things" remained the prerogative of the southern ruling caste, while the Scots tended to become an emigrant managerial stratum - the first secretaries, foremen and butlers of imperialism. Unusually, it was only loosely related to the development of Scottish industrial capitalism: administrative rather than entrepreneurial in outlook, it evolved from the forge and shipyard owners of Glasgow (and has easily outlasted them).

The great moment of this class arrived with the welfare state: public corporatism and patronage had always been its natural element, and in the burgeoning institutions of the post-war consensus it found a suitable replacement for overseas colonialism. These interests led to a profitable switch of political allegiance from Liberalism to Labourism. Indeed, the latter soon became in many respects its most authentic quasi-political embodiment: a fourth "institution" beyond the historical three, and quite similar to them in corporate respectability, influence "down South", and the substantial if staid career prospects tied to an infinity of Buggins' turns. Resting on an orderly working-class vote, this has turned into a historical bloc complementing national predecessors; through it today's graduates are vehicled into a legalistic Presbyterian "socialism" more like the old Moderate Kirk than the colourful secularism so rife beyond Tyneside.(4)

This is not the whole story, however. In 1955, the Conservatives picked up over 50% of the Scottish vote in a general election; it would seem that the conversion to "Labourism" was not an automatic switch to the party of labour. As long as the Conservatives remained committed to the welfare state, the Scottish bourgeoisie would have few qualms about voting for them; and as the official unionist party, they appealed to the Protestant working classes -

...Since the Liberal split over Home Rule for Ireland in 1886, the Unionists (they did not call themselves Conservatives until the 1960s) provided the backbone of right-wing opinion. Its leaders were drawn from the ranks of indigenous capital, mostly in the West of Scotland, reinforced by an officer core of small businessmen and petty capitalists. Its foot-soldiers, the Protestant working class, found Unionism with its Protestant patriotism and militarism a congenial political ideology. This coalition between local capital and Scottish workers remained in place until the 1950s when it began to collapse. People like Weir, Lithgow, Beardmore and Fraser are all gone. The Scottish capitalist class went into steep decline, losing to UK and international competition, and working-class politics became secularised, and religious ties were loosened. After the 1950s, Protestants became much more like the rest of their class - Labour-voting with a wee touch of nationalism.(5)

The irony would not be appreciated in Conservative central office; Labour suffers in England, partly because of a decline in its class based support - and the Tories decline in Scotland, for the same reason.

Thatcherism's attacks on the welfare state are couched in the language of the Tory South (see Chapter 1). Across the Border, these attacks sound uncomfortably like English attacks on Scotland. The result of this is a kind of paranoia - the country is under threat, it is being altered by an outside force that must be resisted. On the 29th of August 1988, Scottish Television broadcast a programme called The Englishing of Scotland; it set out to document the incursions that the marauders have made into Scottish soil. The programme had little real analysis, being mainly a list of names. The audience, presumably, was to be so overwhelmed by the sheer number of Sassenachs in their country that they would leap up from their armchairs, grab their

claymores and see the foreigners off at the Border with a couple of verses of Scots Wha Hae. Some of the people named had no reason to be on the list: Jenny Killick, the artistic director of the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh was named, even though earlier in the year she had staged Scottish Accents, a showcase for new Scots playwrights.

The programme's argument is not as significant as the programme's existence, however. The idea that Scottish culture is in danger of being Englished presupposes that Scottish culture is worth preserving in the first place. This is a relatively recent idea.

The Act of Union of 1707 left Scotland in a unique position - that of a nation with state apparatuses, but with no legislative assembly. It kept its own legal, educational and financial framework, but executive power went South. The flowering of Scots culture in the eighteenth century had few nationalist blooms among it; on the whole, the Humes, Smiths and Hoggs of the Scottish Enlightenment were pleased to see their country lose its statehood. The main thrust of the Enlightenment, in Scotland as in other countries, was internationalist; and the Scottish intellectuals saw Scottish history (if they saw it at all) as a long dark night that had now ended.

After the Enlightenment, Scots culture - or the bourgeois element of it, the element that usually coheres around and legitimises the dominant class - vanished, not into thin

air, but down the road to England. The Scots intellectual (Ruskin, for example, or Carlyle) became part of the British state. It would be futile to expect them to have stayed at home with their ain folk; the Victorian state exercised a powerful centralising pull. The folk culture of Scotland did not find its place in the work of the emigrant intellectuals; where it did manage to struggle through the state's channels, it emerged transformed.

Traditional Gaelic culture, suppressed after the 1745 rebellion, was warped into an appalling quaintness. The image of the kilted Gael as a romantic rebel appeared first in the pages of Sir Walter Scott's novels. Although Scott, a fervent Unionist, always presented the Gaelic culture as romantic, it was a twilight romance; the time of the proud clansman might hold some vestiges of appeal, but, to Scott, it was definitely over. The dashing but safe image of the Highlander, therefore, could be used by the state that had attacked the Gaelic culture in the first place. When George IV visited Edinburgh in 1822 (the first time in over 150 years that a ruling King of Scots had actually set foot in the country) the pageant organised for him was wrapped in tartan. In Victorian times, Scotland was fashionable; Victoria had her castle, her faithful ghillie, and acres of mountain and glen to have picnics on. The rich linguistic, musical and social history of the Gael became part of the package - a garnishing of heather, plaid, sporrans, mist and endemic sweetness. Victoria's vision has prevailed. In

the twentieth century, for example, the Highlands went to Hollywood, and re-emerged as Brigadoon, a fearsome combination of winsome charm and feyness that the Queen-Empress would have recognised; the film's scenery and characters could have been lifted straight from a Victorian biscuit tin. So powerful was the imagery of "tartanry" (as it has come to be called) that a Lowland comic, Harry Lauder, had to climb into Highland garb to be successful.

The Lowlands were also misrepresented, only this time by Scots themselves. The "Kailyard" school of writing became a major cultural phenomenon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it was extremely successful, both inside and outside Scotland. Kail is a kind of cabbage; and kailyard writing generally pictured lowland villages as populated by a kind of cabbage, content to stay in its own small patch and not to waste time looking over the garden wall. The stories are full of rustic wits, misers, wise ministers, bonnie bairnies and couthie chiels. It was the Scottish equivalent of the rural myth found in many countries; the myth of a simple, decent life lived by simple, decent folk - like the English villager, or the American homesteader. However, in Scotland, the expression of this myth was not balanced by bourgeois culture, or by a culture that expressed everyday reality. At the time when books entitled Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush, Bloom of the Heather and Auld Licht Idylls were being published (in the late nineteenth century), the culture that they set out to describe had vanished. The villagers had moved to Glasgow, or

to Scotlands other industrial centres; they lived in slums, and worked in the Empire's engine-rooms.

During the first half of the Twentieth Century, however, Scottish culture slowly came back to life. In the 1920s, the country had a "cultural renaissance" - and a colourful cultural figurehead in Christopher Murray Grieve (Hugh Macdairmid) whose use of a synthetic form of Scots, developed in his first two collections of lyric poems, reached its zenith in A Drunk Man Looks At The Thistle - a long meditation on Scotland and its place in the World. Grieve's politics - a mixture of Marxism and nationalism - were not only expressed through his poetry; he was one of the early members of the National Party of Scotland - a party he helped to form in 1927.

Through the writing of Grieve, Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Neil Gunn, amongst others, Scotland began to acquire an indigenous modern literature that contradicted the images of tartanry and the kailyard. Grassie Gibbon's trilogy A Scots Quair (1932-4) reclaimed kailyard territory for the real world; amongst other things, it described the development of the Scots economy through the farming village and the weaving town to the industrial city. But novels and poems (and especially plays) about contemporary Scotland remained rare. For every Scots Quair, there were a dozen kailyard novels; and the most famous urban novel to come from Scotland was No Mean City - a tabloid-style investigation into Glasgow's razor gangs.

Scottish popular culture, until the first stirrings of nationalism in the 1960s, was in a rather strange position. It existed, but its existence was heavily influenced by the twin discourses of tartanry and kailyard. Scottish T.V. programmes tended to lean heavily on the kilt and the sporran; each new year was ushered in amidst a riot of tartan. In a way, this was a symptom of Scotland's lack of identity; the country was still emotionally tied to its larger southern neighbour, and could not imagine anything else. The Scottish National Party was a marginal grouping in a country that voted in more or less the same way as the rest of Britain. Nationalism, when it did surface, was hysterical and wrapped, yet again, in the ubiquitous tartan; the greatest cultural manifestation of Scottishness came once a year, when Scotland and England played each other at football.

By the mid-1960s, this had begun to change. As noted above, the slow decline in the Conservative vote helped to weaken the political expression of Unionism in Scotland; the slow decline of traditional heavy industry began to undermine the economic advantages of the Union. The increasing number of multi-national corporations basing themselves in Scotland gave the Scottish Nationals their first chance at effective rhetoric; talk of outside interference caught the public's mood.

The whole process was given a substantial jolt by the discovery of oil in the North Sea. The S.N.P. coined a handy

slogan - "It's Scotland's Oil" - and their popularity grew swiftly. Nationalism was an issue for the first time, perhaps because, for the first time, a single issue could be used to crystallise a growing sense of discontent. One of the by-products of this as the elevation of all things Scottish - for the first time since the Act of Union, Scotland as an entity was on the political agenda. It is a measure of how effective this upsurge was that a referendum on the state of the union was even considered, much less carried out.

In the novel 1982 Janine (by Alisdair Gray) Jock McLeish, lying drunk in a hotel bedroom, lets his mind drift back over Scotland's recent past; specifically, in this instance, the referendum in 1979 and its aftermath -

...I voted for Scottish self-government. Not for one minute did I think it would make us more prosperous...but it would be a relief to blame ourselves for the mess we are in instead of the bloody old Westminster parliament...

Well, the majority of Scots voted as I did, even though politicians of both parties appeared on television and told us that a separate assembly would lead to cuts in public spending, loss of business and more unemployment. But the normal rules for electing a new government had changed. "If you win the race by a short head you will have lost it," we were told, so we won by a short head and lost the race. Then came cuts in public spending, loss of business and increased unemployment and now Westminster has decided to spend the North Sea Oil revenues building a fucking tunnel under the English Channel...(6)

The vote was lost because of a rule (the Cunningham amendment) passed especially for the referendum, which stipulated that 40% of the total eligible electorate ( not only those who voted on the day) had to vote for devolution. If this

rule had been in force for the general election later in the year, there would have been no Conservative victory, no landslides in 1983 and 1987 - no "Thatcherite Revolution" at all.

The double blow of the referendum defeat and the 1979/81 recession sent Scots society into shock; traditional industries - shipbuilding, steel, mining - went into terminal decline; unemployment soared. Thatcherism bit deeply into two mainstays of Scottish life - nationalised industry and the welfare state; and Thatcherism was blamed. Scotland was used as a laboratory for Conservative policy on local government and rating reform; Thatcherism was blamed. Scotland was divorced from the heartland that kept delivering a large majority for the Conservatives; Thatcherism was seen as an identifiably alien force, and resented.

In such circumstances, a revival of nationalism was inevitable. In April 1988, an opinion poll showed 35% of Scots in favour of complete independence, 42% favouring a Scottish parliament within the United Kingdom, and only 20% preferring the current situation. This upsurge has not had the swift, immediate impact on British political life that the 70s upsurge had. For one thing, the opposition parties in Scotland - all of whom now support some form of self-government - have been getting in each others' way. The S.N.P. and, to a lesser extent, the centre parties, have been as interested in challenging Labour as the Conservatives; when

a measure of unity seemed likely, with the setting up of a constitutional conference in 1989, the S.N.P. refused to attend. For another thing, the Conservatives do not need Scotland. The Labour Government in the late 1970s looked to Scotland for a sizable number of its M.P.s; given its small majority in the Commons, Labour was forced to take note of the wishes of one of its heartlands - even if only to throw that heartland a sop. The Conservatives could afford to lose all their Scottish M.P.s; they might notice that they had a major constitutional crisis to deal with, but they would still rule. Thatcher's crusading instincts might tell her to preach her gospel to the General Assembly, but, ultimately, her seed can fall on stony ground; it will not matter.

However, Scotland has gained at least one thing from its new-found nationalism. Any nationalist upsurge necessarily involves a large amount of navel-gazing; the nation has to be defined, so that it can be fought for. Scots culture has a high profile in the 80s. The development of Mayfest and the naming of Glasgow as the European City of Culture for 1990; the novels of Alisdair Gray, James Kelman, Agnes Owens, William McIlvanney, Iain Banks and Alan Spence; the poetry of Liz Lochhead, Edwin Morgan, Douglas Dunn, Norman MacCaig and Tom Leonard; the drama of Tom McGrath, John Byrne, John Clifford, Peter Arnott, Rona Munro and Marcella Evaristi; the proliferation of literary magazines - Chapman, Cencrastus, New Edinburgh Review and so on - have all boosted the image of Scots culture both inside and outside the country. This emergent culture, created, for the first time

since 1707, for Scots, by Scots, in Scotland, has a radically different slant to the enthusiastically pro-union stance of the Scottish Enlightenment -

If the creation of a new British mentality acted as a creative spur both to those Scottish writers who accepted it and to the smaller number who resisted it in the eighteenth century, then what provided much of the energy in the twentieth century was the creation of a post-British mentality.(7)

It is difficult to say what a post -British mentality is - it is difficult to say what a British mentality is - but Crawford's judgement, from the prospective of the late 1980s, is a reflection of the received worth of Scottish culture. It is no longer subsumed by, or subservient to, English culture; it is now something worth saving, worth protecting from the "Englising" process - whatever that is. Scottish theatre has shared in this development; it has grown, from virtual non-existence at the start of the century to a position of relative strength in the late 1980s. The theatre movement which began in England in the late 1960s has played an important part in this development. In England, however, the fringe had a powerful impact on the rest of the English theatre, but it has remained on the fringe. In Scotland, the movement has come to represent Scottish theatre in the 1980s.

### SCOTTISH THEATRE, 1900-73.

At the turn of the century, there was virtually no Scots drama. The large number of repertory theatres took touring productions from England; indigenous drama tended to follow English models, if it was not losing itself in the Highlands - adaptations of Scott were common.

The first attempt to establish a specifically Scottish theatre came in 1909, when Alfred Wareing set up the Glasgow Repertory Theatre. Wareing was connected with the Abbey Theatre in Dublin; the Glasgow theatre was set up in the wake of an Abbey tour of Scotland in 1905. Funded by subscriptions, it brought international drama to the city; the first British production of The Seagull was staged there. Glasgow Rep. also encouraged new Scots writing, but failed to uncover anything significant or exciting.

Glasgow Rep. died at the outbreak of the First World War; the next development in Scottish theatre came in the 1920s. The Scottish National Players operated as an amateur company from 1921 to 1948. Between the year it was formed and the early 1930s the S.N.P. produced plays, nearly all of which were in some way identifiably Scottish; most of the playwrights who worked with the company wrote in Scots. The S.N.P., in common with Glasgow Rep., failed both to unearth or generate a Scottish dramatic tradition, but it did produce a few plays which were, at least, relevant to their

times - George Blake's Clyde-Built - about a family of Greenock shipbuilders, or John Brandon's The Glen Is Mine, about Highland development. Granted, these plays usually raised issues only to side-step them - The Glen Is Mine, in particular, takes refuge in an unlikely series of *dei ex machina* - but the issues were raised. The S.N.P. would also tour to any place where they could stage a play. The company played in villages and towns up and down Scotland, sometimes encountering ingrained suspicion -

... "If they were as good as the papers wad mak oot, d'ye think they'd waste their time coming to Lock-erbie?.." (8)

In 1928 the S.N.P.'s constitution changed. the company's new board - composed mainly of business and professional men - were less inclined to take risks with new material, and the S.N.P.'s output declined.

At the same time that the S.N.P. were conducting their search for a Scots dramatic tradition, a number of other groups, growing out of various working-class organisations, began to tour around the country. Linda MacKenney has identified three broad types of group -

...First, there are the socialist drama societies...These include...the Scottish branches of the Workers Theatre Movement...who were closely identified with the Communist Party of Great Britain; The Scottish Labour College players, an offshoot of the Clarion Scouts; the Parkhurst and Paisley Socialist Sunday School Drama Groups; the St. George and the Perth Co-operative Players, attached to Co-operative Societies in Maryhill, Glasgow and Perth, respectively; the Newtongrange Labour Party Dramatic Association and the Catrine, Cumnock, Govanhill and Shettleston I.L.P.

Players...Secondly, at the opposite end of the scale, there were "community" groups who set out to explore the life experience of their working class communities...They include the Glasgow Jewish Institute Players...;and the South Uist and Barra Players...The same "community" groups also include a host of Scottish mining drama clubs, formed by their local miners' institute or Burns club. These include the Kingussie Amateur Dramatic Society from Fife and the Tranent Amateur Dramatic Guild from Lothian; and the Shotts Miners Welfare Guild from Lanarkshire. Last...there were a number of theatre companies who - like the "community" theatre groups - were not originally political, but were subsequently politicised by a particular event, such as the General Strike, the Great Depression and its attendant unemployment, or the rise of Fascism in Europe. This group recruited many community drama clubs, notably the Glasgow Jewish Institute Players who presented a series of anti-fascist dramas during the late 1930s and 40s.(9).ls2

This popular theatre movement could reach large audiences. The Bowhill Miners Group toured Joe Corrie's In Time Of Strife, a play about the 1926 strike, to twenty-five villages in Fife in 1928; they played to an audience of between 800 and 1,000 people each night. From 1937 to 1938, the Glasgow Workers' Theatre performed Waiting For Lefty in front of 10,000 people. In 1941, Glasgow Unity Theatre mounted its first production - Clifford Odets' Awake And Sing. Formed as an amateur group by ex- members of the Workers Theatre Group, The Clarion Players, The Transport Players and the Jewish Institute Players, Unity sought a specifically left-wing Scottish theatre. They spoke the language of the working classes, gave their productions of foreign plays (The Lower Depths, for example) a Scots slant, and staged plays which dealt with the urban, working class experience - Robert MacLeish's The Gorbals Story, Ena Lamont Stewart's Starched Aprons and Men Should Weep, and George Munroe's Gold In His Boots. They even tackled one of the

great unmentionable subjects - homosexuality - in Benedick Scott's The Lambs Of God. The actors - Roddy MacMillan, Andrew Keir, Russell Hunter - were from the audience that the company was trying to reach; they brought that experience to the parts that they played. The audience responded; between August 1946 and April 1947 The Gorbals Story played to over 100,000 people.

After the war, Unity split in two - a professional company and an amateur company. The professional company ran into trouble soon after the split, even though The Gorbals Story was such a great success. The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama wouldn't rent their theatre (the Athenaeum) to Unity; actors left to seek work elsewhere; and the company's finances were not well regulated. The Scottish Committee of the Arts Council withdrew funding from Unity in 1947; Unity itself folded in 1949.

With Unity's demise, the era of working class theatre came to an end. The developing Scottish theatre tradition continued, but the tide had been rolled back; in the 1950s and the 1960s, no group or play managed to reach the massive audiences the Bowhill Miners or Glasgow Unity had.

In the late 40s and 50s the Citizens Theatre Company, formed in 1945, produced 80 Scottish plays, of which 40 were new. Some plays dallied in the kailyard, but others - Roddy MacMillan's All In Good Faith, and the harsh dramas of George Munro - provided the audiences with stronger materi-

al. The company also benefitted from a good acting company, much of it drawn from Glasgow Unity.

In 1963, the Traverse theatre opened in James Court in Edinburgh. In some ways, it was the ancestor and role model for the fringe theatres and arts labs that sprang up at the end of the decade. It was small (60 seats), sweaty, sometimes wonderful, sometimes terrible; and it was a source of continuing controversy -

..with wildly exaggerated stories circulating about the drinking, drug-dealing and lurid sexual practices that were supposed to take place there. At the time, the Traverse was a powerful focus for respectable Edinburgh's fantasies and fears about the new "permissive" age. [Gordon MacDougall, artistic director from 1966 to 1968] tells a story of an actor climbing in a bus at the bottom of the High Street, telling the conductress he wanted to get off at the Traverse, and being rewarded with a nudge and "Oooh, you naughty boy"...(10)

But although the Traverse built itself an international reputation, its relationship to Scots theatre was problematic. The Traverse saw itself as an international experimental theatre; the encouragement of new local writing was only one of its purposes, and enthusiasm for it tended to wax and wane depending on the interest of the Artistic Director. It wasn't until Chris Parr's tenure in 1975 that the Traverse had an Artistic Director committed to Scottish writing.

In the 1960s, though, The Traverse gave a home to Stewart Conn, Stanley Eveling (an Englishman who chose to live in and write about Scotland) and C.P.Taylor. Taylor could almost count as Scotland's great lost dramatist; his plays,

with their flowing, incisive dialogue, never received sufficient recognition in Scotland. He worked for most of the seventies in the north-east of England with various local theatre groups; the Live Theatre Company in Newcastle, in particular. Taylor was a committed socialist; but, like David Mercer, he never stopped examining his beliefs; in plays such as The Black And White Minstrels, he picked holes in the framework of shared assumptions of the left-wing middle class. He died in 1981, four months after his last and most famous play, Good, was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Theatrical activity began to pick up again in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Giles Havergal became Artistic Director of the Citizens theatre in 1969, turning it from a declining rep into a dynamic, if controversial theatre; an early production of Hamlet with David Hayman in the title role, moved the editor of the Glasgow Herald to publish a scathing review on the newspaper's front page. The regime at Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum - Richard Eyre, Chris Parry and Bill Bryden - began to put at least some pressure on the Traverse's reputation as the capital's only pioneering theatre. The Scots theatre gained its first in-house publication. Scottish Theatre, edited by Kenneth Roy, was published from 1969 to 1973; it provided a forum for internal debate, and championed C.P. Taylor's plays to a skeptical theatre community. In 1973, the Scottish Society of Playwrights was set up. And in the midst of all this renewed activity, 7:84 (Scotland) was formed.

## SCOTTISH THEATRE 1973-

In 1972, a theatre co-operative called Offshore Theatre produced a play called The Great Northern Welly Boot Show at the Waverley market as part of that year's festival. In a three-week run, they played to 12,000 people. The company included Tom McGrath (the musical director) and Billy Connolly: and perhaps more significantly for the development of Scottish theatre, it contained the nucleus of the first 7:84 (Scotland) theatre company. John Byrne, the Welly Boot Show's designer, designed the first shows that 7:84 produced: and the cast list included Bill Paterson, John Bett and Alex Norton.

7:84 (Scotland) was not a mere adjunct to 7:84 (England); a branch company set up by its more successful parent, that would remain subordinate to it. Rather, the company meshed Scots talent with the experience of the 7:84 (England) contingent in radical theatre. In any case, that contingent was itself half Scots - David and Elizabeth MacLennan were originally from Glasgow.

Their first production, in 1973, has become part of fringe theatre mythology. The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil has been held up as the definitive example of good political theatre practice; but its success was not due to the quality of the play alone. Quite simply, the time was

right. The Cheviot caught the crest of the first big nationalist wave of the 1970s. Any later and the company ran the risk of political isolation; any later, and it would have been just one voice in a general chorus. But, in 1973, the play focussed Scotland's dilemma; not the spiritual dilemma of a country losing its soul, but the material dilemma of who owns what, and why. The Cheviot and the stag were a part of Highland history, and the lowlander's part in that history was not one to be proud of; but the black, black oil was Scotland's problem.

This is not to deny the show's theatrical brilliance. It fused a well-constructed storyline with elements of the strong Scottish variety tradition; the mixture of comic and serious songs, monologues and set pieces of an average evening at the Glasgow Empire. Occasionally, the elements were rather more specific: the cross-talking Highlanders owed much to Harry Lauder, and Andy McChuckemup was a gallus Glaswegian in the tradition of Lex Maclean.

Interestingly, the play worked in much the same way as early feminist agitprop: Rather than substituting one image for another, so that the new image stood in for, and in a sense explained, the old image, early feminist agitprop held up images of femininity - the sanitary towel, the deodorant, and so on - with the intention of questioning them (see chapter 4). The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil operated in much the same way. It pointed up the contrasts between the sentimental notion of Highland life - the whole

range of "tartanry" - and exposed the history of brutal exploitation that lay beneath it: the show might start with a couple of choruses of These Are My Mountains, but by the end it had shown that, whoever owned the mountains, it wasn't the Highlander. It could be said that the show took on Brigadoon and won.

Something of The Cheviot's impact can be caught from this description of it, from Liz Lochhead in 1987; she is writing about Wildcat's first show, The Painted Bird, in 1978 -.

I can't imagine, though, that The Painted Bird could possibly have caused such a sensation as 7:84 (Scotland) Theatre Company's The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil. Simply because in that five years an audience had evolved which was well-used to the epic and the episodic; to shifting styles of narration; to monologues and music interrupting the action; to having their heartstrings tugged one moment, and their funny-bones tickled the next; to being addressed directly over the footlights and not ignored behind an "invisible" fourth wall; to being wide-open to styles other than naturalism; to there being no reason why something could not be simultaneously thoroughly entertaining and serious and thought provoking...Impossible to remember just how fresh, how very cheeky indeed, seemed Bill Paterson's McChuckemup or Liz MacLennan's Harriet Beecher Stowe monologue or John Byrne's pop-up Heilan' set. Hard to recall how the unfamiliarity of hearing Dolina MacLennan's Gaelic songs and Alan Ross' fiddle music swell to fill the Citizens' Theatre caused a shiver up the spine and a prickle at the back of the neck.(11)

In 1973 and 1974, The Cheviot played to audiences comparable to those reached by the Bowhill miners in the 1920s; touring for 17,000 miles, including a tour of the west of Ireland, the show played to over 30,000 people. No other 7:84 show had this impact, and it is difficult to see how any other show could; implicit in Lochhead's description is the idea

that the recent history of Scottish theatre is unimaginable without The Cheviot. As she notes, it instituted a new style; but, more than that, it became a cultural figurehead. It passed into the popular imagination in a way that only a few plays do; for a while it seemed as though 7:84 badges were everywhere - and everyone knew of the play.

For a time in the 1970s, then, The Cheviot was a shorthand summary for the condition of Scotland; and its success allowed 7:84 - and the fringe and political theatre groups that followed it - to establish itself on a different level than that of the fringe groups in England. In Scotland, there was no indigenous establishment for groups like 7:84 to be on the fringes of. There were no theatrical institutions like the National or the R.S.C. in which the Scots establishment had a social and economic investment; even the Citizens, which to some extent fills that role today, was in the early 1970s more likely to shock than please the establishment. The nearest institutions were, in fact, the National and the R.S.C. 400 miles away and, in the context of 1970s nationalism, in another country. 7:84 were in the fortunate position of being opposed to an establishment identified by its audience as alien, while being far enough away from that establishment to become themselves a major force. Also, 7:84 were operating in a society which was, at least nominally, committed to the left; the Scottish bourgeoisie was coming to ally itself with the Labour party. Being a left-wing theatre group in Scotland was, and still is, rather more respectable than being one in England.

7:84's work, for the rest of the decade, developed the ideas contained within The Cheviot. The company's stance was left-wing nationalist; they argued for a Scotland free both of Westminster and Scottish capital. This brought them into conflict with nationalists, both inside and outside the S.N.P.. The play Little Red Hen, with its Bay City Rollers pastiche and its scathing characterisations of right-wing nationalists, seemed at the time an assault on the whole idea of independence; some commentators missed its plea for an independent socialist Scotland. The company was also unafraid of tackling the problems within Scots society; they examined working-class sectarianism and sexism in The Game's a Bogey, and working class drink culture in Out Of Our Heads. In McGrath's words, 7:84 in the 1970s managed to avoid "tailism"; a slavish pandering to working class culture, merely following it rather than reflecting and examining it.

No-one followed 7:84 around the Highlands; in the period 1973 to 1979 they were the most important touring theatre group in Scotland. However, this did not mean that no other groups were there. The number of Theatre-In-Education companies grew from one in 1967 to twelve in the late 1970s; the most important of these were Theatre About Glasgow (formed as an adjunct to the Citizens in 1967) and Borderline, based in Irvine, who formed in 1974. At the end of the decade Winged Horse formed, initially to produce a Stewart Conn play, Hecuba; and, in 1978, three 7:84 (Scotland) members -

David MacLennan, David Anderson and Feri Lean - left to form Wildcat Theatre Company.

Arguably, however, there was only one other event as significant for the development of Scottish theatre in the 1970s as The Cheviot, although it did not have the same startling impact. Chris Parr was appointed Artistic Director of the Traverse in 1975. If this appointment had been made in 1988, it would have been held up as another example of the inexorable "Englishing" of Scotland. At the time, though, he was the best person for the job -

Chris Parr...came into his inheritance at a time when powerful practical and political considerations were urging the kind of popular Scottish policy he adopted; but the point about Parr -and the key to his unique achievement at the Traverse - is that he did not adopt it for cynical or pragmatic reasons. He was absolutely in tune with the mood of mid-70s Scotland, helping to create it as well as responding to it; he believed in the power of specific, local experience to illuminate broader issues; he believed passionately that there was a rich new seam of Scottish writing talent which the Traverse must encourage, and he believed in more accessible theatre for a more broadly based audience...His whole career, both before the Traverse and after, has been marked by a strong antipathy to the British establishment, and its metropolitan values...(12)

Between 1975 and Parr's departure in 1980, the Traverse provided a home for Tom McGrath, John Byrne, Donald Campbell, Marcella Evaristi and other Scots. Parr gave writers encouragement, and sometimes, when needed, a push; Tom McGrath's play Laurel and Harvey lay at the bottom of a cupboard until Parr chivvied him into reworking it. Even though Parr's output tailed off in his final year, and

although he left the Traverse amidst arguments about festival programming, directing commitments and the Traverse's deficit, he had still created a healthy atmosphere for new Scots writing; after he had left the Traverse, Parr's era became a nostalgic reference point for Scots playwrights. The Scottish Society of Playwrights' magazine, Scottish Theatre News, went so far as to canonise him; his saintly name was "St. Chris Parr of Blessed Memory". If there was any irony in the title, it was gentle.

Until 1979, the Scots theatre scene looked healthier than it had for quite some time; growth, for the first time, was general, not just concentrated in one area or in one group or theatre. The Devolution vote, the 1979 election, and the economic recession of 1980/1 changed all that -

The killer punch was the uppercut of inflation and the plunge into recession which undermined the spirit of adventure, effectively destroyed Theatre-in-Education, thus losing a whole new generation of potential theatre-goers and turned small-scale touring into a high-risk venture. Exciting ventures, like the Young Lyceum, sank without trace...The opportunities which had been created were inexorably lost - the stage became a less and less interesting proposition as far as writers were involved. They saw the possibilities of production receding as management turned their eyes southwards for their salvation...Apart from several tenacious manifestations of the 70s we are more or less back where we started...(13)

By 1982, there were only ten premieres of new Scottish plays, compared to twenty in 1981. However, the advances of the 1970s could not be written off so easily -

But this time it's different and, at the bottom line, more bitter and more sweet. Bitter because we have lost so much that had been built up during that time, and

sweet because we know that if it can be done once, it can be done again - and done better and even more enduringly. One can begin to sense people re-emerging, blinking, into the daylight, to see what can be done - a new generation, tougher, wiser, certainly leaner, and hopefully, fitter.(14)

The truth is that the decline in the Scots theatre was never quite as damaging as post-devolution apathy had made it. Granted, it was harder to have new plays produced in the early 1980s; Peter Lichtenfels, Parr's successor at the Traverse, wasn't as committed to Scots writing as his predecessor. The Glasgow Theatre Club (formed in 1978) had acquired a base in the Tron Theatre, but it did not have enough money to establish itself as a base for new writing. 7:84 and Wildcat had their own in-house writers - McGrath for 7:84, David MacLennan, David Anderson and David MacNiven for Wildcat.

But there were signs of recovery in the midst of the slump. In 1980 the Edinburgh Playwrights Workshop held its first series of readings. In 1981 Theatre Alba formed; in 1982 Gerry Mulgrew formed Communicado. In the early eighties, George Byatt (author of The Clyde Is Red) ran Theatre P.K.F., whose "play followed by discussion" format was adopted by other companies, in particular, United Artists (Scotland). And in the early eighties, Wildcat established themselves as a major force in touring theatre -

It's difficult to say that Wildcat split from 7:84 for any one reason. I think there were a number of reasons. The principal reason is the musical one, that we wanted to develop a musical theatre which treated music as a part of the work of equal importance to any other part. Music with us isn't just a dramatic device. It's absolutely integral to the work, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for 7:84 to contain the people who

wanted to do this kind of work, also at the same time to do the kind of work that John McGrath wanted to do...It called for different acting skills, different musical skills. That was one reason there was a difference in our approach to politics in that John, as a writer, has an almost uncanny knack in handling an argument. Both Dave Anderson and myself and David MacNiven, who have written the bulk of our shows, tend to approach the political matter more tangentially or perhaps create a series of impressions which taken together add up to a strong political statement...(15)

Wildcat's style - a non-naturalistic, public theatre that relies on music - has stayed more or less constant since the group formed. They mix epic theatre techniques (the actors double as musicians, their instruments usually set up on stage as they would be for a rock concert) with the popular culture of the West of Scotland; Their song lyrics mix Brechtian chic with Glasgow cheek -

Your father,  
Who works in Govan,  
It was him who gave you your name,  
He works for us,  
His word is law in this house as his father's was in  
his house,  
It's him who gives us our weekly wage,  
And he doesn't get into debt,  
And he doesn't have debtors,  
And he believes in eternal damnation,  
And he believes in God and the Devil,  
And he brings home the Bacon,  
And the power,  
And the glory,  
For being your father,  
A man.(16)

Wildcat's focus is almost exclusively on urban Scotland; their music - a fusion of jazz, blues, funk, rap and rock - catches something of the urban Scottish fascination with American culture -

Don't talk to me about folk music,  
Don't talk to me about art,  
Don't talk to me about Andy Stewart,  
I know what I feel in my heart.  
I gotta right to sing the blues if I want to,

Learned how to do it at my Grandma's knee,  
If it's good enough for Grandma,  
Then it's good enough for me...(17)

The company do not ignore Scottish folk music, but tartanry,  
when it arises, is given no quarter -

The Heilan' man's umbrella,  
Is ablow the Central Brig,  
An' ma hert is in the studio,  
Where they mak' Thingummyjig...(18)

(Thigummuyjig was a Scottish Television production, notable  
for twee sentimentality, inane songs and more tartan than a  
sane man could comfortably imagine).

To some extent, Wildcat have taken on 7:84's high profile.  
Their tenth anniversary was marked by a full-page article in  
the Glasgow Evening Times - something hard to imagine in  
England. The publication of The Joint Stock Book did not  
rate a full page in The Evening Standard. And, apart from  
their own work, the Company are partly responsible for the  
formation and development of Glasgow's festival - Mayfest.

Mayfest is a curious child: it breeds parents. As it becomes  
larger, more and more people want to be responsible for it -  
to grab a piece of the glory. Glasgow District Council, in  
particular, are quite happy to take more credit for Mayfest  
than they can reasonably claim.

The original impulse for the festival seems to have come  
from two directions at once. Wildcat had been touring  
abroad, and had seen popular theatre groups working in

different countries; they felt that this form of theatre deserved exposure in Scotland. At the same time, the S.T.U.C. were looking for a cultural event to supplement the traditional Mayday celebrations. David MacLennan, Feri Lean and Alex Clark (the Scottish General Secretary of Equity) approached Glasgow District Council for money for the scheme; Equity and Wildcat put up some of their own money to get the fledgling Mayfest off the ground.

Mayfest was, from the outset, both an international and a local festival, intended to bring popular culture to Glasgow, and to provide a focus for local activities. The emphasis on the festival's community side is in marked contrast to Edinburgh, whose festival only plays a peripheral part in Scottish cultural life; after Mayfest started, Scottish theatre companies - Wildcat, 7;84, - began to play there in preference to Edinburgh. Indeed, the capital is trying to follow Mayfest in making its festival more "popular" - to try to bring more of Edinburgh's population into contact with it. Mayfest's community programme was instituted fully in the festival's second year, and by 1988 it had grown to a total of 600 performances in 140 venues; if it stood alone, it would be the largest community festival in Britain. However, funding for it is low; in 1988, the community budget was £40,000 - £2,000 down on the preceding year. The community side is sometimes in danger of being swamped by the more prestigious international festival. In 1988, a casual observer might have concluded that there was nothing to Mayfest bar Peter Brook's brilliantly staged soap-opera,

The Mahabarata. Its supposed "theft" from London occupied more column inches than the community events could hope to muster.

However, the most successful play in Scotland in the 1980s was first produced as part of Mayfest's community programme. Tony Roper's The Steamie was produced by Wildcat at Mayfest in 1986; they toured it around Glasgow community centres. The play was originally commissioned by Borderline, who rejected it at the first draft stage; it was then given a rehearsed reading at the Tron, and rejected by four other companies, before Wildcat took it up, added songs to it, and staged it. The Steamie toured around Scotland in 1986 and 1987. Its success was, in part, due to Wildcat's success in building up a working class audience; but the play itself struck a chord. It was set in a tenement laundry on New Years Eve; a situation within the experience of many in the audience, and in the recent, recoverable past of the audience as a whole. It is not directly political; but it deals with a community of women and a way of life that is in the process of being destroyed. It deals with the women's relationships, to each other and to men. Surprisingly, it also manages to avoid being overly sentimental; the women's humour is too acute to allow the play to degenerate into a kind of tenement kailyard.

The Steamie's success was not copied by any other Scottish theatre groups (although some community theatre groups considered scripts called The Corpy, or The Flittin) but it

did revive interest in Scottish theatre; and it has done so at a time when activity had reached levels comparable to those of the 1970s. At the Traverse, Jenny Killick, the Artistic Director from 1985 to 1989, was interested in international drama; but she also assembled a nexus of young playwrights when she was an assistant director under Peter Lichtenfels in 1984/5. In 1984 she co-directed 1984:Points of Departure - a season of three plays ( The Clean Sweeps by Stuart Paterson, Runty by Chris Hannan, and In Descent by Simon Donald). Later that year, she directed Hannan's first full length play Klimkov: The Life of a Tsarist Agent; and in 1985 the Traverse ran full-length plays by Hannan, Peter Arnott and John Clifford.

In the 70s, the Traverse was the main showcase for new Scots drama. In the 1980s, for the first time, Scots playwrights have a number of options and a network of different groups and venues with which to place their work. Firstly, there are groups such as United Artists (Scotland) and Annexe Theatre Company, who run workshops and perform new plays; the Traverse and the Tron take writers who are rather more established; and the reps - in particular the Royal Lyceum - are starting to take the work of well-known writers. Someone like Liz Lochhead can now work with a small-scale company (Shanghied, for Borderline), a small and middle scale company (Same Difference for Wildcat) and for a large theatre (adaptations of Dracula and Tartuffe for the Royal Lyceum). It is not common, but it can happen.

The growth in touring theatre - United Artists, Theatre Alba, Focus Theatre, Winged Horse, Comunicado, Clyde Unity, AlienArts, Annexe - and in workshops - the Edinburgh Playwrights Workshop, those attached to the Traverse and the Tron, and to the various touring groups - is supported by the longer-established theatres and groups. One of the most positive aspects of the Scottish theatre scene is the high level of commitment to it shown by the Citizens, the Tron and Wildcat, for example; the theatrical big names - the Andersons, the Lochheads - raise money not only for social causes, but also for smaller theatre companies. When Annexe Theatre Company was an idea in the minds of its co-founders, they approached the Scottish Society of Playwrights for office space; to their surprise, Charles Hart, the S.S.P.'s Chair, said yes. The company receives help from Wildcat occasionally, in the form of transport and (sometimes) actors. When the S.S.P. itself needed new office space after the Scottish Arts Council cut its grant in 1986, the Tron Theatre gave part of its offices to the Society.

The theatre world in Scotland is also rather more internally mobile than it is in England. Because the scene is smaller, and there is no division between the fringe and the establishment, directors, designers, writers and actors move more easily between different theatres and groups than they do down South. Alan Lyddiard moved from his post of director at Dundee Repertory Theatre to become Artistic Director for T.A.G., pausing only to direct Fancy Rappin', Wildcat's

tenth anniversary show. Ian Brown moved from T.A.G. to the Traverse, to replace Jenny Killick. Gerry Mulgrew has acted with Wildcat while running Communicado; David Anderson took time off from his usual role as Wildcat's musical director to play the father in 7:84's production of Men Should Weep. Giles Havergal directed that particular 7:84 show; and David Hayman has directed for the Traverse and the Citizens before becoming Artistic Director of 7:84.

It might seem that Scottish theatre has finally won through to a reasonably happy ending. However, it is not that simple. Theatre-in-Education has not recovered from the deprivations of the early 1980s; despite the promptings of the Scottish Arts Council, the field is still largely unpopulated. The development of theatre in working-class communities is hampered by lack of money; even though the Scottish Labour Party are now committed to a Mayfest in each of the Scottish local authorities that they control, there simply are not enough community arts workers to go around.

The Scottish Arts Council has sent periodic shocks through the theatre world in the 1980s. It remains more committed to the old liberal arts funding ideal than its cousin in England: The S.A.C. contribution to the Arts Council's three year plan stressed the cultural differences between Scotland and England and deplored the lack of resources available for it to raise and spread the arts. Even so, it has made unpopular decisions. It withdrew its grant from the Scottish Society of Playwrights in 1986; the S.S.P. - the closest

thing to a union that Scots playwrights have - now exists on a voluntary basis. At the same time, the S.A.C. threatened to withdraw funding from workshop companies. It felt that such companies were merely talking-shops, unproductive cliques not worth financing. In place of the workshops, the S.A.C. favoured the appointment of a dramaturg to every major Scottish theatre company. In the event, the S.A.C. continued to fund workshops on a limited scale, and only one dramaturg - Tom McGrath at the Royal Lyceum - was appointed, in 1985.

In 1988 the S.A.C. threatened to withdraw 7:84's grant. The standard of the group's work had been declining during the 1980s. McGrath's ability to both celebrate and criticise the working-class had been waning: In Blood Red Roses(1980), for example, Bessie McGuigan is a good Trades-Unionist because she is a celtic fighting woman; no explanation, no analysis - she simply is that way. His adaptation of Finn MacColla's The Albannach presented the conflict between Presbyterianism and the free spirit of the Gael too schematically; granted, this is a feature of the original novel, but McGrath's failure to question it made the adaptation hollow and unconvincing. The company's best work in the 1980s tended to be productions of earlier plays; Robert MacLeish's The Gorbals Story, or the Clyde-Built season (George Munroe's Gold In His Boots, Ewan MacColl's Johnny Noble, Lamont-Stewart's Men Should Weep and Joe Corrie's In Time Of Strife). This work was fundamental in reviving interest in working-class thea-

tre earlier in the century; this, indeed, was McGrath's aim

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In a very small way, this season of plays is an attempt to remind our audiences both of the ultimate humanity of the working-class struggle, and of the long, rich and neglected tradition of the way it has been fought.

In Scotland, the labour movement has always had a strong cultural side: It has generated its own poetry, novels, songs, films, and of course, plays. But how many of these works are in print, let alone read? I have no wish to denigrate James Bridie, but it should be a cause for concern that he is THE Scottish playwright of the 40s and 50s - by virtue of playing to large middle-class audiences. The works of Joe Corrie, and the Unity plays are "not remembered". That means they ARE remembered, but by the wrong people.(19)

The company's grant was to be cut, so the Scottish Arts Council maintained, because its administrative structure was weak; the administrator's chair had a large number of occupants. In protest at the S.A.C.'s threat, McGrath resigned 7:84's Artistic Directorship, took the material he was developing to Freeway Films (the production company he set up in 1983) and wrote to the newspapers, denouncing the S.A.C.'s Drama Panel as faded-pink yuppies - the same kind of bureaucrats who cut Unity's grant in the 1940s. David Hayman took over, and Jo Beddoe became the company's administrator; Hayman decided that 7:84 should give more thought to encouraging new Scots writers in the future, the S.A.C. reconsidered, and did not cut the company. McGrath, after leaving the company he helped set up, did not abandon the theatre; in 1989 his play Border Warfare was produced by Wildcat at the old Glasgow Transport Museum - where The Mahabharata was staged.

There is a danger that Scottish theatre might fall foul of the political situation. Thatcher's conversion to devolution is as likely as her conversion to socialism; and if a prolonged period of nationalist activity comes to nothing, then the cultural atmosphere might sour. It might become either self-congratulatory - lose the edge that it currently has - or wither away entirely, as it has done in the past.

However, at the moment the general state of Scottish theatre is healthy. For the first time a specifically Scottish body of work is being assembled, consisting both of new plays and plays recovered from the recent past. 7:84 in the 1970s and Wildcat in the 1980s have managed to construct a strong identity for themselves. Their style is not a blueprint for all of Scots theatre, but their politics - and the success they have had in articulating those politics - have had a great impact -

...From my experience [Joyce MacMillan, The Guardian's Scottish theatre critic] most of the theatre companies...which seek to find a popular audience in Scotland do seem to find themselves adopting a position which is both socialist and nationalist, or at least devolutionist...(20)

Granted, this reflects the politics of that audience; but, as has been noted, 7:84 were at least partly involved in the socialist/nationalist debate in the 1970s.

Where the future lies is uncertain. There is a determination to escape the boom, slump, boom, slump cycle of development that has bedevilled Scottish theatre for most of the century. There is a healthy degree of cynicism about the fall-

out from Glasgow's term as European City of Culture in 1990. The development of theatre within communities is at an early stage, but there have been several large-scale community plays in various locations - Witches' Blood in Dundee, Birds of Passage in Edinburgh, and City - in Glasgow.

If the groups who worked in Scottish theatre in the twentieth century - Glasgow Rep., the S.N.P., the various workers' and community groups of the 1920s and 30s, Unity, the Traverse, 7:84, Wildcat - had been working in England they would have been marginalised. Their story would have been buried under "official" theatre history - the first run of Look Back In Anger, the laying of the National's foundation stone. In Scotland, theatre is, in that sense, establishmentless; the history of Scottish theatre is the history of these groups.

It was inevitable that this history would be rediscovered in a period of nationalist resurgence. Cairns Craig, in a perceptive article written on the tenth anniversary of the devolution vote, has noted the paradox of a strong culture emerging from a period of apparent defeat and suppression -

Ten years ago the talk was all of emigration or of lying low for a generation and hoping that someday it ("the independence movement", "nationalism", "Scottish creativity") might pick up again. The waste land of the 80s as upon us, to be made the more waste by Mrs Thatcher's first three years.

But it didn't happen like that...The energies which had been built up in the political sphere suddenly had nowhere to go, and transferred themselves into cultural activity. Instead of political defeat leading to quies-

cence, it led directly into an explosion of cultural creativity, a creativity coming to terms with the origins of the political defeat and redefining the nation's conception of itself. The '80s have been one of the most significant decades of Scottish cultural self-definition in the past two centuries.

In part this was because the events leading up to and resulting in the 1979 referendum, whatever their political outcome, focussed attention on the fact that Scotland was profoundly different in social texture and values from England. The Thatcher years, years of aggressive English nationalism, only emphasised this difference. The effort to capture and explore the texture of difference that constituted this enduringly Scottish experience provided an enormous impulse to artistic endeavour. The issue was self-definition and self-discovery: the challenge had to be met by an originality and intensity which, perhaps, had been lacking in Scotland since the period immediately following on the First World War.(21)

If the political situation in England has condemned the fringe to a kind of Red Queen's Race - of having to run as fast as it can to stay in the same place - then in Scotland it has had the opposite effect. The "theatre revolution" did not start in Scotland in 1968; it began in 1973 with The Cheviot and the blending of the socialist theatre practices that had emerged in England with the specific political and cultural experience of Scotland. The experience of Thatcherism has served only to give this process added impetus. What it is producing is a "post-British" theatre; if that vague phrase means anything, it means a theatre which does not have to look south for its inspiration.

## CONCLUSION

On the first of April, 1989, Peter Palumbo took over from Lord Rees-Mogg as Chairman of the Arts Council; Rees-Mogg went on to watch over the nation's morality, as Chairman of the new Broadcasting Standards Council. The new appointee was another one of the Prime Minister's "us"; a man who broadly agreed with her on the basics of economic and social policy.

By July, he was already voicing concern. In that month, the chairmen of five major national museums and galleries wrote to the Prime Minister to complain about the effect of inflation on their grants. Palumbo added his voice to the chorus -

I share the concern voiced by the chairmen of the major museums and galleries over meeting their salaries and maintenance bills. Unless there is some urgent action the whole fabric of the arts world will be threatened. We owe it to arts organisations to ensure that their basic public funding is maintained.(1)

Inflation had begun to blow holes in the Government's arts policy. As Nicholas De Jongh noted, Armageddon was not yet inevitable; but even the largest organisations found themselves in financial trouble -

...Peter Palumbo...is, like the rest of the [Arts] Council, acutely worried about the Royal Shakespeare Company, with its deficit of £1.2 million. The Royal Court has had to close its studio theatre, because it cannot achieve sufficient local authority support or sponsorship. The Tate Gallery, patched together after

the Second World War, and the National Gallery are in urgent need of very large capital funds over a five year period. The South Bank Centre, Kent Opera and the Bristol Old Vic are all, in different ways and to different degrees, financially troubled.

We should not, however, read into these declines and falls, a simple failure of the government to maintain public expenditure on the arts. Something more complicated and significant is happening. A series of warning lights are going on in the control rooms where the government's arts policy is hatched, to suggest that the theory and the practice of the policy is flawed...(2)

To the alternative theatre movement, news that warning lights were coming on would not come as a surprise. The fringe's warning lights had been flashing since 1981; but they were on the periphery of the main control board, where few if any would notice them. The serried ranks of bulbs signalling distress for the arts hierarchy, once lit, would easily outshine them.

It is tempting, given the political complexion of the government, to assume that the fringe's warning lights will go unheeded because the fringe has been targeted for annihilation; that there is a conspiracy against the field. This is not the case. As noted in Chapter 1, the Conservative party under Margaret Thatcher tends to fight its perceived enemies in a series of skirmishes (with the obvious exception of the NUM). The fringe has never been singled out as an enemy by the government; it is too small, too marginal (as compared to either the Welfare State or local government) to be worth attacking.

Rather, the fringe suffers as a result of government policy. As argued in Chapter 1, if Thatcherism is anything, then it is a view of the world, not a step by step new-right agenda for radical institutional change. Thrift and enterprise, stern morality and self-reliance are promoted, but by and large they are promoted through the state mechanism that already exists. The main weapon is fiscal. Fittingly for a worldview that holds that most social interaction can be reduced to purely economic imperatives, the Conservative party uses the cutback and the inadequate subsidy as a device to bring the country into line. This, of course, is easy to do through those parts of the state over which the government exercises a measure of direct control. The Arts Council, as noted in Chapter 2, had some independence from 1945 to 1979; and in that period it developed its own elitist philosophy. However, after 1979, the independence was gradually lost; when the government cut the Council's grant and placed sympathetic people into its top positions, the Council became noticeably more in tune with Thatcherism. The Council still registers complaints over the level of its finances, but it does so on the government's own ground.

It is in this way that government policy affects the fringe. The pressure is on the fringe, as it is on all those who are connected with or in some way reliant on the welfare state, to conform; to be efficient, to be cost effective, to be sponsor-friendly, to absorb the philosophy of the market. The danger is that this all-embracing philosophy is becoming

the new orthodoxy of the funding world. The quality of a company's work, its aims, the audience it tries to reach, its preferred form of internal structuring - these are not ignored by the Arts Council or the Regional Arts Associations, but they are de-emphasised. The accent is placed increasingly on the company's success or failure in the marketplace.

The fringe has not been singled out for attack through this new funding approach; nor has government legislation (section 28, for example) been designed with the fringe specifically in mind. The government is shooting at other, larger targets; and the fringe is caught in the crossfire.

However, this does not mean that the fringe has given itself over wholesale to the Thatcherite vision. Overtly socialist analysis has faded, certainly; but the kind of traditional socialism associated with the early agitprop groups has faded too. The oppositional approach may have changed, but there is still enough fuel within society to keep the questioning, socially aware aspects of the fringe moving -

...[There is] a large group of younger writers who send me [Kate Harwood] plays - male, women, working class, blacks, who do have the language of protest in their writing. They are part of our theatre, and just because they are not putting forward particularly well-argued socialist ideologies doesn't mean that they shouldn't actually be brought into the fold...(3)

As the initial political impetus behind feminism, black consciousness and other social and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s faded, much of the activity that these movements had generated moved into the field of culture.

Ideas connected with these movements filtered through to companies that had not endorsed them initially (Red Ladder, 7:84, The General Will). To an extent, these ideas became the new "common sense" of the field, part of the network of shared assumptions that help give the fringe what identity it has. These ideas did not become any less relevant when the Conservatives took office; they have continued to generate material throughout the decade.

Nor is the fringe entirely defenceless. One of the criticisms levelled at the fringe in the 1970s, that it was becoming institutionalised, had paradoxically become a source of strength in the 1980s. Touring venues had been established, support organisations existed to help the companies; any group forming in the 1980s could benefit from a structure that had evolved to help them. Granted, this structure is rickety, and is considerably stronger in some places (London, for example) than in others, but it is there.

The fringe has also been able to grow in the cracks within the state mechanism. The Greater London Council roused the government's ire; its abolition is, perhaps, the best example of the Conservative's extreme sensitivity to criticism. The Council did manage, however, to put over a coherent worldview of its own; arguably, in the early 1980s it was the only section of the Labour party to do so. The Council's responsiveness to outside influences (community

politics, feminism and so on) made it an obvious haven for the fringe.

In Scotland, theatre groups benefitted both from social trends and state formations. Resurgent Scottish nationalism is as much a product of the 1980s as Thatcherism itself; indeed, it has gained much of its political impetus from Thatcherism. The nationalist upsurge has been reflected in the activities of many of Scotland's semi-autonomous state and social organisations, and this has helped to protect companies that might have struggled more if they had been in England -

...We do have a huge majority of Labour and oppositional forces not only in parliamentary representation but also within local authorities, and certainly the working-class movement is not dead either. When the Scottish Arts Council threatened 7:84 Scotland, for example, the first people to get involved were the chairmen of the Scottish Labour Party, the General Secretary of the Scottish T.U.C., and the leaders of all the unions...(4)

Given the nature of the Scottish scene, it has been easier for companies to establish themselves in Scotland: Productions which might have been marginal in England- The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil, The Steamie and Liz Lochhead's Mary Queen Of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off were all either critical or popular successes in Scotland, or both.

The 1980s have been difficult for the fringe. Even the areas of growth and development have been constrained by the general political atmosphere. When the G.L.C. was abolished, the government was never likely to establish a comprehensive city-wide arts funding organisation that would develop the Council's policies. In Scotland, the number of theatre companies is still small; central government does not provide enough money for expansion.

But, throughout the decade, the fringe has managed both to produce work relevant to its time, and to find enclaves of support within the structure of the state. Thatcherism's ethos might seem inimical to the fringe, but Thatcherism has been an incomplete, ambiguous revolution; it has not transformed the country, and it has sparked off resistance in certain areas of society and of the state. The fringe has been able to take advantage of these cracks in the state structure; it has survived because the forces working against it have been unable to complete their self-appointed tasks in society as a whole. By the end of the 1980s, there were still some possibilities left.

In 1988, Welfare State were commissioned to work in Glasgow, as part of the build-up to the city's term as European City of Culture in 1990. 1988 marked Welfare State's 20th anniversary. In that time it had gained an international reputation for itself, and had established itself firmly in two

communities - in Burnley, and in Barrow-in-Furness. The company's work in Glasgow began on January 13th, the Saint's Day Of Glasgow's patron saint, St. Mungo -

...In the worshipful company of assorted clerics, planning officials, news crews, and the Lord Provost in full regalia, we helped coreograph a procession of inner-city school-children accompanied by the police pipe band over the Bridge of Sighs by the Necropolis to the Great Door of the Cathedral.

It was an extraordinary event, somehow fusing elements of Pied Piper mediaevalism, Blake's Holy Thursday, and state-of-the-art P.R.. And St. Mungo, Glasgow's patron saint, was to be guest of honour in a peculiar iconography.

Welfare State International artists had been invited by the City Chambers to assist with the order of the day. Our main contribution was to the Dean at the inaugural ceremony for a sheltered housing development in the cathedral precinct. The first gift was a hand-grafted "seed" lantern (depicting totemistically the life of Mungo) intended to lay the ground for a three-year W.S.I. project to turn Glasgow into the City of Light when it celebrates its distinction of being European City of Culture in 1990.

The second gift was a stainless steel cannister in the form of a spire encasing an hermetically sealed time capsule. Inside the capsule, to be buried under the cathedral forecourt for 200 years, are children's stories, drawings, and architectural fantasies for the future of their city. The container also holds an invitation from ourselves to the punters of 2188 to visit South Cumbria and be entertained by our ghosts on the site of our workshops. Such calculated whimsy may be read both as a marketing ploy and as a declaration of pathological optimism. For these are dangerous times...(5)

Dangerous times, certainly; however, not yet impossible ones.

# **APPENDIX**

## **Interviews**

This appendix contains the texts of some of the interviews conducted for the thesis. In general, these interviews form the background for the text of the thesis : interviews, such as the interview with Alan Tomkins, that are used more or less entire in the body of the thesis are not duplicated below.

With one exception, the interviews were not verbatim, but in note form. The text of each interview has therefore been subsequently checked by the interviewee.

### 1: Interviews for Chapter 3.

**Peter Reid : Community Arts Sub-Committee Officer,  
Greater London Council.**

Interview conducted - 28/10/87.

Nature of interview - Taped.

Peter Reid: [The London Boroughs Grant Committee] does not have a policy unit. It has one person who was recruited in the arts, and a couple of people who are working in the arts, but there's no policy unit. Greater London Arts do actually have [ex- G.L.C. workers] there (Anna Stapleton).

There are problems with the G.L.C. because when the G.L.C. got into community arts in a big way...[it] broadly thought that theatre was a middle-class way of looking at things. It took a political decision - that it should not expand theatre in any great way, and that the expanded area should be other areas that were traditionally underfunded, like photography, visual arts, film and video particularly.

Broadly, our research after the G.L.C. left [ Reid went on to work with the London Strategic Policy Unit] gave the impression that there was still a divide even after the G.L.C. got in there, and that divide was based on education, whether it was theatre, film, video, photography, whatever

the G.L.C. was funding. There was a major education divide above and below the degree level. Most people that made use of the community arts facilities were graduates - a good 20% of them were Ph.D and M.A. students. So there was a real concern, and in fact even the G.L.C.'s efforts which succeeded in terms of race and gender, failed dramatically in terms of spanning the educational divide. As far as theatre was concerned, they tended to concentrate very heavily on young people's theatre - T.I.E. - and they brought in race and feminist issues into those. But, then again, those aside, because they're locked audiences, if you go into school you get a fair cross-section of kids, most of the political theatre was actually pretty academic in content.

What the G.L.C. did do was pretty creditable...It made a policy decision to spend a lot of money on the arts, and on community arts in particular. And it made some mistakes. It had some successes, and these successes were in things like race and gender, which were very well highlighted and very successful. Most people who attended theatres and workshops were women, and a disproportionately high number were Black. But the split was in the educational divide.

David Pattie: I remember going to the Oval House Arts Centre to interview the administrator there [Anita Phrabakar], and she said that the G.L.C., in spite of the fact that some of its policies had failed, had been responsible for the shape of

theatre in London today.

P.R.: That's true, but that's true to a greater extent in other arts forms, film and video particularly which was set up at quite a polished level. Theatre crawled up, grew but crawled up much more slowly than other art forms...When I was interviewed for the job - I came from a theatre background and my prejudice is for theatre - the pile of applications for theatre was about a yard high; the pile of applications was about six inches for photography, and for film and video maybe nine inches. In effect, you could argue that was the community telling the community telling the Community Arts Sub-Committee that it had got its policies wrong. You could argue that. But at the same time, if you examine those theatre policies, as with other art forms, you will find that they were targeted at a fairly high academic audience.

One of the advantages of theatre is that it does not necessarily cost a lot of money to do. If you're going to start a film and video group, then you've got to have your camera, your editing suite, and you've got to have a network to get the technical aspects of it done. Theatre can be done on the street. People have been prepared to do it for nothing, it doesn't cost anything, and consequently the framework is there, and people working not so much as amateurs - which they might consider an insulting description - and if G.L.C. funding is not sustained they will continue to do it. And there will be people working in pubs, there'll be people

busking in the streets, there will be people going to community centres, and they'll pay out of their own pockets... so the network is there and the network will continue to be there.

**Praveen Bahl : Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee Officer.**

Interview conducted - 30/10/87.

Nature of interview - Notes.

Bahl joined the G.L.C. after the 1983 election.

Arts and Recreation was a very large department; it employed about 2,000 people - this included entertainments staff, parks staff, administration staff, and grant processing staff as well as cultural staff.

The Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee was established in 1982 to promote ethnic arts in London; to give support, advice and money to the field. It was intended to have a short life; after a certain period the groups funded by it would be passed over to the Community Arts Sub-Committee and the main committee. However, the ethnic arts portfolio grew and very little was transferred to other groups.

Ethnic Arts developed out of the Ethnic Minorities Unit, which was chaired by Hermann Ousley [now with the I.L.E.A.]. The Ethnic Arts adviser within this unit was also the adviser to the Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee. The Chair of the Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee while Bahl worked for them was Ken Little.

Its policy was not only to develop ethnic arts, but also to provide seed money and development grants to help groups develop themselves. The money was intended to help groups develop their own art forms and to offer a challenge to the arts mainstream.

An interventionist approach was developed by the setting up of a Race Equality Unit within the Arts and Recreations Department. This was a break with the Ethnic Minorities Unit, and was the first and only race equality unit within a department in Britain. The Ethnic Arts adviser monitored all grants by Ethnic Arts, Community Arts and the Main Committee, and made a race equality comment on each report.

One of the great successes of the E.A.S.C. was to encourage groups like the Black Audio Film Collective, and film and video groups in general. A massive injection of cash enabled these organisations to establish themselves- and all these groups had at least one show on Channel Four.

The E.A.S.C. did not have a split budget [i.e. a budget for each art form]; it was felt that it would be wrong to impose grades on the work, so it was all dealt with equally as they emerged. They limited applications to those coming in at the start of the year: Those claims were then processed by the advisers. The emphasis was placed on groups that were intervening in the mainstream, and who were also serving their own community.

However, natural splits arose - and a group's impact on the mainstream became the main criterion for funding. This meant that funding tended to go to groups in film and publishing, and to Black Women's groups; and a lot of developmental work was done with these groups, in everything from artistic programming to filling in forms.

The E.A.S.C. was submerged by a flood of applications; and the Sub-Committee was always underfunded in terms of the amount of applications it received. There was no increase in personnel, for example. The E.A.S.C. also suffered from some institutional bias on the part of the legal and financial committees. The E.A.S.C. had trouble understanding the changing concepts and developments within the Council: new officers had to be trained, but there was no time in which to train them.

The committee meetings ran in cycles of three weeks. 100 groups were chosen at the beginning of the financial year,

and these groups were split between two or three officers. Sometimes the budget had to be made up purely to satisfy the financial officers. Bahl had to produce 6 reports every three weeks, and these reports had to be detailed. The officers were under pressure all the time; once, one officer worked twenty-four hours at a stretch. Even during the summer recess reports were stockpiled. However, more often than not, the officers did not claim overtime for the shows they had to see.

Part of the G.L.C.'s problem was that it was so rich. Groups were encouraged to expand and not to seek support from anywhere else. Very few organisations thought about getting funding from G.L.A. and the Arts Council. Newer organisations only got G.L.C. funding for two or three years: Afterwards, most groups were picked up by the L.G.B.C. or G.L.A..

Bahl's work in the G.L.C. was carried out under the constant threat of abolition. All sorts of obstacles were placed in the G.L.C.'s way in the final year. There were, for example, restrictions on capital grants; allocations of £6,000 and over had to be cleared with the Government. Restraints were also put on building programmes.

However, Bahl thinks of the G.L.C. as a historic occasion in arts funding.

## 2. Interviews for Chapter 4.

### Philip Bernays : Administrator of the Independent Theatre Council

Interview Conducted - 7/5/88 and 17/5/88.

Nature of Interview - Notes.

The Independent Theatre Council is the management organisation for small-scale theatre. It has three functions -

- 1 to protect its members (240 in 1987/88)
- 2 to provide a training and information resource centre for its members - some of whom have quite a lot to learn about management.
- 3 to negotiate contracts with unions on behalf of members, to check on the system of management status, and to check on the enforcement of union agreements.

It has been said that the main problem in this field is financial, or at least liked to finance. The I.T.C. receives hundreds of problems per week, all coming back to money-whether it's staging, health and safety, or whatever. This money should be coming from the Government, especially where small-scale theatre is concerned; Bernays sees the field as the Research and Development branch of theatre.

Outside the I.T.C. there are another 240 companies (approx.) who could join the I.T.C. but have not.

(On the Arts Council) There has been a slight shift in the Arts Council's thinking away from touring and small-scale theatre; it's now putting more emphasis on the regional reps. There is a definite lack of money from the Arts Council, and from Regional Arts Associations and Local Authorities. As for business sponsorship, The problem is that there isn't much of a selling point. Most of the groups are loosely political; the group's policy might not be to find business sponsorship; and they might not find it worth the time and effort to find sponsorship. If a sponsor does fund a group it is largely for philanthropic reasons. However, two large businesses - Marks and Spencers and B.P. - do fund groups.

There is also the problem of interference in the group's work. When Bernays was working with the Actor's Touring Company, the group mounted a production of Hamlet that was sponsored by Prudential. The sponsors told the company that they wanted a "safe" production; that is, a production that did not play games with the text. The A.T.C.'s production was not "safe"; and Prudential did not sponsor them again.

(On Incentive Funding) The Council meant to start the pilot scheme for Incentive Funding in July 1988, but it did not get underway until Christmas-time; and even although £5

million (half of the 10% increase for 1988/9) was set aside for it, Bernays does not see Incentive Funding as a realistic long-term solution.

(On the general state of the Fringe) The field has developed a lot. The companies are getting more professional, and the work is getting technically more polished. Publicity is of a higher quality; in fact, things are more competent all round. There are more companies, and there is more money, mainly from local authorities (although there is a question mark over the effects of Government policy, such as the Poll Tax and section 28). There's an increase in companies funded by the D.H.S.S. and the M.S.C.. In general, the increase in companies has not been matched by an equivalent rise in funding: More companies wind up chasing less money.

The Arts Council gets a lot of applications, and can't deal with them all: there is a huge bottleneck of companies applying for progress funding. The Arts Council's input is huge but at the end of the day they only fund a small part of the field; its new approach is confused, and imposed at very short notice.

(On the G.L.C.) The G.L.C. is proof that having an arts policy succeeds. There was so much going on - one of the great successes of the G.L.C. was that you could sense the "good vibes" coming out of the arts scene. When it went, it left an unnaturally large hole behind it.

The boroughs together formed the L.G.B.C., which works very closely with Greater London Arts. The trouble is that there is not enough money, as always. Also, the L.G.B.C. gives money for everything, and the arts are only a small part of its' brief. Some boroughs have stopped funding the arts altogether - in general, there has been a noticeable loss of services.

**Follow-up Interview : 3/5/89.**

Since the last interview, there hasn't really been any change in the field; except, perhaps, for the Education Reform Act, which could have three effects -

- 1 It would make contributions towards the cost of school trips to theatres compulsory (although this is not a major problem for I.T.C. members).
- 2 It could affect those companies that tour into schools. The question is, will these groups be part of the core curriculum? If not, the groups might have to play at least partly outside of school time; and it could affect the issues they deal with - social issues might fall outside the core curriculum.
- 3 Some of the money that L.E.A.s spend on drama could be devolved to individual schools. Companies will have to make contact with individual heads and boards of governors. This could make setting up a tour chaotic.

(On three-year funding) In the first year, 4 revenue companies were put on three-year funding, one was moved down to annual funding, and two were pushed down to project application status. One of these companies - Foco Novo - folded; it was carrying a massive debt.

The procedures the A.C.G.B. drew up for the first year didn't work very well. The notification of decisions taken and procedures used was slow in coming through; the Arts Council realised this, and have tried to improve their system. The Council has pulled the idea of three year funding and assessment together. This means that major plans have to be made every three years. One-year renewable funding used to go through more or less on the nod; now, any major revisions in a company's three-year plan would require long discussions with the A.C.G.B..

The two companies taken on by the Council in the first year were Trestle Theatre and Theatre de Complicite. They are now on annual funding with an option on three-year funding.

On one level, three-year funding is a good thing: it forces companies to have a regular, coherent look at themselves. However, surely three years is too short a time in which to reassess yourself?

Now, there also has to be a business plan: This is the new buzz-word. One consultancy has produced a mimeographed business plan that will fit any company for £1,500 a go.

(On the I.T.C.) They still have a big membership turnover. New developments include developing training programmes on marketing and business planning. This year, however, was the first year that the I.T.C.'s start a theatre company course was not filled up.

The I.T.C. is going to market itself better; it is also going to mount a membership drive. Their current membership is 260/5. They're going to move into new areas - such as training and contract negotiations.

The biggest problem at the moment is inflation. This year is the first year that Equity could not secure a pay rise that is above the rate of inflation - they achieved 7% while inflation was running at 7.8%. The wage bill is about 70-75% of the total budget of an average company: People are performing shows with fewer actors to keep going. The I.T.C. fears a return to companies being funded by their employees, through low wages. There has been a general tightening of the belt.

Incentive funding was a major flop for the fringe, as was expected: only two companies - London Bubble and the Durham Theatre Company - received incentive funding. The Arts Council have realised that incentive funding is not the way forward for small-scale companies - but as yet there are no plans to replace it.

The I.T.C. has given figures to the Policy Studies Institute  
- and when the P.S.I. had analysed the figures, they found  
that there had been little change in the field - even after  
all of the initiatives of the past few years.

**Richard Wakeley : Administrator of Temba Theatre.**

Interview Conducted - 17/5/88

Nature of Interview - Notes

Temba are going into a three-year assessment, which is  
proving difficult - after all, how can you tell what you'll  
be doing and what will happen in 1991/2?

Production costs - that is, all upfront costs, rehearsal room  
hire etc. - are rising faster than income. Temba could raise  
its ticket prices, both that would lower their audiences -  
and their grants (from all sources) are only set to rise by  
2% in the next three years. If the Arts Council wants more  
value for money from groups like Temba then they should give  
more money to them: more money will mean more productions.

Temba is moving into middle-scale touring productions. It is  
moving into foreign touring and theatre festival organisa-

tion: It's all in an attempt to cater for a wider audience than the normal fringe audience - an audience that is more mixed in terms of class and colour. The company pays attention to touring patterns. They ask themselves where their audiences are, and what the show's effect on its audience will be (that is, who wants, or needs this particular play). For example - They toured Black Love Songs in urban areas, and A Visitor To The Veldt went to some rural venues. This all goes into the three year plan for the Arts Council.

Temba are a national touring company, but what, in this context, does national mean? They are, after all, a black theatre company in a predominantly white country, and they are assessed mainly by whites.

Temba have always maintained high production standards; and they put entertainment first, before politics. If the audiences pick up on the political content, that's fine: the very fact that Romeo and Juliet is played by a black actor and a white actress is in itself a political statement. It's a transfer of the group's values, even though the work itself might not be overtly political.

At the time of The Glory of the Garden, Wakeley was with a T.I.E. group called Theatre Centre, who were encouraged to do more work outside London - even though they were London based. Wakeley feels that the effect of Glory might ultimately have been to take money away from black groups.

However, recently the Arts Council have been saying very encouraging things to Temba, and the company's grant has increased.

Wakeley thinks that talk of vendettas against groups such as 7:84 (England) are exaggerations; paranoia is rife in the arts world at the moment.

(On the G.L.C.) The G.L.C. let Temba down badly over abolition, promising the company money without delivering it before they ceased to exist. This left Temba with a deficit so serious that the company could have folded. The deficit, however, was cut the next year.

Abolition has meant that Temba is still at the whim of the bureaucracy, however. L.B.G.C. councillors have no interest in the arts whatsoever, and its officers are badly overworked. Temba won't be receiving their money for Romeo and Juliet from the L.B.G.C. until the show has been running for two weeks. The officers have three to four times as many clients as Greater London Arts, and they're each expected to deal with all major art forms.

(On the company's future) There are two options -

1 that Temba could develop and increase the quality of its small-scale work over the next five years, and, at the

same time, it could develop its middle scale work, touring one middle-scale show a year. They would introduce new playwrights, like John Matzekela, into the middle scale, and allow them to develop their work there.

They would have a high profile in London (the company is proud of its marketing - a June 1988 Channel Four programme, The Marketing Mix, featured Temba) and might do small- and middle-scale work in London alone.

This will not happen, however, unless Temba get more financial support.

2 that Temba, if the worst comes, might be reduced to touring two small-scale shows each year.

Temba are being encouraged to be competitive, but one of the risks of competition is that you could lose - even though it's the Arts Council's aim to encourage Black arts.

If Temba's London funding bodies - the L.B.G.C., G.L.A. and Southwark Borough Council - don't come up with enough money, then the company's London organisation could disappear completely.

When the Uniform Business Rate comes in, local councils will have less money to spend on the arts - so community organisations and companies that run deficits could just disappear.

Temba could be forced into the regions: Since their largest potential audience is in London this would be a bad move artistically.

Temba have argued for years that black theatre should be good, and should be well-run. They've won a few battles (Romeo and Juliet was one), but Wakeley isn't sure about the war.

**Richard Rees: Artistic Director of Foco Novo**

Interview conducted - 3/6/88

Nature of Interview - Notes.

(On funding) Incentive funding is virtually another name for business sponsorship.

The basis of progress funding [the type of incentive funding that applies to Foco Novo] is that the company should raise a minimum of £10,000 which will be matched by the Arts Council: This is very difficult for a small company - Foco Novo have only two full-time employees.

The recent cut of 24% in Foco Novo's Arts Council grant has led to a 50% decrease in production. However, the general

rule now is that you don't argue with the Arts Council. The 17% over three years increase will not reach down to companies like Foco Novo, who will have to work on an annual increase of 2%, even if they get back onto the revenue list. Only one production will be commissioned this year, with only four actors in it; Rees does not know whether or not this will be the new pattern.

(On general issues) In Rees' opinion, two things have happened in the past six or seven years -

- 1 The amount of money given to Foco Novo and groups like it has been steadily reduced.
- 2 In an ironic reversal, the priorities the Council now insists upon are those which Foco Novo also have; but the company is still being cut.

There are similarities with the treatment of the N.H.S.. Subsidised theatre is being underfunded, to encourage it to play the market. To suggest, however, that theatre workers do not understand the market is nonsense; the question is, should they be governed by it? However, this funding policy is being imposed from above, and every company has to accept it.

(On the future) Rees feels that the fringe will not collapse. In this climate (it has been suggested to Rees) it

may even be that groups like Red Ladder will not be cut because they are overtly political - a turn-around from the situation in 1981. The question is, again, do the groups play the Council's game, or not? There is now no appeal to the Council, because everyone is a client, and the client's relationship with the Council is more easily terminated.

There will be no more large scale cutbacks - the revue procedure now underway will "take care" of the companies through natural wastage. Rees' comment on this -

"You either live with it or you take early retirement - but without a pension."

The general strategy outlined in The Glory of the Garden has broken down: The Council is now prone to new initiatives that bear no relation to what the groups actually need.

Gwenda Hughes and Kathleen Hamilton :

The Women's Theatre Group

Interview conducted - 12/11/87.

Nature of Interview - Notes.

Gwenda Hughes The fundamental change over the period of the past few years is the pressure that economic forces have put on collectives. It feels like there is a move against collectives - it is not a management style that the Arts Council recognises easily.

Ironically, as the need for such companies increases, the money for the companies decreases. The Arts Council funds the Women's Theatre Group to promote women's playwriting in community and small-scale venues - while at the same time the Council will be looking for increased revenue from these shows.

The funding that the W.T.G. received from the G.L.C. is now split between the L.B.G.C. and the Arts Council. The abolition of the G.L.C. was a blow, because their attitude to funding was different. The Council was more approachable; it encouraged groups to be independent; and it was more realistic about what the groups could achieve.

Kathleen Hamilton: Hamilton was in Common Stock T.I.E. company.

The group had cash-flow problems because the G.L.C.'s grant had been slow in coming. Hammersmith and Fulham Council introduced Hamilton to Peter Pitt [Chair of the Arts and Recreations Committee]. Pitt gave notification - literally wrote a note - of the G.L.C.'s funding commitment so that Common Stock could get an overdraft from their bank.

G.H. : The Women's Theatre Group has 2 commissions a year, and can only afford to back out of one commission if it is not good enough: Hughes estimates that, out of every three commissions, one will not work.

The last two or three years have been tricky for the company. This may reflect a crisis in feminism; however, there seem to be more socialist feminists about. The debate is now about moving away from the oppositional feminism of the 1970s towards a more complex, sophisticated approach. Collectives have to become as efficient as old-style, hierarchical managements. The kind of bourgeois feminism of the 1970s has finished - it was simply not appealing to working-class women. Also, black theatre has provided a massive influence and challenge. There has been a growing need for good art for the working-class.

The Director's Guild did a survey of women theatre directors, and found that Hughes was one of eight. Women's theatre has been ghettoised within the theatre - they still tend

only to gain access to T.I.E., fringe theatre and the like. Hughes went for an interview with the R.S.C., only to be told by the male interview panel "We're looking for one of us."

The Women's Theatre Group is given just enough money to survive, but not enough to develop and expand. The company is not attractive to sponsors. The pressure for sponsorship is great, but opportunities for sponsorship are few. There seems to be a ceiling against which fringe theatre hits its head.

**Suad El-Amin : Administrator, Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company**

Interview conducted - 25/4/89

Nature of interview - Notes

The company is on project funding from the Arts Council: Because of this, they only know if they're getting a grant five months before the project starts - that is, after many of the venues they want to play have been booked up. Next year they have been invited to apply for three-year funding. This is both good and bad - good because of the increased security, bad because of the touring requirements. The Arts Council would expect them to tour for 17 weeks. Sweatshop

tend to work at venues for one or two nights: whether because of prejudice or because it just hasn't happened yet, they haven't graduated to middle-scale venues.

Clause 28 has separated the sheep from the goats. There are places, funded by local government, that will take Sweatshop; places like the Drill Hall, the Green Room in Manchester, or the Albany Centre in Bristol. The company has a problem, though. It is a charity, and therefore cannot engage directly in political activities - they can't mount any political campaigns. So, over Clause 28, they could organise an arts lobby, but they had to withdraw from the lobby as soon as it was formed. At venues that practice equal opportunities Sweatshop are asked to fill in the 2.5% of out-put that is Gay-oriented. However, some of the workers in these venues are not sympathetic and don't support the company.

Sweatshop now gets a yearly grant from G.L.A., but the best that the Association can manage is a stable grant - or a cut in real terms each year. These cuts are made worse by the rising cost of Equity - enforced wages, for example.

At the moment Sweatshop commission work by asking the Arts Council for half the playwright's fee. When the production is more developed, Sweatshop put in an application for the full cost of the show (this includes the second half of the

writer's fee). This makes Sweatshop's life difficult; they are only as good as their last play. If they get three-year funding, they could afford a couple of flops; as it is, the company is biased towards established names in both writing and acting. Part of the problem is that the Arts Council regard Sweatshop to be a minority group, and fund them accordingly. Sweatshop, however, don't consider themselves to be purely a theatre company for gays.

Sweatshop, unlike Avon Touring or Dual Control, are not narrowly left-political; they deal with sexuality directly in all that they do. They also don't see themselves as "hit and run" tourers: Sweatshop have to tell prospective employees that they will be taking on a lot. They have to be prepared to talk to the audience afterwards (in the bar, for example). When the company had no money, they had to rely on the locals for accommodation.

Their next play has been commissioned; they got the grant they wanted easily from the Arts Council. El-Amin thinks that this might have something to do with the company's potential three-year funding status. There was a row last year over the funding of gay theatre; El-Amin thinks that the Arts Council's new attitude to Sweatshop might be an astute political move.

Some of Sweatshop's underfunding problem is self-imposed. Why apply for money when section 28 means that you might not

get it anyway? The section almost demands self-censorship. When the bill was passed, Sweatshop were arranging a tour of Twice Over - a play for 14-18 year olds - for schools and youth centres. They had to reschedule the tour to adult venues. It was a success, but it wasn't what the Company had intended.

Sweatshop have come to expect funding problem. There are a lot of gay businesses out there, but they will tend to give one-off grants rather than commit themselves to a long term deal. This is not satisfactory - after all, if you want gay theatre, you should be prepared to pay for it. They now run a Friends of Sweatshop scheme, but this is not the same as sponsorship.

El-Amin does not hold out much hope for sponsorship: Sweatshop's only future continues to be state funding. If the top 75% of companies opt for business sponsorship, it is conceivable that the Government might pull the plug on the Arts Council.

The Arts Council are trying to encourage rural touring: This is obviously a good thing, and Sweatshop would love to tour rural areas, but the offers aren't exactly flooding in. However, these days a tour which favours large cities can be sufficient reason for the Arts Council to refuse grant aid.

(On the future) At the moment Sweatshop seems secure, but you have to wait and see what will happen. The company can only stage two shows a year. Special interest plays - like Compromised Immunity, a play about A.I.D.S. - are funded by different interest groups: Compromised Immunity was funded by N.A.L.G.O.. Other shows have been criticised by the Lesbian and Gay community: This Island's Mine, for example - the question was asked, "Why are you showing the love affair between a Jewish immigrant and an American G.I.? But, if Sweatshop want to change things, they will have to annoy people occasionally.

#### **Interviews for Chapter 5.**

**Christine Hamilton : Arts Officer,**

**Scottish Trades Union Council.**

Interview conducted - 30/8/88.

Nature of Interview - Notes.

The situation in Scotland is different than in England (the negative view is that it is only a matter of time before that changes). In Scotland there isn't any more money than there is down south, but being a political theatre group is more respectable than it is in England.

It's not that there are a large amount of companies: but, going back fifteen years, the original production of The Cheviot revolutionised the Scottish theatre in terms of the approach to venues (the places where theatre was, and was not, applicable). This started a growth which is still continuing.

For revenue-funded companies, you need bigger venues, like the Lyceum in Edinburgh, the Citizens and Pavilion in Glasgow: But, because of the size of the country, 7:84, Wildcat and so on can afford to play both big and small venues.

The Steamie was the most successful new play in Scotland in 1987/88: everybody had either seen it or heard about it. People in the working classes know of 7:84 and Wildcat and are prepared to support them; the general political environment is not hostile to them.

There are a few examples of generosity on the part of Scottish local authorities like Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee: They have ensured at least some kind of community access. Again, it isn't easy, but it is easier than it would be in the South-East of England.

(On 7:84 Scotland) The company's administration was bad, the books weren't balanced, and the board wasn't doing its' job properly.

The Scottish Arts Council is still very much a part of the liberal establishment. They are not great supporters of political theatre, but while companies fit their criteria, they will be funded. As far as 7:84 went, the Scottish Arts Council had no choice but to fire the warning shot that they did. However, some of the artistic criteria that the S.A.C. employ would not necessarily mean anything to a group like 7:84 Scotland.

The Government is putting pressure on the S.A.C. to conform. Firstly, the new money [Incentive Funding] that is available to companies is being administered from London. Arts Council policy - not S.A.C. policy - determines how the money is to be spent. Secondly, The S.T.U.C. has customarily had representation on the S.A.C.. The final decision about who gets onto the S.A.C. rests with the Scottish Office, and ultimately with the minister responsible, Michael Forsyth [Forsyth was the man charged in 1989 to bring Thatcherism to the Scots: He has also publicly objected to a Wildcat poster, for Dead Liberty]. A new S.T.U.C. nominee was put to Forsyth for ratification - and he refused. The S.A.C., however, put the nominee on the Drama Committee.

(On Mayfest) Glasgow District Council has used some of the policies of Thatcherism, but for its own ends; to help revive the city without destroying it as a community. This approach is behind the drive for the city of culture; there

are partnerships with business, schemes like G.E.A.R. (Glasgow Eastern Area Redevelopment) and advertising schemes like Glasgow's Miles Better. The reduction in local authority power and funding, paradoxically, increases the emphasis placed on the arts: It is one of the few areas left that a local authority can fund. It has the added advantage of a high profile: Glasgow has selling potential - and the arts are part of that potential.

Mayfest itself has many self-acclaimed parents. Originally, though, the impetus came largely from the Trade Union movement, which was looking for some kind of celebration to mark Mayday. The first administrator - Feri Lean - was Wildcat's administrator; and Wildcat were heavily involved in Mayfest at the start. The original idea was of a festival of both international and community music and theatre - a popular festival. It is a different kind of festival to Edinburgh, which is more establishment oriented, bringing the brightest and best into Scotland. Mayfest tries to bring in the truly popular in the arts. It hasn't always worked, but it does sometimes. Scottish companies now gear themselves towards Mayfest, producing shows there whether Mayfest funds them or not.

What's missing at the moment is any new political thought. There's a lack of hardness, a danger of nostalgia and griping creeping in.

Hamilton's parting comment - "The arts in Scotland are woven into political life in Scotland."

**Charles Bell: Drama Officer, Scottish Arts Council.**

Interview Conducted - 16/9/88.

Nature of Interview - Notes.

The Scottish Arts Council has 13 revenue clients - 9 building-based and 4 touring (T.A.G., Wildcat, 7:84 and Borderline). They fund 19 project tours on average, 10 or 11 of which are Scottish. These companies put in a plan in September, and the Drama Committee supports them for one or more tours, usually of five weeks, and guarantees that tour against loss. The English companies receive "marginal costs"; the expense of touring to Scotland means that English companies usually limit themselves to the central belt.

T.I.E. hasn't recovered since 1981. The S.A.C. held out carrots to encourage companies but the Education Authorities have turned away from T.I.E.. Perth and the Byre Theatre in St. Andrews have done one project each in the past few years, but these are not indications of a permanent base. There are only a couple of small companies (Fablevision, for example). The S.A.C. has been in conference with the Education Authorities, but the picture is still patchy.

Small-scale touring has really burgeoned. Now there are twenty companies putting in plans to the S.A.C. - a comparatively healthy picture. Companies are beginning to set up reliable administration structures. There are problems, but companies are coming forward with well-thought-out plans. Some companies are emerging as front runners - Comunicado, Winged Horse, Eden Court Theatre in Inverness, and Theatre Alba. Eden Court is particularly important to the S.A.C. because, although it is mainly a touring venue, it does tour its own productions to areas of the Highlands that do not normally see any theatre.

S.A.C. policy is to encourage groups to tour outside the central belt. The companies themselves are now geared to touring the North and the Borders. The problem, though, is that highland touring is expensive: Travelling costs and living expenses are higher. The S.A.C. will help, and the amount of money it gives depends on the constitution of the tour. For tours to specific parts of the Highlands the Highlands and Islands Development Board may provide financial help. The four main touring companies are expected to tour these areas, but as these companies now play in large venues their work is more difficult to scale down to the right size: Therefore, there is a move to integrate large-scale and middle-scale work. Companies like Borderline, Theatre Alba and Comunicado have become more flexible, designing shows for all sizes of venue.

(On the Traverse and the Tron) Ian Brown is going to the Traverse: Jenny Killick is going to the National Theatre. Alan Lyddiard is going to T.A.G. to replace Brown. Michael Boyd is still at the Tron. The identity of the Traverse is heavily dependent on the team running it. Killick had a penchant for European Drama: However, she did encourage Scots Drama - for example, in the successful Scottish Accents season in 1988. Brown intends to involve more young Scots writers and will probably spend more time on Workshops.

The Traverse now has secure three-year funding for the first time in its history. Hopefully, it will soon have a new custom-built base in the new Financial Centre in Edinburgh's Hole in the Ground [a notorious gap site, once the proposed home for Scottish Opera]. Going public has also increased the Traverse's income.

The Tron has now gone public as well; they're also producing new Scottish writers, and holding workshops. As far as touring product goes, to some extent the Tron has to take what it can get: It doesn't have the resources to do otherwise, and so the quality of touring product can be patchy. The Tron does have 1990, however, and can cash in on the run-up to the year: It will be a good venue for visiting companies.

(On Scottish playwriting) At the time that the Scottish Society of Playwrights' grant was withdrawn, the S.A.C. felt that too much money was going into administration. However, at the moment, there approximately 20-25 commissions a year to which the S.A.C. contributes £2,000. The S.A.C. preferred the idea of a dramaturg for every major theatre company, but this did not happen: By 1988, however, Tom McGrath was in his third year at the Lyceum. He is respected and successful, and conducts workshops across Scotland.

After some debate, the S.A.C. reinstated funding for playwright's workshops. There was a feeling in the mid-1980s that these workshops weren't playing a useful role, but now things are better: they're more outward looking, and they now get limited support from the S.A.C.. The Tron and the Traverse have their own workshops. Things are healthier, but Bell thinks that this aspect of S.A.C. policy should always be subject to review.

(On 7:84) They were informed in 1987 that their grant was going to be withdrawn. John Haswell (General Manager) and John McGrath resigned: They have a new Artistic Director in David Hayman, and a new general manager in Jo Beddoe.

Over the past few years there had been administrative problems in the company. The S.A.C. had difficulty in getting the company to accept the terms that the Council attach to grants. The post of administrator lay vacant for a long

time; during the 1980s, there had been a whole stream of administrators. Questions had also been raised about the quality of the group's work. In Bell's opinion, where public money is involved, tough decisions have to be made.

7:84 have never received money from Edinburgh District Council, so they are considering moving to Glasgow. [They did, in late 1988].

(On the future) There's a lot of "historical funding" [i.e. long-standing commitments]: The reps have a certain amount of security. The S.A.C. feels that everyone should have a chance to see good theatre. What the S.A.C. would like to see is an increase in good quality children's theatre, both in schools and in the middle-scale venues. Companies will be encouraged to work in the middle scale circuit, with a suitable choice of material.

Communicado's Blood Wedding is the kind of theatre that Bell would like to see more of. He lived for a while in the Orkneys, and missed seeing anything that was "big" and "had meat". He'd like to see the range of a company's work expanded.

David MacLennan : Artistic Director,  
Wildcat Theatre Company.

Interview conducted - 8/9/88.

Nature of Interview - Notes.

There is a difference in the response to political theatre between Scotland and England. Scotland has much more cultural cohesion: It's much less fragmented.

The first stirrings in Scotland came with The Great Northern Welly Boot Show (1972) - which included Billy Connolly, John Byrne, John Bett, Bill Paterson and others. The nucleus of this group combined with the contingent from 7:84 (England) to form 7:84 (Scotland) - whose first show was The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil (1973). These two shows - and The Cheviot in particular - established the new theatre on a different level in Scotland. From then until 1978/9 the money available from the Scottish Arts Council increased steadily: Scottish theatre grew ( as witness Chris Parr at the Traverse, Borderline, T.A.G., etc). Wildcat were one of the last companies to squeeze their way through the door.

Over the past 5/6 years there has been a new attitude on the part of local authorities. Glasgow District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council have seen the arts as a way of regenerating the inner city. They have made funds available to various arts organisations: The culmination of this came

when Glasgow was named European City of Culture for 1990. In a sense, this has put the arts on the political agenda. A recent Policy Studies Institute report on arts spending showed that the money spent on arts funding in Glasgow created more jobs more quickly than the money spent on the city's community programme.

It is true that Wildcat and 7:84 have established themselves as part of the community. In part, this is through extensive touring - in 1988 Wildcat mounted 280 shows ( roughly 5 a week ). In 1987 the company played to a total of 146,503 people. The character of the audience changes: Clydebank provides a different kind of audience to the King's Theatre in Glasgow, which in its' turn is different to the audience in the Pavillion in Glasgow (which is a more working-class establishment). During its' run at the Pavillion as part of Mayfest 1988, The Celtic Story played to 60,000 people.

In the financial year 1988/9 S.A.C. funding was £140,000: Subject to an audit, the company was earning £600,000. The growth in funding has been steady, but has been particularly marked in the last 4/5 years. This is largely due to the company building up an audience. They find that a high profile helps - for one thing, it saves money on publicity.

(On Wildcat) The company's style is as follows -

- 1 They use music as a dramatic instrument.

2 They are interested in a non-naturalistic, epic, public theatre.

3 They are acutely aware of their audience, which is not only working-class. They also have an audience amongst the "progressive areas" of society (the caring professions, social workers, education, etc.) - people who take an active role in the labour movement. They also target young people.

(On Mayfest) The company had toured foreign countries, and while there they had seen popular theatre in different countries. The company thought that this style of theatre should be seen in Scotland. At the same time, the S.T.U.C. had been thinking of developing Mayday into a cultural event. Feri Lean, MacLennan and Alex Clark (the General Secretary of Scottish Equity) got together and approached Glasgow District Council for money. Wildcat and Scottish Equity both put money into the fledgling event.

There was an audience waiting for the event, and the potential audience was growing. The community was important - and there has been an attempt to respond to the community's needs. It hasn't always worked, but there have been honest attempts to involve estates like Easterhouse and Drumchapel, and to move towards more participation generally.

(On the S.T.U.C.) The S.T.U.C.'s input has been vital, and they have a leading role to play in the arts. Wildcat do

political work, and take part in labour movement campaigns. They have looked to the S.T.U.C. to take a part in the development of the arts, and the Unions - and especially the younger workers - have responded.

Questions have to be asked about culture, and the kind of culture that companies present. Wildcat believe that theatre is celebratory: They believe that it is one of the few remaining platforms where thought can be expressed and shared publicly. The media can't do this. And when you get things right, the audience recognises what you're doing, and it's great. After The Celtic Story, the company received many letters saying "I liked it, and I'll be back".

(On the S.A.C.) Wildcat have a pragmatic relationship with the S.A.C.. There have been periods of great difficulty. It's fair to say that there is a hostile political/ cultural consensus in Britain as a whole against the kind of work that Wildcat do.

(On the future) Subject to two things, the potential is there for continued expansion. There is an audience, but growth depends on -

- 1 the continued availability of public funding (about which MacLennan is pessimistic)
- 2 The availability of talented and committed artists (about which MacLennan is optimistic).

**April Chamberlain : General Manager, Wildcat Theatre.**

Interview Conducted - 8/9/88

Nature of Interview - Notes.

The income for the financial year 1987/8 was £203,865 from the box office (including £11,000 from N.A.L.G.O.), £134,000 from the S.A.C., and £10,000 from Glasgow District Council.

Since Jotters, the company has been spectacularly successful. The Importance of Being Honest played to more people than The Steamie.

The 280 performances of 1988/9 equals 46.6 touring weeks - of six shows a week.

Borderline commissioned The Steamie, but rejected the first draft. it was then given a reading at The Tron. Four other companies rejected the play before Wildcat paid Roper the rest of his commission, added songs and performed the play.

**Paula McGee : Member of the Council of the Scottish Society  
of Playwrights; Founder Member of Annexe  
Theatre Company.**

Interview conducted - 19/9/88.

Nature of Interview - Notes.

Annexe Theatre Company are now in receipt of S.A.C. project funding. As Annexe have a remit to produce new work, the S.A.C. is still involved in new playwriting. When it ceased funding the S.S.P., the S.A.C. favoured dramaturgs: There were originally meant to be three, but only one was put in place - Tom McGrath at the Edinburgh Lyceum.

Annexe are involved in joint negotiations with Glasgow District Council festivals unit (in conjunction with the Tron and the S.S.P.) to establish a writers centre in Glasgow in time for 1990: This will include a dramaturg.

(On the S.S.P.) McGee thinks that the S.A.C. was not interested in funding what was, to all intents and purposes, a union for playwrights. The S.S.P. was more than just an administrative organisation: they conducted rehearsal readings, a panel of professional playwrights read over new work, and the Society provided free photocopying. After funding was withdrawn in 1986, the S.S.P. had to reassess its' position: For the past two years the S.S.P.'s council

has met on a voluntary basis. It now sees its' main function as being to redefine the attitude to Scottish writing in general. For example - the S.A.C. pay a playwright a commission - £2,000. This is meant to be a subsidy: But, frequently, a theatre manager will not pay any more for the play. The S.S.P. wants theatre managers to contribute.

The current Council has only recently been elected: So no-one on the Council directly remembers the problems with the S.A.C.. However, there is still some animosity between the two organisations. There was a general feeling at the time that the withdrawal of funding from the S.S.P. was a bad move for Scottish playwriting. It has not been as bad as was feared: But the S.A.C. has given no indication that it will fund the S.S.P. again.

(On writing) Since the Annexe Theatre Company was born there has been a resurgence in new writing, which is now seen as something to be supported. Now it's not only the Traverse - The Tron, Annexe and other theatre companies help to promote new writing.

There's a kind of ladder emerging in Scottish playwriting. The Tron will take writers who are reasonably established: The Traverse will also take less established writers. Annexe will take completely new writing - They've formed a group of completely new writers (formed from their reading group) that produce a high standard of work.

Wildcat are opening their doors to new writing - the negotiations about The Steamie between Tony Roper and Wildcat were overseen by the S.S.P..

Now, a first step is available for potential playwrights. It's an exciting place to be (especially Glasgow). Tom McGrath is doing a good job: The work that he oversaw in 1987 won a Fringe First.

(On Financial Pressures) The Annexe was lucky - after its' first show, which comprised two plays mounted on a profit-sharing basis, the company received a project grant from the S.A.C.. However, they've been told that it is unlikely that they will get a revenue grant: Comunicado only received revenue funding this year.

A company really has to commit itself to profit-sharing and unpaid work. Professionals must be used (they help to keep up the quality of the shows), but asking them to work for nothing, or for next to nothing, is exploitation. They will work - in the hope that they will receive funding, and because they believe in the work. There is a large group of professionals who are prepared to back something new.

This is, however, open to abuse. Channel Five Theatre Company started off with good intentions; but they lost direction

and eventually had to ask their actors to pay for membership.

Companies realise very quickly that financial status has to be defined exactly if they are going to deal with the S.A.C., Equity and other organisations. Annexe impressed the S.A.C. with "good housekeeping": But sometimes you're not sure whether the S.A.C. are watching your administration or your work. As the funds shrink, greater emphasis is placed on the use to which funding is put. You have to cope with this; at the moment it is the way things are.

What is refreshing is that good work is being done, much of the best of it on a profit-sharing basis. This might have something to do with size: The London scene is so large that it is intimidating and difficult to break into. In Scotland, the scene is smaller, and there's no theatrical establishment to battle against. What is good about Wildcat, the Tron, and the Citizens is their high level of commitment: They are willing to help small companies like Annexe. The scope of this help wasn't anticipated: When Annexe was an idea in the heads of McGee and her co-founder, they went to the S.S.P.'s offices and asked Charles Hart (the S.S.P.'s chair) for office space. To their surprise, Hart said yes. Wildcat gives Annexe transport and (occasionally) actors. The theatrical big names in Scotland - David Anderson (of Wildcat), Liz Lochhead, Elaine C. Smith (formerly of Wildcat) - raise funds not only for social issues, but also for

other theatre companies, and for the S.S.P.. People these days are not afraid to ask for help, because they need it: Those who can help are willing to help.

What has to happen is that the mistakes of the 1970s must be avoided. The 1970s playwrights - Byrne, Hector McMillan, Tom McGrath - found it hard to work after the initial upsurge: Now it is generally accepted that this cannot happen again. There must be some kind of continuity.

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