Fringe Benefits

Colin Ward

17 June 1988 — 3 May 1996

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1. Introduction

Colin Ward is one of the great radical figures of the past half-century, but his impact has been subterranean. His name is little mentioned by commentators and is scarcely known to the wider, intelligent public, even in his native Britain. A striking indication of his intellectual and institutional marginality is that he did not even possess a regular commercial publisher. In a *Festschrift* intended at least in part to remedy this unsatisfactory state of affairs, the editor, Ken Worpole, ably demonstrated the correspondence between Ward's concerns and contemporary debates and problems.[1] I suspect that Ward himself would have contended that this linkage can be made because of the commonsensical, realistic, *necessary* nature of anarchism as such (and not just his especial brand), if people could only see that, and its obvious relevance to the needs of the twenty-first century – and with this I would myself agree, it being one of the implicit themes of this book. But equally there can be no gainsaying the very real originality of Ward's oeuvre.

Colin Ward was born on 14 August 1924 in Wanstead, in suburban Essex, the son of Arnold Ward, a teacher, and Ruby Ward (née West), who had been a shorthand typist. He was educated at the County High School for Boys, Ilford, whose other principal claim to fame is that for thirty-eight years its English teacher was the father of the poet and critic, Kathleen Raine, who was to write venomously and extremely snobbishly of him, the school and Ilford in her first volume of autobiography. The young Ward was an unsuccessful pupil and left school at fifteen.[2]

Arnold Ward taught in elementary schools, eventually becoming a headmaster in West Ham, which, although a county borough outside the London County Council, contained the depths of poverty of Canning Town and Silvertown. He was a natural Labour supporter and the family car (a Singer Junior) was much in demand on polling days. To grow up in a strongly Labour Party environment in the 1930s was far from stultifying – whether politically, culturally or morally – as is attested by Colin Ward having both heard Emma Goldman speak in 1938, at the massive May Day rally in Hyde Park, and attended in April 1939 the 'Festival of Music for the People' at which Benjamin Britten's *Ballad of Heroes,* with a libretto by W.H. Auden and Randall Swingler, and conducted by Constant Lambert, saluted the fallen of the International Brigades at the Queen's Hall. He also recalled the milk tokens, a voluntary surcharge

[1] Ken Worpole (ed.), *Richer Futures: Fashioning a New Politics* (London: Earthscan, 1999), esp. pp. 174–85.

[2] Kathleen Raine, *Farewell Happy Fields: Memories of Childhood* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1973). Much of the detail in this chapter derives from correspondence and conversations with Ward over twenty-five years, and most particularly from an interview of 29 June 1997 [hereafter 'Interview with CW']. The conversations published as Colin Ward and David Goodway, *Talking Anarchy* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2003) [hereafter TA], are the nearest he came to autobiography. There is no published listing of his writings, although at the time of the *Festschrift* he produced an invaluable 21-page typescript 'Colin Ward Bibliography'.

on milk sales, by which the London Co-operative Society raised a levy for Spanish relief.

It was Ward's experiences during the Second World War that shaped, to a very large extent, his later career. His first job was as a clerk for a builder erecting (entirely fraudulently) air-raid shelters. His next was in the Ilford Borough Engineer's office, where his eyes were opened to the inequitable treatment of council house tenants, with some having requests for repairs attended to immediately, while others had to wait since they ranked low in an unspoken hierarchy of estates. He then went to work for the architect Sidney Caulfield, a living link with the Arts and Crafts Movement since he had been articled to John Loughborough Pearson (for whom he had worked on Truro Cathedral), been taught lettering by Edward Johnson and Eric Gill, and also studied under and later worked as a colleague – all at the Central School of Arts and Crafts – of W.R. Lethaby, whom Caulfield revered. Lethaby, a major architectural thinker as well as architect, is one of the nine people whom Ward was to name in 1991 in his *Influences.*[3] Next door to his office, Caulfield – who was brother-in-law to Britain's solitary Futurist painter, C.R.W. Nevinson – let a flat at 28 Emperor's Gate to Miron Grindea, the Romanian editor of the long-running little magazine, *Adam.* It was Grindea who introduced Ward to the work of such writers as Proust, Gide, Thomas Mann, Brecht, Lorca and Canetti.[4]

Ward was conscripted in 1942 and it was then that he came into contact with anarchists. Posted to Glasgow, he received 'a real education' there: on account of the eye-catching deprivation, his use of the excellent Mitchell Library and, as the only British city ever to have had a significant indigenous anarchist movement (in contrast to London's Continental exiles and Jewish immigrants), the dazzling anarchist orators on Glasgow Green with their Sunday-night meetings in a room above the Hangman's Rest in Wilson Street and bookshop in George Street.[5] He was particularly influenced by Frank Leech, a shopkeeper and former miner, who urged him to submit articles to *War Commentary* in London – the first, 'Allied Military Government', on the new order in liberated Europe, appeared in December 1943. After visiting Leech, sentenced for failing to register for firewatching and refusing to pay the fine, while on hunger strike in Barlinnie Prison, Ward, who had no clothes to wear other than his uniform, found himself transferred to Orkney and Shetland for the remainder of the war.[6]

It was in April 1945, as the war drew to a close, that the four editors of *War Commentary* were prosecuted for conspiring to cause disaffection in the armed forces

[3] Colin Ward, *Influences: Voices of Creative Dissent* (Hartland, Devon: Green Books, 1991), pp. 91–7. For the early career of Caulfield, who had contributed to Hampstead Garden Suburb, see A. Stuart Gray, *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Survey* (London: Duckworth, 1985), pp. 24, 137.

[4] See Colin Ward, 'Fringe Benefits', *New Statesman and Society,* 8 December 1995, for an obituary appreciation of Grindea.

[5] Interview with CW.

[6] Colin Ward, 'Local Hero in Netherton Road', *Guardian,* 3 August 1988, is a brief memoir of Leech.

– they were anticipating a revolutionary situation comparable to that in Russia and Germany at the end of the First World War, one of their headlines insisting 'Hang on to Your Arms!' – and Ward was among four servicemen subscribers who were called to give evidence for the prosecution. All four testified that they had not been disaffected; but John Hewetson, Vernon Richards and Philip Sansom were each imprisoned for nine months, while Marie Louise Berneri was acquitted on the technicality that she was married to Richards.[7] The following year, still in the army, but now in the south of England, Ward was able to report on the post-war squatters' movement in nine articles in *Freedom, War Commentary* having reverted to the traditional title; and when he was eventually discharged from the army in the summer of 1947, he was asked to join *Freedoms* editorial group, of which George Woodcock had also been a member since 1945. This was his first close contact with the people who were to become his 'closest and dearest friends'.[8] This Freedom Press Group was extremely talented and energetic and, although Woodcock emigrated to Canada in 1949 and Berneri died the same year, was able to call upon contributions from anarchists like Herbert Read (until shunned in 1953 for accepting his knighthood), Alex Comfort and Geoffrey Ostergaard and such sympathizers as Gerald Brenan, the member of the Bloomsbury Group who had become a notable Hispanicist and whose exploration of the origins of the Civil War, *The Spanish Labyrinth* (1943), was a major work of history.

The file of *Freedom* for the late 1940s and early 1950s makes impressive reading. During the 1940s *War Commentary,* followed by *Freedom,* had been fortnightly, but from summer 1951 the paper went weekly. The bulk of the contents had always been written by the editors; and in 1950 Ward had provided some twenty-five items, rising to no fewer than fifty-four in 1951, but the number declined as he began to contribute long articles, frequently spread over four to six issues. From May 1956 until the end of 1960, and now using the heading of 'People and Ideas', he wrote around 165 such columns. Given this daunting, spare time journalistic apprenticeship, it is hardly surprising that his stylistic vice continued to be the excessive employment of lengthy, partially digested quotations.

By the early 1950s characteristic Ward topics had emerged: housing and planning, workers' control and self-organization in industry, the problems of making rural life economically viable, the decolonizing societies. He was alert to what was going on in the wider intellectual world, attempting to point to what was happening outside the confines of anarchism, drawing on the developing sociological literature, and, for example, writing (sympathetically) on Bertolt Brecht (5 August, 1 September 1956) and excitedly highlighting the publication in *Encounter* of Isaiah Berlin's celebrated Third Programme talks, 'A Marvellous Decade', on the Russian intelligentsia between 1838 and 1848 and much later to be collected in *Russian Thinkers* (25 June 1955). But who was reading his articles? *War Commentary* had fared relatively well in wartime

[7] Colin Ward, 'Witness for the Prosecution', *Wildcat,* no. 1 (September 1974); *TA,* pp. 29—32.

[8] Interview with CW. For Ward's reminiscences of the Freedom Press Group, see *TA,* pp. 33—42.

on account of the solidarity and intercourse between the small anti-war groups, principally *Peace News,* but also the ILP with its *New Leader.* With the end of the war and Labour's electoral triumph in 1945, the anarchists were to become very isolated indeed, Freedom Press being unswervingly hostile to the Labour governments and their nationalization and welfare legislation. Ward recalled Berneri saying towards the end of the forties, 'The paper gets better and better, and fewer and fewer people read it'.[9] The isolation and numerical insignificance of British anarchism obtained throughout the fifties also.

It was to break from the treadmill of weekly production that Ward began to urge the case for a monthly, more reflective *Freedom;* and eventually his fellow editors responded by giving him his head with the monthly *Anarchy* from March 1961, while they continued to bring out *Freedom* for the other three weeks of each month. Ward had actually wanted his monthly to be called *Autonomy: A Journal of Anarchist Ideas,* but this his traditionalist comrades were not prepared to allow (he had already been described as a 'revisionist' and they considered that he was backing away from the talismanic word 'anarchist'), although the subtitle was initially, and now largely redundantly, retained.[10] *Anarchy* ran for 118 issues, culminating in December 1970, with a series of superb covers designed by Rufus Segar (who was responsible for ditching the subtitle from no. 28).

In a review of the 1950s and statement of his personal agenda for the 1960s Ward had observed:

> The anarchist movement throughout the world can hardly be said to have increased its influence during the decade... Yet the relevance of anarchist ideas was never so great. Anarchism suffers, as all minority movements suffer, from the fact that its numerical weakness inhibits its intellectual strength. This may not matter when you approach it as individual attitude to life, but in its other role, as a social theory, as one of the possible approaches to the solution of the problems of social life, it is a very serious thing. It is precisely this lack which people have in mind when they complain that there have been no advances in anarchist theory since the days of Kropotkin. Ideas and not armies change the face of the world, and in the sphere of what we ambitiously call the social sciences, too few of the people with ideas couple them with anarchist attitudes.
>
> For the anarchists the problem of the nineteen-sixties is simply that of how to put anarchism back into the intellectual bloodstream, into the field of ideas which are taken seriously.[11]

[9] Interview with CW.

[10] Colin Ward, 'Notes of an Anarchist Columnist', *Raven,* no. 12 (October/December 1990), p. 316; Colin Ward (ed.), *A Decade of Anarchy, 1961—1970: Selections from the Monthly Journal 'Anarchy'* (London: Freedom Press, 1987), pp. 8–9.

[11] CW, 'Last Look Round at the 50s', *Freedom,* 26 December 1959.

As editor of *Anarchy* Ward had some success in putting anarchist ideas 'back into the intellectual bloodstream', largely because of propitious political and social changes. The rise of the New Left and the nuclear disarmament movement in the late fifties, culminating in the student radicalism and general libertarianism of the sixties, meant that a new audience receptive to anarchist attitudes came into existence. My own case provides an illustration of the trend. In October 1961, a foundation subscriber to the *New Left Review* (the first number of which had appeared at the beginning of the previous year) and in London again to appear at Bow Street after my arrest during the Committee of 100 sit-down of 17 September, I bought a copy of *Anarchy 8* at Collet's bookshop in Charing Cross Road. I had just turned nineteen and thereafter was hooked, several weeks later beginning to read *Freedom* also. When I went up to Oxford University twelve months afterwards I co-founded the Oxford Anarchist Group and one of the first speakers I invited was Colin Ward (he spoke on 'Anarchism and the Welfare State' on 28 October 1963). Among the members were Gene Sharp, Richard Mabey, Hugh Brody, Kate Soper and Carole Pateman. Gene Sharp was different from the rest since he was American, much older (born 1928) and a postgraduate student, who had already published extensively on non-violent direct action – as he has continued to do, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973) being especially noteworthy. Richard Mabey, after working in publishing, where he edited several of Colin Ward's books, has become an outstanding writer on botany and wildlife, initially with a markedly alternative approach: for example, *Food for Free* and *The Unofficial Countryside.* Hugh Brody is many things, but principally an anthropologist, authority on the Canadian Inuit and advocate of the way of life of hunter-gatherers, as in the acclaimed *The Other Side of Eden.* Kate Soper became a Marxist philosopher, author of *On Human Needs* and member of the editorial committee of the *New Left Review,* but is also one of the translators of Cornelius Castoriadis into English. The work of the political philosopher, Carole Pateman, has been discussed in chapter 12. The Marxist social historian and a former editor of the *Universities and Left Review,* Raphael Samuel, was later to tell me that he had attended some of our meetings. By 1968 Ward himself could say in a radio interview: 'I think that social attitudes have changed... Anarchism perhaps is becoming almost modish. I think that there is a certain anarchy in the air today...'[12]

Ward's success was also due to *Anarchy*'s simple excellence. This should not be exaggerated, for there was definite unevenness. 'The editing, according to an admiring, though not uncritical contributor [Nicolas Walter], was minimal: nothing was re-written, nothing even subbed. "Colin almost didn't do anything. He didn't muck it about, didn't really bother to read the proofs. Just shoved them all in. Just let it happen."'[13] Ward put the contents together on his kitchen table. Coming out of *Freedom,* he frequently wrote much of the journal himself under a string of pseudonyms – 'John

[12] Richard Boston, 'Conversations about Anarchism', *Anarchy,* no. 85 (March 1968), p. 74.

[13] Raphael Samuel, 'Utopian Sociology', *New Society,* 2 October 1987, an exceptionally generous evaluation of Ward's work, occasioned by the publication of *A Decade of Anarchy.*

Ellerby', 'Frank Schubert' (these two after the streets where he was currently living), 'Tristram Shandy' – as well as the unsigned items. Even the articles scarcely differed from, and indeed there was significant recycling of, his contributions to *Freedom* back in the 1950s – for example, the admired issue on adventure playgrounds (September 1961) had been preceded by a similar piece in *Freedom* (6 September 1958). Sales never exceeded 2,800 per issue, no advance on *Freedom's* 2,000–3,000.[14]

The excellence, though, lay in a variety of factors. Ward's anarchism was no longer buried among reports of industrial disputes and comment on contemporary politics, whether national or international. It now stood by itself, supported by like-minded contributors. *Anarchy* exuded vitality, was in touch with the trends of its decade, and appealed to the young. Its preoccupations centred on housing and squatting, progressive education, workers' control (a theme shared with the New Left), and crime and punishment. The leading members of 'the New Criminology' – David Downes, Jock Young (who had been a student distributor of *Anarchy* at the London School of Economics), Laurie Taylor, Stan Cohen and Ian Taylor – all appeared in its pages. Nicolas Walter was a frequent contributor and Ward published his pair of important articles, 'Direct Action and the New Pacifism' and 'Disobedience and the New Pacifism', as well as the influential *About Anarchism* for the entire hundredth number of *Anarchy.* From the other side of the Atlantic the powerfully original essays by Murray Bookchin (initially as 'Lewis Herber') – 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' (November 1966), 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' (August 1967) and 'Desire and Need' (October 1967) – later collected in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (London, 1974), had their first European publication in *Anarchy.*

On demobilization from the British Army in 1947 Ward had gone back to work for Caulfield for eighteen months, before moving as a draughtsman to the Architects' Co-Partnership (which had been formed before the war as the Architects' Co-operative Partnership by a group of Communists who had been students together at the Architectural Association School). From 1952 to 1961 he was senior assistant to Shepheard & Epstein, whose practice was devoted entirely to schools and municipal housing, and then worked for two years as director of research for Chamberlin, Powell & Bon.[15] A career change came in 1964–5 when he took a one-year course at Garnett College in south-west London to train as a further education teacher and he was in charge of liberal studies at Wandsworth Technical College from 1966; but he returned to architecture and planning in 1971 by becoming education officer for the Town and Country Planning Association (founded by Ebenezer Howard as the Garden City Association) for which he edited *BEE (Bulletin of Environmental Education).* At Garnett he had met his future wife, then Harriet Unwin, whose mother, Dora Russell, had still been

[14] CW, 'After a Hundred Issues', in Ward, *Decade of Anarchy,* p. 276.
[15] For Ward's work in architects' offices, see TA, pp. 62–5.

married to Bertrand Russell at the time of her birth, but whose father, as of her younger brother Roddy, was an unreliable American journalist called Griffin Barry.[16]

It was his editorship of *Anarchy* that released Ward from the obscurity of *Freedom* and Freedom Press and made his name. During the 1960S he began to be asked to write for other journals, not only in the realm of dissident politics, like *Peace News* and *Liberation* (New York), but such titles as the *Twentieth Century* and the recently established *New Society.* From 1978 he became a regular contributor to *New Society*'s full-page 'Stand' column; and when *New Society* was merged, ten years later, with the *New Statesman* he was retained as a columnist of the resultant *New Statesman and Society* with the shorter, but weekly, 'Fringe Benefits', until its abrupt termination by a new editor in 1996. His first books, *Violence* and *Work,* came as late as 1970 and 1972 respectively, but these were intended for teenagers and published by Penguin Education in a series edited by Richard Mabey (whom he had first met when he visited Oxford to speak to the Anarchist Group in 1963). He resigned from the Town and Country Planning Association in 1979, moved to the Suffolk countryside, and became a self-employed author.

Ward's third book, which appeared in 1973, was his first for an adult readership and is his only work on the theory of anarchism, indeed the only one 'directly and specifically about anarchism' until the publication in 2004 of *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction,* which happened to be his final work.[17] *Anarchy in Action* is also the one that has been most translated, currently into seven or possibly eight languages, for it is, as George Woodcock considered, 'one of the most important theoretical works' on anarchism."[18] It came into being almost accidentally since Walter passed on the contract after he found himself unable to produce what was required. Ward had wanted to call it *Anarchy as a Theory of Organization* – the title of an article that had appeared in *Anarchy 62* (April 1966) – but the publishers, Allen & Unwin, insisted on *Anarchy in Action.*

It is in *Anarchy in Action* that Ward makes entirely explicit the highly distinctive anarchism that had informed his editorship of and contributions to *Anarchy* during the preceding decade. His opening words – alluding to Ignazio Silone's marvellous novel, *The Seed beneath the Snow,* translated in 1943 and which he remembered reading on the train back to Orkney after a leave in London – have been much quoted:

> The argument of this book is that an anarchist society, a society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath

[16] See Harriet Ward, *A Man of Small Importance: My Father Griffin Barry* (Debenham: Dormouse Books, 2003). Dora Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree,* vol. 3: *Challenge to the Cold War* (London: Virago, 1985), esp. pp. 259–60, writes warmly of Ward. Roddy Barry published a single short story, 'Giancarlo', interestingly in the *New Reasoner,* no. 9 (Summer 1959), pp. 40–9.

[17] Colin Ward, ' "I Think That's a Terrible Thing to Say!" Elderly Anarchist Hack Tells All', *Freedom,* Centenary Edition, October 1986, p. 63.

[18] George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists: Essays* (Kingston, Ontario: Quarry Press, 1992), p. 231.

> the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, religious differences and their superstitious separatism.

His kind of anarchism, 'far from being a speculative vision of a future society ... is a description of a mode of human organization, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society'.[19]

Acceptance of this central insight is not only extraordinarily liberating intellectually but has strictly realistic and practical consequences: '...once you begin to look at human society from an anarchist point of view you discover that the alternatives are already there, in the interstices of the dominant power structure. If you want to build a free society, the parts are all at hand.'[20] It also solves two apparently insoluble problems that have always confronted anarchists (and socialists). The first is, if anarchism (or socialism) is so highly desirable as well as feasible, how is it that it has never come into being or lasted no longer than a few months (or years). Ward's answer is that anarchism is already partially in existence and that he can show us examples 'in action'. The second problem is how can humans be taught to become co-operative, thereby enabling a transition from the present order to a co-operative society to be attained, and is the same problem the solution to which, it has been shown in chapter 2, separated Morris from Kropotkin. Ward's response here is that humans are naturally co-operative and that current societies and institutions, however capitalist and individualist, would completely fall apart without the integrating powers, even if unvalued, of mutual aid and federation. Nor will social transformation be a matter of climactic revolution, attained in a millennial moment, but rather a prolonged situation of dual power in the age-old struggle between authoritarian and libertarian tendencies, with outright victory for either tendency most improbable. As he explained in a remarkable manifesto of 1958, 'The Unwritten Handbook', published in his 'People and Ideas' column, his is an anarchism

> which recognizes that the conflict between authority and liberty is a permanent aspect of the human condition and not something that can be resolved by a vaguely specified social revolution. It recognizes that the choice between libertarian and authoritarian solutions occurs every day and in every way, and the extent to which we choose, or accept, or are fobbed off with, or lack the imagination and inventiveness to discover alternatives to, the authoritarian solutions to small problems is the extent to which we are their powerless victims in big affairs.[21]

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[19] Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 11.

[20] *Ibid.,* p. 13.

[21] *Freedom,* 28 June 1958. Quoted also in TA, pp. 54–5.

George Woodcock observed in an essay on Paul Goodman that, according to this conception of anarchism,

> the anarchist does not seek to destroy the present political order so that it may be replaced by a better system of organization ... rather he proposes to clear the existing structure of coercive institutions away so that the natural society which has survived in a largely subterranean way from earlier, freer and more originative periods can be liberated to flower again in a different future.

Woodcock continued:

> The anarchists have never been nihilists, wishing to destroy present society entirely and replace it with something new... The anarchists have always valued the endurance of natural social impulses and the voluntary institutions they create, and it is to liberating the great network of human co-operation that even now spreads through all levels of our lives rather than to creating or even imagining brave new worlds that they have bent their efforts. That is why there are so few utopian writings among the anarchists; they have always believed that human social instincts, once set free, could be trusted to adapt society in desirable and practical ways without plans – which are always constrictive – being made beforehand.[22]

Anarchists seek, in summary form, the end (that is, the goal) of voluntary co-operation or mutual aid using the means of direct action, while organizing freely. Ward is primarily concerned with the forms of direct action, in the world of the here-and-now, which are 'liberating the great network of human co-operation'. In 1973 he considered that 'the very growth of the state and its bureaucracy, the giant corporation and its privileged hierarchy ... are ... giving rise to parallel organizations, counter organizations, alternative organizations, which exemplify the anarchist method'; and he proceeded to itemize the revived demand for workers' control, the de-schooling movement, self-help therapeutic groups, squatter movements and tenants' co-operatives, food co-operatives, claimants' unions, and community organizations of every conceivable kind.[23] During the following thirty years he additionally drew attention to self-build activities – he was particularly impressed by achievements in the shanty towns of the poor countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia – co-operatives of all types, the informal economy and LETS (Local Exchange Trading Schemes).[24] New self-organizing activities are continually emerging: '"Do-it-yourself" is ... the essence of anarchist action, and the more

[22] George Woodcock, 'The Artist as Conservative', in Peter Parisi (ed.), *Artist of the Actual: Essays on Paul Goodman* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986), pp. 16–17, reprinted with changes (and errors) in Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists,* p. 231.

[23] Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), p. 137.

[24] For LETS, see Jonathan Croall, 'Local, Mutual, Voluntary and Simple: The Power of Local Exchange Trading Systems', in Worpole, pp. 145–58.

people apply it on every level, in education, in the workplace, in the family, the more ineffective restrictive structures will become and the more dependence will be replaced by individual and collective self-reliance.' This is another quotation from Woodcock, who was one of the most appreciative and perceptive of Ward's commentators; but otherwise discussion of his writings has been remarkably limited, presumably because they are perceived as insufficiently theoretical, the unpretentious originality of his pragmatic anarchism not being appreciated. He observed that it is in the Netherlands and Germany with their down-to-earth empiricism that his books are most popular in contrast to the excessively rational and intellectual France and Italy.[25]

It is Ward's vision of anarchism, along with his many years of working in architecture and planning, that account for his concentration on 'anarchist applications' or 'anarchist solutions' to 'immediate issues in which people *are actually likely to get involved'.*[26] Although he told me in 1997 that in his opinion 'all my books hang together as an exploration of the relations between people and their environment' (by which he means the built, rather than the 'natural', environment), and while this clearly covers three-quarters of his output, it seems rather (as he had put it thirteen years earlier) that all his publications were 'looking at life from an anarchist point of view'.[27] So the 'anarchist applications' concern housing: *Tenants Take Over* (1974), *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* (1976), *When We Build Again, Let's Have Housing That Works!* (1985) and *Talking Houses* (1990); architecture and planning: *Welcome, Thinner City: Urban Survival in the 1990s* (1989), *New Town, Home Town: The Lessons of Experience* (1993), *Talking to Architects* (1996) and (with Peter Hall) *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard* (1998); education: *Talking Schools* (1995); education *and* the environment: *Streetwork: The Exploding School* (1973) (with Anthony Fyson), *The Child in the City* (1978) and *The Child in the Country* (1988); education, work *and* housing: *Havens and Springboards: The Foyer Movement in Context* (1997); education and housing: *Undermining the Central Line* (1989) (with Ruth Rendell); transport: *Freedom to Go: After the Motor Age* (1991); and water: *Reflected in Water: A Crisis of Social Responsibility* (1997). As can be seen from this (incomplete) list, a surpris-

[25] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2nd edn, 1986), pp. 421. There is, however, a penetrating analysis of *Anarchy* by David Stafford, 'Anarchists in Britain Today', in David E. Apter and James Joll (eds.), *Anarchism Today* (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 91–6, as well as Ruth Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), chap. 4, 'Practical Anarchism'. Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), shamefully contained no discussion of Ward (though this is rectified in the 2nd edn (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), pp. 676–7), unlike the stimulating Rodney Barker, *Political Ideas in Modern Britain* (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 203–5. See also David Miller, *Anarchism* (London: J.M. Dent, 1984), pp. 151, 205 n26; and George Crowder, *Classical Anarchism: The Political Thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 195–6.

[26] David Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism: History, Theory, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 14; CW, 'After a Hundred Issues', p. 279 (Ward's emphasis).

[27] Interview with CW; Goodway, p. 21 n52.

ingly large number of his books, despite their distinctiveness, have been written in collaboration, something he particularly enjoyed.[28]

How did Ward come to espouse such an anarchism? Who are the thinkers and which are the traditions responsible for shaping his outlook? First, it should be said that some would argue that there is no originality in Wardian anarchism since it is all anticipated by Peter Kropotkin and Gustav Landauer. There is indeed no denying Ward's very considerable debt to Kropotkin. He names Kropotkin as his economic influence; described himself as 'an anarchist-communist, in the Kropotkin tradition'; and, regarding *Fields, Factories and Workshops* as 'one of those great prophetic works of the nineteenth century whose hour is yet to come', brought it up to date as *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow* (1974).[29] It is also the case that Kropotkin in his great *Mutual Aid* demonstrates that co-operation is pervasive within both the animal and the human worlds, in his concluding chapter giving contemporary clubs and voluntary societies, such as the Lifeboat Association, as examples. Ward, with his typical modesty, writes that in a sense *Anarchy in Action* is 'simply an extended, updating footnote to Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*'[30] Yet Kropotkin prepared for a bloody social revolution; and Ward also goes far beyond him in the types of co-operative groups he identifies in modern societies and the centrality he accords to them in anarchist transformation.

Ward is still closer to the remarkable Landauer. He even goes so far as to say that his 'is not a new version of anarchism. Gustav Landauer saw it, not as the founding of something new, "but as the actualization and reconstitution of something that has always been present, which exists alongside the state, albeit buried and laid waste."' And one of Ward's favourite quotations, which he rightly regards as 'a profound and simple contribution to the analysis of the state and society in one sentence' derives from an article by Landauer of 1910: 'The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.'[31] What this led Landauer to advocate was the formation of producers' and consumers' co-operatives, but especially of agrarian communes; and his emphasis is substantially different to Ward's exploration of 'anarchist solutions' to 'immediate issues'. In any case, for many years Ward only knew of Landauer through a chapter in Martin Buber's *Paths in Utopia* (1949); and it is Buber, who had been Landauer's friend, executor and editor and shared similar views concerning the relationship between society and the State but, although sympathetic, was not an anarchist himself, whom Ward acknowledges as his influence with respect to 'society'. He was deeply impressed by 'Society and the State' – a lecture of 1950 that he has perpetually cited

[28] See TA, p. 84.

[29] Boston, p.65; Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Today,* ed. Colin Ward (London: Freedom Press, 2nd edn, 1985), p. iv. See also Ward, *Influences,* chap. 3; TA, p. 85.

[30] Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 2nd edn, 1996), p. 8.

[31] Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), pp. 11, 19.

– in which Buber distinguishes between 'the social principle', exemplified by all spontaneous human associations built around shared needs or interests, such the family, informal groups, co-ops of all kinds, trade unions and communities, as opposed to 'the political principle', manifested in authority, power, hierarchy and, of course, the State. Buber maintained:

> All forms of government have this in common: each possesses more power than is required by the given conditions; in fact, this excess in the capacity for making dispositions is actually what we understand by political power. The measure of this excess ... represents the exact difference between Administration and Government. I call it the 'political surplus'. Its justification derives from the external and internal instability, from the latent state of crisis between nations and within every nation...The political principle is always stronger in relation to the social principle than the given conditions require. The result is a continuous diminution in social spontaneity.

Ward comments that these words 'cut the rhetoric of politics down to size' and that ever since he first read them he has 'found Buber's terminology far more valuable as an explanation of events in the real world ... than a dozen lectures on political theory or on sociology'.[32] In 'The Unwritten Handbook', he himself wrote that a power vacuum,

> created by the organizational requirements of society in a period of rapid population growth and industrialization at a time when unrestricted exploitation had to yield to a growing extent to the demands of the exploited, has been filled by the State, because of the weakness, inadequacy or incompleteness of libertarian alternatives. Thus the State, in its role as a form of social organization rather than in its basic function as an instrument of internal and external coercion, is not so much the villain of the piece as the result of the inadequacy of the other answers to social needs.[33]

It seems extraordinary that Wardian anarchism was nurtured within a Freedom Press Group whose other members were looking back to the workers' and soldiers' councils of the Russian and German Revolutions and the collectives of the Spanish

[32] Ward, *Anarchy in Action,* pp. 19–21; Ward, *Influences,* pp. 88–9; TA, pp. 86–7; Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 26–7. See also the Buber-Landauer-Muhsam issue of *Anarchy,* no. 54 (August 1965), where 'Society and the State' is reprinted (Ward's quotation is on p. 241). For Landauer, see Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973); also Charles B. Maurer, *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), and Gustav Landauer, *For Socialism* (St Louis: Telos Press, 1978) [with a helpful introduction by Russell Berman and Tim Luke]. For years this last was the only significant English translation of a book by Landauer, but it has now been supplemented by Gustav Landauer, *Revolution and Other Writings: A Political Reader,* ed. Gabriel Kuhn (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010).

[33] *Freedom,* 28 June 1958.

Revolution. He never believed in an imminent revolution: 'That's just not my view of anarchism. I think it's unhistorical....I don't think you'll ever see any of my writings in *Freedom* which are remotely demanding revolution next week.' When he tried to interest his comrades in the late 1940s in a pamphlet on the squatters' movement – to give them the idea he had even pasted his articles up – he recalled that 'it wasn't thought that this is somehow relevant to anarchism'.[34] Although they deserve great credit for allowing him to go his own way with *Anarchy,* it was not until after the success of *Tenants Take Over,* published by the Architectural Press in 1974, that Freedom Press suggested that he write a book for them. The result was *Housing: An Anarchist Approach*, which, to some extent, did recycle his *War Commentary* and *Freedom* pieces on post-war squatting.[35]

Ward's difference of emphasis is, in part, to be explained by the fact that he was approaching anarchism from a background of architecture, town planning, the Garden City movement – 'You could see the links between Ebenezer Howard and Kropotkin' – and regional planning.[36] He was considerably influenced by Patrick Geddes (who is acknowledged accordingly in *Influences),* Lewis Mumford and the regionalist approach.[37] William Morris was also important – 'As the decades roll by, it becomes more and more evident that the truly creative socialist thinker of the nineteenth century was not Karl Marx, but William Morris' – but not for his political lectures, which were not to Ward's taste, but rather as mediated by the Arts and Crafts Movement (his early employer, Sidney Caulfield, had actually known Morris) and, in particular, as has been seen, by Lethaby.[38] It is Alexander Herzen, though not an anarchist, whom he regards as his principal political influence, repeatedly quoting – just as with Buber's paragraph from 'Society and the State' – the same passage from *From the Other Shore,* praising it as 'a splendidly-phrased political message for every twentieth-century zealot, prepared to sacrifice his generation for the sake of *his* version of the future':

> If progress is the goal, for whom then are we working? Who is this Moloch who, as the toilers approach him, instead of rewarding them, draws back, and as a consolation to the exhausted multitudes shouting, 'We, who are about to die, salute thee!', can only give the mocking answer that after their death all will be beautiful on earth. Do you really wish to condemn human

[34] Interview with CW.

[35] Colin Ward, *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* (London: Freedom Press, 1976), pp. 13–27.

[36] Interview with CW. For Ward on Howard and the Garden City movement, see Peter Hall and Colin Ward, *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebeneqer Howard* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1998), esp. chaps. 1–3; *TA,* pp. 70–73.

[37] Ward, *Influences,* pp. 105–i. For Ward on Mumford, see Colin Ward, 'Introduction', to Lewis Mumford, *The Future of Technics and Civilization* (London: Freedom Press, 1986).

[38] William Morris, *A Factory as It Might Be;* Colin Ward, *The Factory We Never Had* (Nottingham: Mushroom Bookshop, 1994), p. 21. See also Colin Ward, 'An Old House amongst New Folk: Making Nowhere Somewhere', in Stephen Coleman and Paddy O'Sullivan (eds.), *William Morris and News from Nowhere: A Vision for Our Time* (Hartford, Devon: Green Books, 1990), pp. 127–36.

> beings alive today to the mere sad role of caryatids supporting a floor for others one day to dance upon? Of wretched galley slaves who, up to their knees in mud, drag a barge with the humble words 'Future Progress' on its flag.
>
> A goal which is indefinitely remote is not a goal at all, it is a deception. A goal must be closer – at the very least the labourer's wage or pleasure in the work performed. Each epoch, each generation, each life has had, and has, its own experience, and *en route* new demands grow, new methods.

Herzen's conclusion is that 'the end of each generation must be itself'.[39] By extension another influence on Ward is Herzen's outstanding expositor in English, Isaiah Berlin, whose major liberal statements, *Historical Inevitability* and *Two Concepts of Liberty,* he also prized. Yet he was familiar with Herzen long before Berlin's 'A Marvellous Decade', George Woodcock having published an article on him in *politics,* whose editor, Dwight Macdonald, was another Herzen *aficionado.* Berlin was to decline Ward's invitation to write a piece on Zeno of Citium, on whom he was due to speak to the Oxford Anarchist Group, although asserting that he had 'every sympathy' with *Anarchy:* 'I am very sorry, I should like to oblige.'[40] George Orwell and his 'pretty anarchical' version of socialism also need to be mentioned; and in 1955 Ward published 'Orwell and Anarchism', a persuasively argued series of five articles, in Freedom.[41]

From across the Atlantic two periodicals, which were available from Freedom Bookshop, were important. *politics* (1944–49), edited by Dwight Macdonald in the course of his transition from Marxism to a pacifist anarchism, Ward considered 'my ideal of a political journal', admiring its 'breadth, sophistication, dryness'. Although Macdonald lived in London in 1956–7 and again in 1960–61, he had by then moved to the right – although participating in the Committee of 100's first sit-down demonstration in Whitehall in February 1961 – and Ward was to meet him only two or three times.[42]

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[39] Cited in full in Ward, *Anarchism,* p. 32. A shorter version, from which the conclusion is drawn, appears in Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), p. 136. The passage, but in a different translation, is quoted in Colin Ward, *Housing Is Theft, Housing Is Freedom* (Nottingham: Old Hammond Press, n.d.), p. 9; Ward, *Influences,* p. 60; TA, p. 86. (The emphasis is Ward's.)

[40] Ward, *Influences,* p. 50; letter from Berlin to Ward, 10 January [1964] (for a copy of which I am indebted to Colin Ward). Woodcock's article on Herzen was reprinted in George Woodcock, *The Writer and Politics* (London: Porcupine Press, 1948), chap. 5.

[41] Interview with CW. 'Orwell and Anarchism' has been reprinted in [Vernon Richards (ed.)] *George Orwell at Home (and among the Anarchists): Essays and Photographs* (London: Freedom Press, 1998), pp. 15–45.

[42] Interview with CW. For Macdonald and *politics,* see Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Critical American: The Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (Guilford, CT: Archon Books, 1984); Michael Wreszin, *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); and Gregory D. Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the 'politics' Circle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). For Macdonald in London, see NW, 'A Rebel in Defence of Tradition', *Freedom,* 10 December 1994; Vernon Richards, *A Weekend Photographer's Notebook* (London: Freedom Press, 1996), p. 44 and note 59.

Why? (1942–7), later *Resistance* (1947–54), was edited by a group which included David Wieck and Paul Goodman. Goodman, who also contributed to *politics,* was another principal influence, firstly and always, for *Communitas* (1947), the planning classic he wrote with his brother Percival, but also for the very similar anarchism to Ward's he began to expound from 'The May Pamphlet', included in his *Art and Social Nature* (1946), onwards. Goodman became a frequent contributor to *Anarchy* and *Anarchy in Action* is dedicated to his memory; yet Ward was only to meet him once (when he was in London in 1967 for the Dialectics of Liberation conference).[43] In an issue of *Anarchy* celebrating the work of Alex Comfort, Ward drew attention to the similarities between Goodman and Comfort, and the Comfort of *Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State* O950) and *Delinquency* (1951), in which he calls for anarchism to become a libertarian action sociology, is the final significant influence on Ward's anarchism.[44]

In total, as he explained in 1958:

> To my mind the most striking feature of the unwritten handbook of twentieth-century anarchism is not in its rejection of the insights of the classical anarchist thinkers, Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, but its widening and deepening of them. But it is selective, it rejects perfectionism, utopian fantasy, conspiratorial romanticism, revolutionary optimism; it draws from the classical anarchists their most valid, not their most questionable ideas. And it adds to them the subtler contribution of later (and neglected because untranslated) thinkers like Landauer and Malatesta. It also adds the evidence provided in this century by the social sciences, by psychology and anthropology, and by technical change.[45]

Ward was, with good reason, scornful of most other anarchists' obsession with the history, whether glorious or infamous, of their tradition: 'I think the besetting sin of anarchism has been its preoccupation with its own past...'[46] Still, despite his own emphasis on the here-and-now and the future, he wrote four historical books, the first two with Dennis Hardy and the third with David Crouch: *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape (*1984); *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (1986); *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture* (1988); and *Cotters and Squatters: Housing's Hidden History* (2002). The masterly *Arcadia for All,* a history of the 'plotlands' of south-east England, is simply a natural extension back into the recent past of his major interest in self-build and squatting in the present, while *Cotters*

[43] Ward, *Influences,* pp. 115–32. See also *Anarchy,* no. 11 (January 1962), a special Goodman number.

[44] 'John Ellerby', 'The Anarchism of Alex Comfort', *Anarchy,* no. 33 (November 1963), esp. pp. 329–32.

[45] *Freedom,* 28 June 1958. Also quoted in *TA,* pp. 54–5.

[46] 'Colin Ward Interview', *Freedom,* June 1984.

and Squatters draws from their entire historical record in England and Wales; and *The Allotment* touches upon similar issues. In *Goodnight Campers!* the entrepreneurial holiday camps are traced to their origins in the early twentieth century and the 'pioneer camps', in which a key role was played by the major organizations of working-class self-help and mutual aid: the co-operative movement and trade unions.[47] The historic importance of such institutions in the provision of welfare and the maintenance of social solidarity was to become after *Goodnight Campers!* a theme of increasing significance in Ward's work.[48]

He stated his case in 'The Path Not Taken', a striking short article of 1987;[49] but his analysis over the next ten years fleshed out and developed a longstanding preoccupation, as he explored the manner in which 'the social principle' has been overborne by 'the political principle' in modern Britain. Since the late nineteenth century 'the tradition of fraternal and autonomous associations springing up from below' had been successively displaced by one of 'authoritarian institutions directed from above'.[50] He saw a 'sinister alliance of Fabians and Marxists, both of whom believed implicitly in the state, and assumed that they would be the particular elite in control of it', effectively combining with 'the equally sinister alliance of bureaucrats and professionals: the British civil service and the British professional classes, with their undisguised contempt for the way ordinary people organized anything'. The result was: 'The great tradition of working-class self-help and mutual aid was written off, not just as irrelevant, but as an actual impediment, by the political and professional architects of the welfare state ... The contribution that the recipients had to make ... was ignored as a mere embarrassment...'[51] Drawing upon several recent historical works, he was able to show that the nineteenth-century dame schools, set up by working-class parents for working-class children and under working-class control, were swept away by the board schools of the 1870s; and similarly the self-organization of patients in the working-class

[47] Colin Ward and Dennis Hardy, *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1986), esp. chap. 2.

[48] See, for example, three of his articles: 'Those Talking Co-op Blues', *Freedom,* ii June 1994; 'A Token Anarchist's Week', *Freedom,* 29 April 1995; 'Coping with Jobless Capitalism', *Freedom,* 26 April 1997.

[49] Colin Ward, 'The Path Not Taken', *Raven,* no. 3 (November 1987), abridged as 'Rebels Finding Their Cause', *Guardian,* 12 October 1987. The apparently independently convergent views of Michael Young (in conjunction with Gerald Lemos), 'Roots of Revival', *Guardian,* 19 March 1997, were printed with his acknowledgement to Ward omitted (letter from Young to Ward, 21 March 1997, for a copy of which I am obliged to Colin Ward).

[50] Ward, 'Path Not Taken', p. 195. He said these phrases (which also appear in Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), p. 123) were first published in 1956 in *Freedom;* but the original printing is actually located in a long letter of 30 June 1960 to the *Listener,* and his 'Origins of the Welfare State', *Freedom,* 12 June 1959, prefigures it only weakly. For other early engagements with theme see, for example, his articles, 'Moving with Times...But Not in Step', *Anarchy,* no. 3 (May 1961); 'Anarchists and Fabians: An Anniversary Symposium', *Anarchy,* no. 8 (October 1961); 'House and Home', *Anarchy,* no. 35 (January 1964).

[51] Ward, 'Path Not Taken', p. 196.

medical societies was to be lost in the creation of the National Health Service. Ward commented from his own specialism on the initially working-class self-help building societies stripping themselves of the final vestiges of mutuality; and this degeneration has occurred alongside a tradition of municipal housing that was adamantly opposed to the principle of dweller control. Here we are presented with a rich, never more relevant, analysis of the disaster of modern British social policy with pointers to the way ahead if we are to stand any chance of reinstituting the self-organization and mutual aid that have been lost. He restated his argument in *Social Policy: An Anarchist Response,* the lectures he gave in 1996 as Visiting Professor of Housing and Social Policy at the London School of Economics and which summarize several of his most important themes.[52]

Down to his death in February 2010, Colin Ward saw anarchism's best prospects in the immediate future as lying within the environmental and ecological movement, and the concluding chapter of his final book significantly is on 'Green Aspirations and Anarchist Futures'.[53] One of his greatest regrets remained that so few anarchists follow his example and apply their principles to what they themselves know best. In his case that was the terrain of housing, architecture and planning; but where, he wanted to know, are the anarchist experts on, and applications to, for example, medicine, the health service, agriculture and economics?

[52] Colin Ward, *Social Policy: An Anarchist Response* (London: London School of Economics, 1996) and (London: Freedom Press, corrected edn, 2000).

[53] Ward, *Anarchism,* chap. 10.

1988

2. Colin Ward introduces the country column which is radically different. It's about the city, too.

The urban fringe, that vast ragged ring, some of it actually green belt, has a bad reputation in the ideology of planners, conservationists and snobs. The distaste that is felt for the area beyond the city limits, but which isn't quite country, has its origins in psychology and aesthetics rather than in land use analysis. We acquire in childhood the perception that town is town and country is country and that the two are distinct. We carry into adult life this purified image of desirably separate places, even though, in demographic fact, most of us, here or in the United States, actually live in suburbs.

But we express our disapproval of the space which is neither city nor country nor even suburb, not in terms of childhood certainties, but in that of wasteful land use. For the planner Graham Moss, in his book on *Britain's Wasting Acres,* the urban fringe is "that chaotic mixture of rural and urban land uses in mutual conflict". For the geographer Alice Coleman, it is "an irrational land-use pattern which it was hoped would disappear after the advent of planning" but which instead "has increased".

I want to use this column to explore the present and future of Britain's urban fringe, formerly known as the countryside. But I also want to look at those huge areas of life, whether they are geographically in the fringe or in an equally unreal category, the alleged inner city, where what is variously called the black economy, the informal economy, or doing your own thing, is the most important way of sustaining convivial life.

The urban fringe is perceived as a deplorable problem, but if it has increased, it must be useful for someone. And of course it is: there is a big range of not particularly profitable, but inevitable, activities that take up a lot of space but aren't lucrative enough to pay either urban or agricultural rents. Car-breaking yards are an example. If you citizens depend on cars, they must have a penultimate resting place once you have busted or rusted them into the ground.

"Horsiculture" is another, and a growth industry too. If your children prefer riding to driving, the beasts have to be stabled and grazed. And the same goes for kennels, catteries, places where earth-moving equipment rests between jobs, or where concrete blocks are drying in the sun.

But the really big joke about the derogatory talk about the urban fringe is that it is less a land-use category than a social fact. Why do we obscure observable truths with

sentimental myths and deny that the greater part of England and much of Scotland and Wales belongs to a wholly urbanised culture, or that the children of Shetland, St Ives or Anglesey follow the same fashions, respond to the same music and absorb the same half-truths as those of any British city? Their parents commute to work over what are to me unbelievable distances, but not necessarily to big urban centres: they might be driving, as they do a mile from the remote spot where I write, to a high-tech factory based on a former watermill in Suffolk.

The object of capital is to do without labour, and thanks to almost 50 years of generous subsidy, the primary rural industry, agriculture, has ensured that farm workers are a minute proportion of the rural population, as well as being the lowest paid. Unlike their employers, they've been left out of the huge benefits that accrue to their neighbours who happen to live in the country (the old-fashioned name for our all-but-universal urban fringe).

Another ex-urban East Anglian writer, Fraser Harrison, coined the useful phrase "a corrupt grief' for the habit of lamenting that simple past from which everyone actually involved thankfully escaped. There is every reason for recording and conserving the rural past and for telling the truth about it. There is no reason at all for deploring the belated invasion of rural Britain by access to metropolitan culture. Quite the contrary, since the curtailment of public transport and the fact that many services have been trimmed to serve the mobile majority, has left some rural households more isolated than at any time in the last 60 years.

But the worst aspect of that corrupting grief is the notion that the view will be desecrated by the obscene sight of another human habitation. Pull up the ladder, Jack. We're already aboard.

3. Colin Ward: the travellers who don't whittle clothes pegs and tell fortunes.

I was in Germany last week for the first time in my life, and I saw in the streets and squares of central Cologne posters which claimed that "The new racism now has a name: Sony". Naturally I was curious and I found that the posters reproduced what was claimed to be a letter to the Lord Mayor, Norbert Burger, from the European head of the Sony Corporation, the interestingly-named Jacob Schmuckli, under the heading The Gipsy Problem, in which the key word was *Durchgreifen,* This word means, I am told, "ruthless measures have to be taken".

There is no way I can know whether Herr Schmuckli really said such a thing to the Oberburgermeister, but for countless Germans of my generation it has echoes of the report to the Minister for Racial Affairs in 1938 from Gauleiter Portschy which argued that something must be done about the gipsy problem "for reasons of public health".

One consequence of Herr Portschy's report was that 600,000 gipsy men, women and children were exterminated in the 1940s and countless others were compulsorily sterilised. They were eliminated, along with the Jews, Communists and homosexuals. I can't imagine that this Schmuckli-person, if he actually exists, could dare make such a remark.

What I learned was that there is a place in the urban fringe of Cologne called Bickendorf where Sony has its German factory, and that the gipsies are encamped nearby. Denied their traditional occupations (who wants clothes-pegs, chair-reseating, knifesharpening or saucepan-tinkering these days?) they are into the car-recycling and metal-recovery industries.

Naturally thefts from the supermarkets and purse-snatching from tourists are the standard complaints among Cologne's good citizens about the gipsies, I heard unusual tales about the sheer adroitness of the children in squeezing under the check-out to pass the goodies seized from the consumer counters to Papa on the outside. Mutti's voluminous skirts, I was assured, conceal a multitude of peculations by the gipsy children. And we all know how these stereotype multiply. But I assume that Jack Schmuckli is Swiss and just doesn't see how his remark would grate on modern German sensibilities, and mine.

Another thing I was told in Cologne is that an association of at least 50 professional people, paediatricians, remedial teachers and jobcounsellors, are recognising the plight of the gipsies and are putting their services, free, at their disposal. This is an intriguing contrast to the British situation.

A few miles from where I live there's a road junction between the A134 and the B1087 which leads to the posh Suffolk village of Nayland. Between the river Stour and the Anglican Water Authority's pump-house there's a patch of ground never used by its owners for anything, which has for years been a seasonal camp for half a dozen caravans or trailers.

Suddenly last autumn a huge machine appeared to dig an instant trench, a deep tank-resisting ditch which ensures that no-one, gipsy or paid-up citizen, can get onto that particular site. If I telephone the County Council or the Water Authority I will get an instant assurance that this has nothing to do with any policy of *Durchgreifen.* Such an idea is merely a product of my overworked imagination. Just as it would be in Germany.

And once a year now we have National Hate Week when those hippies converge around Stonehenge, and we all have a chance to express our resentment of those inveterate criminals who constitute parasites in the bosom of our people. Apparently they aren't *genuine* gipsies who are recognisable by their habit of whittling clothes-pegs and telling fortunes as well as living in horse-drawn caravans. The fact that every traveller can be stigmatised as a spurious traveller and not the elusive and romantic real thing enables local authorities to avoid their statutory duty to provide sites and enables us to vent our hatred of anyone who lives in an old bus and doesn't pay rates.

Step by step, with the changes in housing benefit, the Housing Bill and the impending poll tax, the good citizens are creating the situation where ruthless measures have to be taken, not by government but by those people who have the nerve to adopt the gispy lifestyle. It's not my idea of a good life, but I'm not in their situation.

4. Colin Ward finds a group of young, unemployed people in Hull are building their own enterprise.

Despite the Humber Bridge, Hull is a city too far out on a limb to have an office boom like Leeds or a shopping boom like Sheffield. Its port is a shadow, its fishing a memory and its shipbuilding a ghost. Its biggest industry is education.

One effect of Hull's isolation and depression is that Victorian terraced houses to which little has been done for decades are still relatively cheap. Forty-seven per cent of the housing stock belongs to the council yet at least 3,500 families are officially described as homeless, and this minimal figure ignores the young, single and footloose and all those teenagers leaving home after a family row or a broken marriage.

Three years ago, young, unemployed Reg Salmon borrowed enough in small loans from trusting friends to get a mortgage on a small house which together they set about renovating. With that house as security they got a bank loan to buy a second house. Then with the help of Humberside Cooperative Development Agency they set up a building cooperative, Giroscope Ltd, whose five other directors are Robert Amesbury, Martin Newman, Sarah Paton, Michael Shutt and Simon Wheatley. All are under 25 and all were unemployed.

The directors who got the £40 a week paid under the enterprise allowance scheme pooled it with those who got £30 a week dole. The aims of the co-op are "the purchase, renovation, modernisation and furnishing of houses in a poor condition" and "the renting out of these house to unemployed people and to other disadvantaged groups in society, such as single parents and disabled people."

The co-op now has six houses and accommodates 25 young unemployed people and four children. Two more houses are on the way. Having earned credibility it finds it easier to get loans and has benefited from grants from the Hull and East Riding Charitable Trust and from Charity Projects. Its members pay themselves no more than the £30 a week they would get on the dole.

I found them in their office in Glencoe Street, off the Anlaby Road, and asked about their future. They explained how everything had got better as they went along. Their first house had depended totally on mutual trust and on robbing Peter to pay Paul. By now they had all acquired building skills and experience, as well as management know-how, and were in good standing with builders' merchants. A network of well-wishers tipped them off about cheap houses coming onto the market. They believe that once they have bought and renovated 20 houses their operation will be self-financing. They

don't want to grow indefinitely and they don't want to become a convenience for the city's social services.

They are willing to train people and to share their experience, though they warned that, especially with the impact of the new social security regulations on the homeless young, their precariously balanced budget would only work in those northern towns and cities where it is still possible to buy houses cheaply and to put in a great deal of work.

From experience they scorn the government's faith in the private landlord.

"Many of the people operating in the private rented sector," they declare, "are tyrants for whom extortion, intimidation, violence, humiliation and overt prejudice are an everyday part of their business.

Much of the accommodation available is squalid, damp, verminous, cold, small and insecure. Contacting the Fair Rent Officer or Environmental Health Department often results in illegal (and possibly violent) eviction."

When I asked the co-op members why their example hadn't been followed all over the place, they laughed. "It depends on three things," Reg Salmon explained. "One is being willing to work very hard. Another is to do it for very little money. And the third is the one that makes sense of the other two: a kind of political and social awareness."

5. Colin Ward remembers depopulation and discovers a barn job

A century ago politicians of both major parties were preoccupied with one great worry known as the "depopulation of the countryside". Like drink and debauchery, it was seen as a major social evil. Calculations from census returns showed that the number of persons gainfully employed in agriculture had fallen by 50 per cent between 1851 and 1901. This was actually an exaggeration of an unmistakable trend but it led the Board of Acriculture to commission a report on the problem. This attributed the decline to unsuitable education. poor housing, the pleasures of city life, the low wages in agriculture and the higher wages in industry, and the lack of chances for advancement in agricultural work.

The good and the great worried away at the spectre of rural depopulation; however, they failed to attribute it to the depression of British agriculture that began in the 1870s and continued, with just a brief recovery when the young men from the country were being slaughtered in droves in Flanders, until the Second World War. Anyone over 60 can remember the pre-war farming scene of blocked ditches, overgrown hedges, thistles and "dog and stick" farmers in constant fear of bankruptcy. Those who imagine that the land is full of immemorial wisdom handed down from father to son have to be reminded that the War Agricultural Committees had to borrow ploughmen from East Anglia to teach farmers in the shires how to plough.

The fact that both in 1916 and 1941 Britain was brought within weeks of famine because of the submarine blockade led both to the capital-intensive rather than the labour-intensive pattern of post-war farming and to its remarkably privileged position in the British economy. Other European governments have used the Common Agricultural Policy to support the small producer, often a part-time farmer. In Britain it has been applied in a way that enables the big producer to get bigger, and richer.

Public perception of rural Britain ignored the fact that farm work occupied a continually diminishing proportion of the rural population. Planning policy, mindful of "those precious agricultural acres" sought to freeze rural Britain in a snapshot of 1948. New housing in the country, outside "key" villages was only to be permitted if it was to provide homes for farm workers, even though their numbers had fallen from two million at the turn of the century, to 160,000 today.

The result was every kind of subterfuge to persuade the development control officer that auntie, who wanted a house in the country, was really a shepherdess. And in the 1950s and 1960s, zealous public health inspectors from the then rural district councils would slap a closure order on every tied cottage once a retired farmworker's widow had finally expired and before it came on the market, on the grounds that the ceiling heights were lower than those prescribed in the one-time Model Bylaws of the Ministry of Health.

Cottages that would delight conservationists and historians of vernacular architecture, and which would be worth a mint of money today, were pulled down to ensure that dispersed settlements, except for those of farmers and land-owners, were eliminated. Then there were barns, those heroic structures that are no longer needed since contract harvesting requires no on-farm storage space. Ten years ago they were being pulled down because there was a market for the superb oak posts and beams, the acres of clay roof tiles and the paving bricks. Lovers of vernacular buildings were driven to despair.

Gradually, planning departments retreated from their refrigeration policy to one which allows the conversion of barns to houses. Builders are becoming used to taking on "barn jobs". Speculators, known as "developers" scour the countryside for barns, cowsheds and piggeries that are ripe for conversion.

Some are excellent and ought to delight anyone who would rather see an old building used than be a picturesque relic or a museum of rural fife. I Others are hilarious bits of Disney make-believe, rebuilt from scratch. All are pricey.

Barn conversions here have the same status as loft conversions in New York. Neither are for the grandchildren of those who sweated for a living in them and were thankful to escape and get a living wage.

6. Colin Ward marches into the field of rural repopulation by the rich

John MacGregor, the Minister of Agriculture, told the Commons last month that annual payments of up to £200 a hectare will be offered to farmers who set aside at least a fifth of their arable land by taking it out of production for five years. To qualify, land would have to be kept fallow or put to woodland; it could not be grazed or developed for residential, industrial or retail purposes.

Quick as a flash, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) responded with a discussion paper suggesting that rather than paying farmers to "set aside" up to a million acres, it would be more sensible to change the land use from farming and turn it into "country estates" with planning consent for a suitable house, stables, ponds and parkland and, of course, a few staff cottages.

Here is a nice example of the survival of Victorian values: this is exactly what happened 100 years ago, when in the agricultural depression the newly rich bought their way into rural lifestyles. The venerable weekly *Country Life* was founded to give them hints on keeping up with the county families. A wave of newly-established rival journals shows that this aspiration has been revived.

There is another reason, of course, for the RICS paper. A Norwich surveyor explains that estates of 50 to a 100 acres could be sold at, say, £15,000 an acre instead of the figure of £100,000 now being charged for a single plot with planning permission. The Norwich surveyor said he was besieged with inquiries like, "Should we buy land in order to get it set aside?"

In the process of rural repopulation, planning consent is worth 100 times its weight in gold. But it isn't easily won, so if the bottom really is dropping out of the grotesquely subsidised cereal prices of the last decade, and thus land prices, it's as well to settle for what you can get.

It was like this, of course, long before we were alleged to have a planning system. In 1875, Tarbuck's *Handbook of House Property* included the apt little verse: "The richest crop for any field/Is a crop of bricks for it to yield./The richest crop that it can grow/Is a crop of houses all in a row." At that time everyone deplored the way the country was being de-populated by the poor. Now—apart from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors—we deplore the way in which it is being repopulated by the rich. Years ago the geographer Peter Hall described the green belt as "a civilised form of apartheid" and the whole machinery of planning, justified for its allegedly redistributive effect, has been hijacked by the secure and affluent to bolster their automatic freedom of choice.

In my own patch, unofficial bodies like the Suffolk Rural Housing Association, with little support and less cash, have been drawing attention to the plight of local people setting up home, let alone job seekers in growing East Anglia, hopelessly outclassed in the property boom.

Our local *East Anglian Daily Times,* not known for its radicalism, comments editorially that, "A number of councillors, speaking from experience, saw little or no hope of the ordinary house buyer receiving any benefit from cheaper land prices. Builders, in their view, were unduly involved with land-hoarding and speculation. Since the development value of land is created entirely by the community, it is right that the community should benefit from it. A tax on it would be fair and it would lead to cheaper housing and to better planning. It is impossible to understand why the government should be considering any other form of replacement for rates."

This is an absolutely crucial issue in rural England, with speculators balancing their chances of set-aside or sell-off, determined by a district council's development control officer, but modified by the local assessment of the way the DoE will swing on appeal. This ministerial judgment is in fact the way in which policy is revealed to those hard-pressed local officers. Mr Ridley has just issued two new policy statements on rural housing. I shall study them eagerly.

7. Colin Ward on changing attitudes to the village school

In Charsfield, Suffolk, and the villages around, plenty of people stayed up recently until the absurd hour of 12.55am, just to see Channel 4's revival of Peter Hall's film adaptation of Ronald Blythe's *Akenfield.*

It makes riveting watching to glimpse people you actually know, acting out the roles of their grand parents, especially as for some of them the film itself is now a period piece. For the primary school children in the film are now in their twenties, and were watching out indulgently for a nice photogenic accident that occurred in its making.

Teacher, realistically playing the part of her severe predecessor, admonished one infant so sternly that he, never having been addressed like this in his life, crumpled into uncontrollable sobbing. Of course, once the scene was shot, everyone rushed forward to console him and to stress that it was only a game.

It was a reminder that the village school, whose survival is a matter of vital concern up and down the country today, was once a hard, tough and limiting environment. There has been a striking change in our response to the actual words "village school".

Ronald Blythe himself expressed this very accurately when he wrote in 1980, "For some time after the last war these schools lacked any kind of charm and were even found hateful, as being remnants of an all too easily remembered poverty, both physical and intellectual, and sometimes of brutality. Those who attended them breathed a sigh of relief when they were closed down and their children bussed to new sunny primaries miles away. However, as with all things, the day of re-evaluation has dawned..."

It has indeed. You have only to open a local paper in the shires to read reports of "Save Our School" campaigns by rural parents. The school at Charsfield itself (Blythe's

Akenfield), along with that at Little Bealings, has been threatened by closure by the county council, followed by protests, meetings and a delegation to the Secretary of State. It was reprieved last month.

In Burston, Norfolk, with immense irony, the seventieth anniversary of the Burston Strike School, set up by parents in an epic village struggle against the sacking of teachers by the local plutocracy of sporting parson and farming landowners, was celebrated by a demonstration in support of Burston County Primary School, threatened with closure by the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the pupils who walked out of it in 1914 and attended the Strike School from 1918 to 1939.

Village schools have changed immeasurably since those days, but the change in oarents' and educators' perceptions of appropriate school size are much more recent. In the sixties the Plowden report made recommendations on school size, which Lady Plowden herself has abandoned. Her old criteria are still used as a basis for closure by county councils, usually supported by the Secretary of State, in spite of his electioneering promise to rural voters.

Parents nowadays expect teachers to be local, friendly and approachable, not an annual meeting many miles away, but in an informal day-to-day relationship. Assumptions about class and culture made this impossible in the past, when Teacher was regarded with fear.

The changed relationship between parent and school (something Mr Baker is alleged to be keen about) is precisely why they are hurt and bewildered at the thought that their hopes for their five-to-eleven year-olds cannot be met in their own village.

8. Colin Ward seeks Robert Owen's ghost at New Lanark and meets a lumpen communard

Fifteen years ago, writing a school book on utopias, I went to Robert Owen's New Lanark in its spectacular gorge near the Falls of Clyde, which provided the power for the monumental cotton mills that once employed 2,000 people.

It was a ghost village. The Gourock Ropework Company had closed in 1968, and a firm called Metal Extraction had bought it and filled it with aluminium slag. Junk was everywhere and even the roof of Owen's famous school had caved in. Better a humble use than demolition, I supposed, but the metal firm only employed eight people in this area of high unemployment.

Of the handful of people and bodies interested in this particular slice of our history, none could conceivably take on the prohibitive cost of restoring the place. Yet it presents a truer picture of Scotland's heritage than all the *Bonny Prince Charlie slept here* industry. David Dale, a Glasgow banker, built the mills and a big house for the 500 pauper children he imported from Edinburgh. Then he built more to attract the poverty-stricken farm workers. Finally he found at Greenock a shipload of families

from Skye, victims of the Highland Clearances destined to be forcibly dumped in North America. By 1796 he had four mills with 1,340 workers, 750 of them children, half of whom were under nine, working from six in the morning until seven at night.

An everyday story of the industrial revolution in fact. But then came Owen, who had left school at nine in Wales and before he was 20 was the manager of the biggest mill in Lancashire. In 1799, with a shrewdness worthy of the enterprise culture, he married Dale's daughter and bought the mills. He stayed for 25 years, built a school, the first co-op grocery, a laundry, a vegetable market and houses better than any workers' homes in Scotland. He paid higher wages for shorter hours than any other manufacturer, and still took enough in profit to go off and found the Cooperative Community of New Harmony in the USA.

Owen claimed that New Lanark had become "a self-employing, self-supporting, self-educating, and self-governing population". What the workers thought about it we don't know, but last week Jim Arnold stressed that New Lanark, with its 150 residents, is today "far more democratic than in Owen's day".

He's the manager (the same title that Owen used) of the New Lanark Conservation Trust, the body set up in 1974 to unite interests and apply for grant aid. To me, going back there, the changes are staggering. Much of the housing has been restored and occupied through grants, and enough work has been done to make one of the mills function as a visitors' centre, with the Scottish Wildlife Trust running the Falls of Clyde Nature Reserve. In an area with over 20 per cent unemployment, there are 240 people employed with MSC money.

With all the usual reservations about the Heritage industry, I could not but admire the sheer organisational zest with which the transformation has been accomplished. I was there for an International Conference on Utopian Thought and Communal Experience organised by Israeli kibbutzniks on the one hand and American academics on the other, with some direct descendants of Dale and Owen for sentimental reasons and accounts of current alternative communities for relevance.

The communitarian urge persists, despite every discouragement. Ron Roberts of Northern Iowa, for example, presented a paper on *Lumper communards: recent attempts at community by the homeless in the US,* and resisted the tendency to measure the success or failure of any such venture by its longevity. Krishan Kumar of Kent University provided a thought for the week. "No organisations should last long," he declared. "They all begin to ossify from the moment they are set up."

9. Colin Ward is alarmed as the City of London spreads over Spitalfields

My friend Bobby has for 25 years had his little office in Commercial Street, London E1. Nowadays he's besieged with phone calls making offers for the premises.

Bobby is always polite. He listens to the smart young speculators, gratefully accepts their offers, and just when they propose to come round with the papers, explains that he doesn't actually own the place. Receiver crashes down at the other end. I keep telling him that he's going to be bought out, squeezed out or otherwise eased out, but he goes on believing in his gentleman's agreement with the landlord, forgetting that there aren't any gentle men in the property business.

I went the other night to an exhibition called "A Farewell to Spitalfields". It was rushed together by John Shaw and Ralph Samuel of Ruskin College, from old and new photographs and testimony, to remind us of the implications of the coming closure of Spitalfields market, and its removal eastward to Temple Mills.

It's moving, not because of traffic congestion or under-use, but because the annual turnover of the fruit and veg wholesalers is worth less than the "million square feet of potential office development right next door to the City of London" which will replace it.

This ancient area outside the city wall has been a market since the 14th century and a centre for the rag trade since the 15th. It is in the geographers' terms, the classic zone of transition where, as everyone knows, the Huguenots, then the Irish, then the Jews and now the Bengalis, have gained their first toe-hold in the urban economy.

It has always been a place of unlicensed factories in upper rooms, child labour, sweatshops, family solidarity and racial antagonism from outside. It has also been the hugely productive centre where the latest modes are run up for the smartest shops. And of course it houses the Petticoat Lane market, known 400 years ago as Rag Fair, and the market for birds and animals, Club Row. People have been thankful to get into it and glad to get out.

The same streets have always contained dozens of minute businesses supplying or applying the buttons, zips, fixings and trimmings or pressing, pinning and packaging for the wholesale market. What you wear either comes from a chain of subcontractors in places like Spitalfields or from their equivalents in South East Asia.

If you don't like it you should make your own clothes. What you *shouldn't* do is to applaud the elimination of the low-rent workshop economy by the high-rent finance industry that doesn't deal with useful commodities at all, just in money.

The organisers of that little exhibition at the Bishopsgate Institute were right to say that, "The viewer is thus confronted with two versions of the enterprise culture: one of family business and small scale firms, the other of international high finance with computer screens linking the City of London to the money markets of the world."

The left, when in office, used a lot of energy in attempting to eliminate the zone of transition, which represented everything it despised about petty capitalism. The right carelessly wipes it out because low-income enterprises are automatically absurd when property as such is a much better investment. Politically neither side recognises the need for the scruffy, busy workshop economy which depends on cheap premises close to the market.

"The whole industrial economy of Spitalfields," Shaw and Samuel claim, "rests on cheap workrooms; rentals in the new office complex are some eight times greater than they are in the purlieus of Brick Lane, and with the dizzy rise in property values which will flow, accommodation of all kinds, whether for working space or home, will be beyond local people." But who cares?

10. Colin Ward goes to pubs—not for the drink, or the food, but for the music

Maybe the best thing that has happend to the licensed trade is the fact that publicans can't make a living any more simply by selling booze. They have to have some other attractions to draw the punters in.

Most have moved into food, and it's my experience that you get far better value for money in a pub than in a restaurant, but increasingly it is live music that boosts trade. Musak, happily, drives them out after a while. Urban pubs develop their own specialities: jazz, blues, rock, Irish ballads, sixties music, reggae, someone playing sing-along oldies, or country-and-westem groups.

In rural England it is all much less standardised. A local following tags on to a favourite performer whose reputation grows through word of mouth.

At one end of Suffolk there's the Butley Oyster. It is incredibly crowded on folk nights, all the tables are pushed together to make a kind of board meeting where you sit around and catch the chairman's eye if you want to do your act. There's "authentic" unaccompanied folk, pseudo-folk and neo-folk, and Edwardian music-hall ballads. It's cosmopolitan: last time we went there were Dutch and Yiddish songs.

It's a privilege to perform, and to get a drink you have to squeeze out of the back door to the other bar and bring it in. The ordinary' hubbub of conversation tends to be loud and often impolite.

At our end of the county people know who is performing where, and arrange their weekend evenings accordingly. Most loved are those musicians of professional quality who use their very expertise to encourage anyone who turns up to do their piece. The real musicians will play along with all, whether it's my neighbour Alan doing his WW2 numbers on his harmonica, or Dennis Pym, persuaded to give his rendering of *Click go the shears.*

I love to watch the way they pick up the key and the tempo to encourage the singer in songs they may never have heard before. They abolish the distinction between skilled and incompetent, young and old. professional and unprofessional.

Last weekend, for example, we heard that the Churchfitters would be at the King's Head, Bildeston, and got ourselves seats in the corner. They're a duo, based in Colchester, and they don't travel far, unless it's really far, like Thailand or Australia. Anthony is tall, dark and Irish, Rosie is slight and blond.

Between them they have every kind of fretted instrument: guitars, mandolins, banjos, several things to blow, from twin whistles to a soprano saxophone, and all sorts of percussive sound: tamborine, drums, bones, spoons and a cardboard box operated by a drummer's pedal. They use mikes and an amplifier, so they aren't worried by the general noise level of the pub.

Supremely competent, they have worked up a huge repertoire: British and Irish folksongs, American songs, Appalachian fiddle music and East European dances. In a mobile and eclectic world, they aren't a bit concerned about the distinction that used to split Cecil Sharp House apart, between "genuine" folk traditions and everyone's experience of listening to modern recordings. As Louis Armstrong used to remark, "It's all folk music. Ain't never heard a horse sing."

Sometimes these two streams actually meet. A lady in her seventies who plays the phono-fiddle, an instrument like a violin without any body but with a big metallic horn at the bottom, which sounds, people say, like an old 78-rpm record, was cajoled to come, from her home near Thetford to play at Rougham.

Among the other performers was an itinerant piano-accordionist, and one of his numbers was a well known Irish dance tune. The phono-fiddler beckoned him over to her honoured place by the fireside.

"Do you know what you were playing?" she asked. "Sure," he replied, "It's called Dennis Murphy's Polka."

"Dennis Murphy was my brother," she said.

11. Colin Ward takes cross-country journeys and regrets British Rail's failure to explain its operations

Like any reasonable person I'm a railway enthusiast. Not in that tedious ever-so-English nostalgic way, but because the train is the most rational, safest and most convivial form of mass transportation. But between us and British Rail, which we own, there's such a barrage of professional public relations people that if ever I actually meet any of the BR high-ups I harangue them like any outraged commuter.

It happened last month. I buttonholed this nice guy with my complaints about the way the convolutions of fares policy always penalised the journey I wanted to make. He took it all with good humour and then asked, "Do you seriously think there's someone in an office in London calculating how to lure you with concessions which turn out not to apply to your journeys?"

"Yes," I replied, "that's just what I do think. "He patiently explained that the government had laid a duty on BR to fill every train and that manipulating prices was the only known way of achieving this.

Well, every train I travel on seems to be pretty full, if not overflowing. But this very fact raises huge issues. You can see the nature of any nation state by looking at its railway links. A wise Swiss, Herbert Luethy once advised us to examine his country's railway system, the densest network in the world, which faithfully reflected the local and federal democracy of that country. "At great cost and with great trouble, it has been made to serve the needs of the smallest localities and most remote valleys, not as a paying proposition, but because it was the will of the people."

A "democratic railway movement" in the 19th century ensured that industry was distributed all over Switzerland, and Luethy compared this with the French system, entirely centred on Paris "so that the prosperity or the decline, the life or death, of whole regions has depended on the quality of the link with the capital."

Britain is nowadays much like France. All lines lead to London.

Time and again I have sought to make a cross-country journey only to find that it was simpler and faster to go to London, enduring the change between one terminus and another, rather than have endless waits on platforms in attempting a direct route. One problem of comparison is that today's seating and rolling-stock for the inter-city trade are incomparably better than the older coaches relegated to minor routes.

I took a couple of trips the other day which tested BR's provision for the non-metropolitan. I went from Newton Abbot to Manchester by way of Birmingham and on the following day from Manchester to Ipswich on a magical cross-section of our industrial history.

Naturally I had to stand through the most exciting slice of the journey, between Manchester and Sheffield, and needless to say, the catering, a trolley provided by Rightline, "a private company independent of BR", couldn't penetrate the overcrowded aisles. But what an incredible route it was, taking in Chesterfield, Derby, Nottingham and Peterborough, and absorbing the backside of modern Britain, just as the previous day's trip between Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Stoke-on-Trent had done.

Not for the first time, I reflected that the problem is that our various leaders travel Inter-City and miss the provincial routes, or that, more likely, they go by plane or along motorways landscaped through green fields. They never have even the vicarious passing visual contact that the train provides with the ruined and empty lineside environment.

What I yearned for was a guide, which was taken for granted a century ago, to the sights from the train window. Ten years ago David Wright, a teacher-trainer at the University of East Anglia, produced an *East Anglican Railpack* to enhance school journeys, for British Rail Norwich Division. But the Norwich Division was shut down in the interests of commercial viability and the packs just got lost.

12. Colin Ward laments that community initiatives are to be replaced by the community charge

One of my very few inventions was the phrase the community workshop" in *Anarchy,* August 1963. So a quarter of a century later I always feel a glow of pleasure when I hear of a successful venture under that name. And consequently a spasm of pain to learn that Norwich community workshop faces closure this month because of yet another sudden change in the government's unemployment strategy.

The community programme, already notoriously inflexible and short-term in its support for local initiatives, is to be abandoned as yet another scheme, the adult training programme is introduced.

Now I don't claim to be more farsighted than anyone else, but in April 1972 I published in the *Bulletin of Environmental Education* a really important paper by John Ewen, then of the National Youth Bureau, initiating the idea of a community industry. He stressed that it was not to be confused with expedients to keep the young occupied with notions of voluntary community service, still less with those about conscript community service.

It was to be a recognition that unemployment was a permanent aspect of post-industrial Britain. Ewen envisaged a whole new industry of community maintenance which would pay appropriate rates and in which a career structure would emerge, operating in environmental improvement, housing renewal, social and health services.

Vocational training was to be an integral part, but he reminded us that the prolongation of schooling would only be useful if the most radical changes took place in the attitude of schools and colleges to the group he had in mind, since its motivation was "almost diametrically opposed to ongoing formal education".

Well, the community industry was initiated, but to the bitter disappointment of John Ewen, as a short-term stop-gap. It actually gave birth to the Manpower Services Commission, which grew and grew and swallowed up its parent and a lot else beside, begetting all those schemes with bewildering initials that subsidise some of the jobless young in employment, or give them a motive to get up in the morning, with the usual endless arguments about made work or cheap labour.

Ordinary parents and teachers, let alone the young, get lost in an ever changing series of initials (remember YOPS and TOPS?), and must even get used to the idea that the MSC itself is to re-emerge as the Training Commission. I'm not a conspiracytheorist. I've met peop'e who have benefitted greatly from MSC-funded initiatives. But I can't help feeling that the endless shifts destroy accountability, continuity and any attempt at evaluation.

At one level nameless people whisper in the ear of an unelected minister in the House of Lords, and policy changes. At another, unofficial bodies with useful social aims, use up their energies and resources, and even change their policies, so as to be eligible for job-creating support, only to discover that the rules have changed and

another set of boots have to be licked. At yet another there are local authorities charged with providing a service to the community who find themselves arraigned for over-spending, while new money from central government is provided to meet the same need, through initiatives that can be switched on or off by guidelines which you and I don't understand.

But beyond all this, people like me, and I am sure, John Ewen, who are not politicians, nor academics, nor civil servants, have a nasty, niggling feeling that we should have been able to read the writing on the wall, generations ago. Could our mistake have been that it was automatic for us to make use of that loaded word "community"?

The community workshop, the community industry and the community programme are to be expunged. What you will be left with is the community charge.

13. Colin Ward picks up a pebble and finds grassroots initiatives

I carry round with me, like a particularly beautiful pebble picked up on the beach, a remark made 30 years ago by Richard Titmuss. Social ideas, he said, "may well be as important in Britain in the next half-century as technical innovation". Think about it. In the context of rented housing, for example, the left, then as now, believed in direct provision by local authorities. The right, then as now, thought it possible to revive private landlordism for low-income people.

A handful of social innovators reinvented co-operative housing from scratch, as a mode of tenure that by-passed the landlord-tenant syndrome and extended dweller control beyond the frontiers of owneroccupation. When Titmuss wrote there were two housing co-ops in Britain. Today there are hundreds and their significance goes far beyond their numbers..

This is why *New Society's* "Initiatives" column was one of its most important features, and why it's a delight that this column continues in the present journal. We do have a crisis of social welfare which goes deeper than the effects of current government policies, and in a unitary state committed in theory at least to a uniform standard of provision, there is a special importance in little local initiatives that posit a different way of doing things.

A new book *Grassroots Initiatives* (Bedford Square Press £5.50) brings together 68 of these accounts from the last few years, covering women's issues, ethnic minorities, health, provision for the handicapped, education, housing, crime and the community, families and young people, employment and the arts. They are written by a handful of journalists whose names are very well known and trusted by you and me.

They're all level-headed people, but if I were, say, Amanda Mitchison or Steve Platt, I would be tempted to view the world with an incredible optimism, just through continually meeting these precious social innovators. As a matter of fact I do suffer

from this temptation. Being on the sidelines of the housing world and the education world, I only meet the busy bees who thrust aside the ordinary daily discouragements and inertia and pursue what seems to them to be the next sensible step.

I just don't meet the discouraged functionaries behind the counter in the welfare delivery services of the centralised state and the demoralised local authorities. If I did I would feel much more sympathetic to the claims of NALGO, NUPE, COHSE, the CPSA and the POA. We've all delegated to them the dreary end of the public administration of welfare in a world where they are despised not only by their political masters but by the clients they are hired to serve.

Can you imagine a worse climate in which to discuss social innovations? David Lipsey in his introduction to the book states the issue correctly. He notes that Britain is the most centralised of all the major western democracies and that "the gloomy picture of Britain as a nation where all power lies at the centre, crushing energies which lie outside it, has a dismal ring of truth".

It's like Tsarist Russia in the 19th century. "We lack a countervailing tradition of corporate involvement in community affairs." Sometimes the initiatives come from "the much-derided local authorities", sometimes from people who have the know-how to grab the disappearing MSC cash or EEC funds not under Whitehall control, sometimes purely from local self-help depending on no outside support. Just like the early 19th century when Britain was not like Russia and when non-taxpayers taxed themselves to build up the whole edifice of building societies, voluntary hospitals, the co-operative movement, and much else, in those experimental days before the Fabians and marxists taught us that the state should be the universal provider and tax-gatherer.

If I was asked to nominate a book of the year for 1988 it would be *Grassroots Initiatives.*

14. Colin Ward on the shops for the poor that are too expensive for the rich

A special accolade is deserved by Radio 4's *Punters* feature, "the programme with listener power". It investigated the not at all obvious issue of Tesco's modest little supermarket in Goodge Street, London Wl, due for closure this month because the current owners of Tesco couldn't negotiate a satisfactory renewal of their lease with the current owners of the building.

There is nothing new about this story. For 30 years ordinary grocers and dairies have been driven out of the West End by rising overheads, their place taken by speciality restaurants, porn shops or advertising agencies—anyone with a more profitable line of business.

Tesco's, with the usual advantages of bulk buying, were able to succeed in Goodge Street. But only in a relative way, compared with the turnover of the really big hyper-

markets that they and their competitors operate outside the city centre. The irony is that when the *Punters* team bought the same commonplace items at the small shops all around they cost exactly twice as much as the Tesco shopping basket. This is not a criticism of the other traders. They are obliged to buy dear and sell dear.

But of course there are plenty of low income people in London W1. Apart from the dear old folk who have lived there for ever and are bewildered by the changes all around them, there are the nurses and ancilliary staff at University College Hospital and the Middlesex Hospital who are obliged to do their shopping locally. How dare their employers occupy sites which could fetch a mint in the open market?

There is too a great phalanx of invisible people who come in every morning for low-wage cleaning and servicing jobs and return just in time to pick up ordinary bits of family shopping at Tesco.

The *Punters* producers kept trying to contact the right top person at Tesco and kept getting fobbed off until suddenly, at the last minute, came the message that the lease was to be renewed and that the shop would stay open. As a concessionary gesture, of course, to the customers.

It's an interesting tale for a whole variety of reasons. Should we congratulate Tesco for being willing to keep open, not a loss-maker, but a less-than-average profit-maker? I've watched this firm's remarkable investment and disinvestment in Colchester. They had a big shop in the centre of town, in Head Street, which they closed to move into a vast super-store with car-parking overhead in St John's Street. The paintwork in this brand new building had no time to get scuffed before it was closed when Tesco moved again to a hypermarket outside the town. Other retailers in the same town have made the same leaps, and the implications were brought home to us by accident last week in Bury St Edmunds, when we needed to buy vegetables. In the centre of that city you can buy shares, houses, or cars, compact discs or any kind of tourist junk, but not fruit and veg.

The Goodge Street syndrome applies in fact throughout rural England. Well-off people never shop in the village store. "We couldn't possibly afford it," they say as they sail off in their Volvos to the hypermarket on the outskirts of the nearest town. Brian McLaughlin in his unpublished final report to the Department of the Environment on *Deprivation in Rural Areas* found that: "A common explanation given by the better-off households for not using local shops was their high costs."

Poor people in villages, just like their counterparts in London Wl, are obliged to shop locally. In the country they have no alternative without access to a car. In London it will cost them 50 pence just to take a trip to an area of greater choice. In village England that choice doesn't exist.

15. Colin Ward finds that the Rochdale pioneers had it right all along

I want to return to the topic of the socially useful but unviable shop (see *NSS*, 16 September). In 1974 about 13,000 village stores had survived, by 1984 there were 12,000 and by 1988 only 11,000. No one doubts their decline and everyone knows that if you renamed such a shop "Country Bygones" or turned it into a wine bar, you might make a living.

You have only to think of the far wider range of items in a general store and the far smaller retailer's mark-up on any of them to see how hard a store is to run. There was a time in our history when it might be assumed that the co-operative movement had a vital role to play in providing this kind of service, which was commercially unviable but socially vital.

There are certainly villages where the co-op is the one remaining useful shop. But there are even more where the centralising tendencies, which have affected the co-ops just as much as their rivals, have closed the local shop, just as though the whole cooperative ideology had never been evolved.

Sometimes the original spirit survives. Miners in the upper Afon valley started the Blaengwynfi co-op in the 19th century and rebuilt their shop in 1905. By 1969 rationalisation of the movement put it into the hands of the Co-operative Retail Services who closed it in 1983. After an epic local struggle for alternative support the Gwynfi co-op re-opened in 1984.

The same year saw the opening of another community venture in Polstead, Suffolk, the very next village to where I live. There hadn't been a shop in the village for ten years, and a questionnaire circulated by the Women's Institute tried out the idea of a community shop—who would use it and who would help run it. After a public meeting a committee was formed, and a building provided in the form of a "mobile home" sited in the centre of the village.

Apart from its own fund-raising endeavours, small loans came from the parish council, the district council and the village's care and share committee. The shop opened that spring, run by a rota of two dozen volunteers. At the time its chairwoman, Erica Pomerans, stressed to me that there was nothing unique about that venture and that every village had its own varied human resources and opportunities. It had a turnover of £300 a week and prices were comparable with those of supermarkets in the nearest towns. She told me that, "It has become a social centre too, in just the way we hoped it would. Not only for the old people living nearby, but for women with young families. For them it's more than a grocery shop. It's a local focus: somewhere to take the children to". She pointed out that if the shop were run for profit, with its minimum overheads, it would bring in about £50 a week, which could not provide an income for a trading family.

The venture has prospered marvellously since then. Last year 40 volunteers built new larger premises as a prize-winning annexe to the village hall. The turnover for its $3\frac{1}{2}$-day week has doubled. I asked Erica Pomerans the same question about commercial viability. She replied that a family willing to open all hours might make a go of it, but at a great cost. Not just in terms of their own lives, but in terms of much higher prices, of dropping a whole range of stock just because it wasn't profitable, and of poaching on the fragile pre-existing shopping networks: the travelling vans, the paraffin man, and so on.

It has kept its momentum, it is a village focus and notice board, and it provides an outlet for local producers. It has become a community cement. But its lessons are clear: if you want a shop that really serves a small community, fairly, you have to do it yourself. When the co-operative movement began in Toad Lane, Rochdale, its humble founders knew this perfectly well.

16. Colin Ward concludes that art education may not produce good art but it does produce good citizens

Watching the telly-tribute to Richard Demarco, the Edinburgh galleryowner and impresario, reinforced the feeling that has been building up inside me for years—that the importance of the arts is not the product (boring, pretentious and overpriced) but the process.

I know from experience that Demarco is a better interpreter of his city than a hundred guides from the Scottish Tourist Board or the District Council. He is better than anyone since Patrick Geddes, the extraordinary biologist, or R L Stevenson, the novelist. In fact, I find myself paying the same tribute to the creative imagination in every field.

For example, among the hundreds of primary and secondary teachers I have met, a surprising number of the most exciting were products of the art colleges rather than of the teacher-training institutions. And it is also my experience that the best teachers of say, maths, physics, geography or technical drawing at any level, have been those who turned their attainment-packed subjects into an art.

When I taught at Croydon Technical College, I found that the PE teacher was no rugger-bugger. He was involved with "the inner art of the body". Later when I taught at the then Wandsworth Technical College, the students, freed from compulsory schooling at least, remembered drama at Southfields School, music at Wandsworth School and art at Elliot School, as their most important contacts so far with the education industry.

It is not because there is anything wrong with specialist secondary technical education that the current government's concern with city technology colleges is so suspect. It is because these privately educated and grammar school ideologues don't realise

that humbler precursors, like, for example, the Stanley Technical School in Croydon, provided a liberal education in which the arts had a greater significance than the technocrats want to believe.

Their thinking is, tediously, based upon adulterations of Martin Wiener's book *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit.* The book discusses the dreary and academic influence of the public and grammar schools, and of course the universities their products attended, but not the educational experience of humbler people who just wanted to get by. Their experience of schooling has been decried both by elite conservative theorists as anti-entrepreneurial, and by Marxists too, as a mere learning to labour.

Both sides have got it wrong. When you meet those people who have made a creative transition from redundancy or the dead shop floor into some new livelihood of their own, you find that they are more like drop-outs than like the new heroes of the enterprise culture. They don't want to make a million and despise the people who do. They just can't stand being pushed around.

And when you probe into the sources of their individualism it is often not because anyone introduced them to the idea that success came from buying cheap and selling dear, but because of some well-remembered teacher of English, art, music or drama. From these teachers, from the ones who made an art out of teaching any subject, they learned that the personal, subjective imagination was something to be cherished, and not devalued, in every field.

By now I've met this characteristic in so many contexts that I adopt it as a general assumption. A background in any of the aits may not make for good art (experience tells us the opposite) but it does encourage innovation, improvisation and creative solutions. Sometimes, just as a fringe benefit, it adds graphic, dramatic and even verbal skills. And a bit of good lettering never did any community activity any harm.

17. Colin Ward gets new spectacles and sees the world through farmers' eyes

"Shall I give you a receipt?" the optician's assistant asked when I collected my glasses in our nearest town. "Don't bother," I replied, "there's no one I can claim it from".

"Well you can if you're a farmer," she explained as she wrote out the receipt. Flattered to appear so opulent, I had another sudden insight into the reasons why farmers are such figures of contempt among those who watch how they behave, most especially among their employees.

No doubt their spectacles are a business expense, necessary for reading the accountant's report. But so is everything else, like the 162,500 cars belonging to farmers and farmers' wives which are run on the business, together with their licensing, insurance, repairs and depreciation. Stories abound in rural areas about the variety of uses

to which untaxed fuel oil is put, and the incredible number of other bills which can be business expenses, like electricity, telephone, house repairs and decorations, water charges and so on.

Farm workers don't *blame* their bosses for exploiting every loophole that their professional advisers can find. What they resent very bitterly is that their employers are so attuned to such advantages that they never stop to think how the people who work for them cope with the same kinds of expenditure, met out of actual income.

This is why Peter Medhurst, as agricultural secretary of the TGWU was moved to say that, "I am sure that if my members could offset the same items they would have a comfortable standard of living. Instead, 35 per cent of all farm workers have to claim Family Income Supplement".

It is asssumed that there are "perks" for the farm worker, like that mythical free milk, but once again, Brian McLaughlin in his still unpublished final report to the Department of Environment on rural deprivation, found that over 80 per cent of poor rural workers have no fringe benefits at all.

They don't pile into the Landrover for a weekly stock-up of larder and freezer, partly because they don't have that much money around at any one time, and partly because Dad is using the clapped-out old Vauxhall to oblige the boss on a rush job and pick up a couple of half-hundredweight bags of solid fuel for the Rayburn.

The poor always pay more, not just as buyers of small quantities from the nearest retail outlet but especially as they have to pay personally for goods that are taken for granted as business expenses by their employers—like the huge cost of running a vehicle. They in turn are up to their necks in debt because they have been persuaded by the Ministry' of Agriculture and the EEC, and their financial advisers to buy more and more expensive machinery which can be sold off after a couple of years as a tax loss, hut whose principal function is to employ fewer humans.

The farmers are caught in a trap of public policy. Subsidies have encouraged them to live beyond their income for years, and people who can remember pre-war days have every sympathy for the stabilisation of the industry that came from huge investment by the taxpayer. Other people have every kind of criticism of the way the money was used, and the environmental costs involved.

I want just to record the fact that the public sympathy towards fanning has never been reflected in farmers' attitude towards their employees. It certainly wasn't in the years of poverty. And it wasn't in the decades of subsidised affluence. In the last boom year, 1982–3, farm incomes went up by 45 per cent, but the agreed increase in farm wages was 7.1 per cent. When we hear about the bad times coining for the agricultural industry let's remember that in boom or slump the farm workers have always been at the bottom of the pile.

18. Colin Ward finds small-scale magnificence under threat in the Docklands

There are plenty of areas of no-man's-land that can be labelled both as inner city and as urban fringe, and an obvious one at the eastern end of the east end of London is the space enfolded by that bend in the Thames called Galleon's Reach.

It includes land acquired by the precursors of the Port of London Authority for extensions to the north of the Royal Albert Dock, which never happened, huge areas which were once the Beckton gasworks, still more that belonged to the bodies that became the Thames Water Authority as well as the East London Waste Authority's refuse destroyer and sorter.

Within this area there's a triangle of what might be called virgin land, since it has neither been built upon nor been subjected, like so much of its surroundings, to chemical pollution. Maps show it as playing fields, as a space earmarked by the river authority as a sludge lagoon and as allotments instituted in 1908, but declining in the 1970s.

With the growth of a new environmental consciousness, in 1976 a body was set up called Allotments for the Future "to promote communication and understanding between plot-holders, planners and people on waiting lists, to encourage ideas and self-help, and to encourage responsibility about our environment and future people's needs".

It was chaired by a veteran plot-holder, Bill Gladwell, and its secretary was Sheila Beskine, a seasoned worker in that field derisively called "pre-vandalism work", meaning finding ways of giving children creative involvement in the environment.

Hers is the one alternative we know to *destructive* involvement. Her credentials go back to the Stratford Butterfly Garden and Operation Goatsmile—which was based on the absolutely correct notion that everyone smiles when they meet a goat in the street, and wants to stroke it.

Her commitment to the Beckton. area led to the Beckton Meadows Community Smallholding in one small $2\frac{1}{2}$ acre wedge of that triangle of former allotment land.

It was waste-high in thistles by the time the authorities had agreed to re-fence it. Soon it will be reduced by the building of the Eastern Gateway Access Road for the proposed new Thames crossing.

But there I saw goats, geese, ducks, chickens, rabbits, and a magnificent sow, cherished by a group of people who are convinced that animal husbandry is an essential aspect of urban life and have a bunch of children and teenage boys to help. They would like some sheep too, and they recall that less than three years ago there was a patch called Arthur's Ground with pigs and even cattle in that triangle. Les Rice is a night-worker for whom the site is an immense release. Fred Parker is a chef who has the same view that contact with livestock is therapeutic for humans.

But these worthy, creative people are no match for the big, professionally-administered public bodies they have to beg from. There is the hard-pressed London Borough of Newham. There is the London Residuary Body, which through the accidents of history owns the site, and has a statutory duty to make the maximum gain from it. And there's the London Docklands Development Corporation, calculating the right time to offer the right price to the LRB for this unimportant patch of land which the East London Docklands CPO Inquiry of March 1986 held must stay green.

Hand it over to the landscape architects to spend millions, but do get it away from the squalid locals! This, I fear, is going to be the automatic approach to this bit of urban wasteland, unless there is someone up there with the same imaginative response that has been made from down below by people with no power, money or influence at all.

19. Colin Ward wishes that he had long ago learned the rudiments of maintenance

Back in the 40s and 50s there was in New York a man called Eric Hoffer who wrote a couple of books, *The True Believer* and *The Passionate State of Mind.* They were about the psychology of the person who supported the parties that brought about Auschwitz on the one hand and the Gulag Archipelago on the other. Observers who got to the root of things were quite rare, and another rare thing about Mr Hoffer was that he wasn't employed at Columbia University: he worked in the docks.

Academic promoters of the proletariat as the seat of all wisdom couldn't believe their ears. How could this "longshoreman philosopher" as he became known, have a more subtle interpretation than their own? Eric Hoffer, the expert on the origins of totalitarianism, came to Britain in 1968 and was interviewed on Radio 3 (not 4) about his opinions on many other aspects of life.

He let slip a piece of ordinary observation which will always stay with me as one of those bits of advice I forever yearn to heed. What he said was: "After the last war, when Western Europe was in ruins, I thought to myself: 'If the President should pick me and send me to Europe to predict which country is going to recover first, I would get the answer in five minutes.' I would say: 'Bring me the records of maintenance. The nation with the best maintenance will recover first. ' If I should go to Africa and want to tell you which of those 30-some nations is going to be here 50 years from now, I would look around for the rudiments of maintenance. If I got in there in the warehouse, let's say, and I saw that the broom had a special nail, I would say: 'This is the nail of immortality!'"

We all wish we were like those people who seem to have been born with an internal clock that includes time automatically devoted to maintenance. Their garden tools are oiled and always put away, their chisels and saws are always sharp and keen, hanging

in the right place on the workshop wall, they have mastered the great art of housework by adopting apparently effortless routines, even their bicycles hang from the ceiling to avoid distorting the tyres, and the undersides of their cars are regularly rust-proofed. Their pencils are always sharp.

Whenever I meet one of these paragons I ask how they acquired these life-preserving habits. Very often they do speak of a stern father or frugal mother inculcating the rudiments of maintenance, or of the result of an old-fashioned apprenticeship in workshops where a text on the wall proclaimed that "The Man Who Lends the Tools is Out". Others stress they have learned the hard way that maintenance, rather than innovation, is a supreme virtue. Expensive failure has led them to revere the capacity for taking care.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the post-war history of public housing. Kenneth Campbell who used to be housing architect for the GLC took pleasure in mystifying audiences by equating the decline of public housing with the decline of the Royal Navy. He would explain that all those leading stokers and chief petty officers, needing a land base when they retired quite young, would take on the job of resident caretaker, taking pride in running what they invariably called "a happy ship".

The supply of these paragons dried up and the housing authority was obliged to adopt a policy of mobile caretakers. The one thing that has to be said about a mobile caretaker is that he has lost the incentive to take care. Contrast this with the tenant-controlled estates of Oslo, where the person awarded a gold medal for caretaking regularly employed the children of the estate to help clear the leaves in the autumn and the snow in the spring (with real money) and ensured that the rudiments of maintenance were a proper component of everybody's life.

20. Colin Ward on the dangers of Spider Catching in the workplace

Spiders are the friends of mankind, but this particular creature has always aroused irrational fears. Just recently a childhood memory of one particular spider incident surfaced after 50 years.

My father was the headteacher of Custom House Junior Elementary School in Canning Town in what—in those days—was the County Borough of West Ham. Those of his pupils' fathers actually in work were employed in the Royal Albert Dock.

One day one of them was, as usual, unloading bananas, and from one of the bunches of green fruit emerged a tarantula snider.

Quick as a flash he trapped it in a WD & HO Wills tobacco tin and took it home to entertain the family. Next day his son brought it into school to show Sir and the class, but the unfortunate spider escaped from the tin and caused panic, until the ever-reliable teacher, Jack Tulloch, recaptured it.

My dad explained to me that there was a widespread belief that the merest touch of this particular spider brought about a dancing disease, an incurable mania. Hence Rossini's *Tarantella.* Its bite was fatal, so it was said.

I had totally forgotten this episode until I heard Sophie's tale. She's 17 and picked up all the right 0-levels, but after spending one day at the sixth form college, decided it wasn't for her. So she got a job in an out-of-town hypermarket, on the fringes of Ipswich.

Unpacking bunches of grapes from a carton, she was actually bitten by an emerging spider. As a sensible person, Sophie realised that the incident shouldn't be ignored and after insisting that she be sent to hospital for investigation, was consequently despatched, alone, in a taxi. The spider was apprehended in a plastic margarine carton.

At the hospital in Ipswich they took her misadventure seriously, seeking some kind of identification. They got in touch with Rentokil Limited who operate such a service, but who couldn't do it instantly. Similarly, Colchester Zoo were willing, but unable, to do an instant analysis to ascertain whether or not the bite should cause concern.

They did the sensible thing, pumping her full of antibiotics and telling her to go to bed. Meanwhile they had contacted someone from the shop in question to find out whether the grapes came from the Mediterranean or from the Americas. I am told that the hypermarket representative's contribution to Sophie's case was to warn her that if she was off work for a week she wouldn't get paid.

Hospital personnel reminded the spokesperson that if it was their grapes it was their spider, and it seems difficult to believe that the employers' attitude would be sustainable in court. But the episode is a reminder of two quite important issues, apart from Sophie's alarmingly swollen arm.

The first is that many people from both right and left (including me) have urged that protective legislation be relaxed in the interests of the small employer, just to encourage him or her to provide jobs. But who takes advantage of this *laissez-faire* approach? Not our small employer, but the vast corporation, in denying responsibility for Sophie's spider.

The second is that, given a bizarre situation like Sophie's bite, the hard-pressed hospital staff responded to her problem, contacted every available source of information, and adopted ever/ precautionary measure. Next time you have the bad luck to be bitten by a spider (who may not be a British national) think of the implications of Sophie's case.

But I have to remind you of the old verse: "If you wish to live and thrive/ Let the spider run alive.

21. Colin Ward identifies with scarecrows and hedge-preachers

From the moment it first appeared I have felt at home with Cliff Harper's vignette of the scarecrow, arms outstretched in a vain rhetorical gesture, preaching to the birds.

That's me, I said, reflecting that all through life, my nearest and dearest have reproached me with looking like a scarecrow. My intentions have always been quite different. I just wanted to be unnoticeable in a crowd. Decent, if shabby-genteel, anonymity has been my aim. "Never trust a sharp dresser" has always been my advice to fellow-citizens who have sweated for decades and have then handed over the savings of a lifetime to smartly-dressed crooks, whether political or financial.

There was a disgraceful episode in British politics when Michael Foot, a worthy back-bench hedge-parson, allowed himself to become first a minister and then a political leader. The climax of the campaign to ridicule him came, not because of any political statement he might have made, but because at the cenotaph in London, dressed as an ordinary citizen, just like the millions whose deaths were being commemorated. The irony is that he had probably made a great effort to smarten himself up for the occasion.

Those who tacitly accept that the art of the couturier or tailor is the ultimate in politics shouldn't grumble when they find themselves ruled by well-heeled, well-dressed dummies or gangsters. But of course there's an informal style too, endlessly working its way up from the workingmen's outfitters to the Kings Road. And, fortunately, there's an Oxfam/ jumble sale aesthetic too.

Among the poorly-dressed, just as you can't turn a corner in Cornwall without bumping into a potter, so in Suffolk you can't pass a bus-stop without seeing a writer. I've noticed, for example, Ronald Blythe, endlessly waiting for Chambers' bus to take him to a school appointment or an Eastern Arts engagement, just for love of the trade of writing.

Or there's the novelist Peter Vansittart. He gets the train to Colchester and then Mr Norfolk's bus to the nearest stop, about five miles from home, and then walks in all weathers, hair and raincoat blowing in the wind, trudging through the lanes, picking up a stick or two for kindling and pausing now and then to put a point down in his notebook. It's an ordinary fact that apart from residents walking their dogs, he and I are the only pedestrians in our patch. Mothers consequently warn their children about these dishevelled prophets or scarecrows passing by.

This is why I welcome a new book from another Suffolk village author. Peter Haining's *The Scarecrow: Fact and Fable* (Robert Hale £11.95) examines the scarecrow as an artefact all through history, as well as the human variety, young children or old men, whose task has been to frighten the birds away from crops. He also gathers together the disproportionate role of the scarecrow in folklore, verse, fiction, plays and films, from the original *Wizard of Oz,* through Worzel Gummidge down to Dennis Potter.

I wish he'd projected the idea of the scarecrow as a conveyor of disgruntled wisdom just one stage further. It's a matter of history that one generation's scarecrows (let's just mention Bunyan, Defoe, Clare, Cobbet or Robert Bloomfield) have been the bearers of a different generation's revered rural wisdom. It always cheers me up to reflect that the scarecrows, preaching their message out there in all weathers, might turn out to be closer to reality than the sensible, well-dressed citizens, back home investing.

22. Colin Ward meets a minority man with a casting vote

Midday last Friday I was standing on the steps of the Council House in Nottingham, talking to Alan Clark whose victory in the city's Byron ward by-election (by the biggest majority of any Labour councillor, he proudly told me) has changed Nottingham's political complexion.

We were surrounded by photographers and TV cameras. But they weren't pointing at him. They weren't even focused on the Conservative leader packing his papers in his Porsche with its personalised number plates. For the hero of the hour (and it does seem unfair on the victorious Councillor Clark) was another councillor, dutifully walking across the square to please the cameraman.

This was 66-year-old John Peck, decorated wartime pilot, veteran member of the executive of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and Britain's only Communist councillor, who now holds the balance of power. The by-election leaves Nottingham with 27 Labour and 27 Conservative seats and with Councillor Peck holding the casting vote.

His notion of the way to behave in this situation differs greatly from that of the Lord Mayor of Bradford. He recently described himself as a moderating influence, a curb on the political excesses of both sides, since he could "help prevent extremes in both cases and thus be of value to Nottingham and its people." He told me last week, "I support Labour for the council leadership, but don't take anything for granted. If an issue comes up supported by the Tories and it's in the interests of the city, I shall go along with them".

He knows that there is something absurd about the concept of democracy that makes him, holder of 1,417 votes in a city of 279,000, the arbiter of its politics. But as we all know, our electoral system at both local and national level is full of such absurdities. Ask the Scots.

Peck stayed out of Alan Clark's ward during the election to avoid giving any fuel to smear campaigns, which fell flat anyway since he has been active in local issues for longer than most people can remember. As the Nottingham *Evening Post* put it before the election, "For those who don't know of John Peck, the thought of a Communist putting a brake on extreme policies will be less easily absorbed than it is by those who

do! But any opponent who tries to paint John Peck as a rabid militant is on a loser. He is an honest, sensible and intelligent man whose reputation as a crusader for the local community he loves transcends the political tag he carries."

On Monday, for example, he proposed two motions he had put down weeks ago with little hope of success. One related to the allotments in Blenheim Lane, Bulwell. Members of the allotment society approached him about alleged intentions to close the sites and add them to a neighbouring industrial estate. He found that no council committee had authorised this, but officers told him, "We'll consult the allotment holders once we've decided what to do". He got legal advice, organised a petition with 3,500 signatures, while bulldozers were already beginning to remove the topsoil. Planning permission was expected this month. His Monday motion will have saved the allotments.

His other motion was about the market traders in the Victoria Centre. A deal between the council and site-owners Capital and Counties proposed to clear out 28 traders and offer them pitches in the street itself at three times the rent Too late to reverse the deal, his motion will at least retain the current rent. Why is this important? "Because it's the market not the multiples, where poor people shop. Out of necessity."

So Britain's one Communist councillor provides two important lessons for other politicians. He doesn't despise the parish pump. He probably wouldn't agree with Herbert Read's claim that all real politics are local politics. But he knows that decisions made in city hall without a second thought can deeply affect the fine-grain texture of ordinary people's lives.

His other lesson, about proper and improper uses of a casting vote, is a little homily on statesmanship.

23. Colin Ward reflects on local government and its liquidators

A leading article in the *Times* the other day remarked that: "The Italians have a charming, almost magical ability to survive without government." I thought that we would be urged to emulate this enviable achievement. But the very next sentence admonished those charming Italians: "But if Italy is to modernise more rapidly, it must sort out its governing machinery."

There is an instant riposte to this kindly-meant advice. Which national economy, that of Britain or Italy, has most successfully weathered the economic hurricanes of the years since the energy crisis of 1973? And to which aspects of Italian life do we attribute that country's ebullience?

Some people would talk knowingly about the flourishing informal or underground economy. Others would be determined to set aside that particular *frisson* of illegality and would stress the fact that while Britain has $2\frac{1}{2}$m self-employed people, Italy with

a similar total population, has 7½m and an incredible network of very small, but highly mechanised, workshops.

This is the result, whichever coalition might be ruling in Rome, of locally agreed politics, common to right and left, of positive support, cheap credit, advice and market intelligence, pooled accountancy and I financial services, as well as ready I availability of sites and premises. Local government, at city and regional level, is strong and active.

The chance circumstances of visiting both Germany and Italy this year led me to an unexpected conclusion. If you read the textbook history of Europe in the nineteenth century you will learn that the big events were the unification of Germany under Bismarck and Wilhelm I and the unification of Italy under Cavour, Garibaldi, Mazzini and Victor Emmanuel I. They seldom pause to make the obvious comment that these events were disasters for the people of Germany and Italy as well as for those of every other European nation.

But today if you ask yourself which are the most decentralised countries in Europe, you will be obliged to conclude that, apart from the ever-present example of Switzerland, they are the Federal Republic of Germany and the Italian Republic. And if you ask which is the most centralised state in Europe, you will have to say that it is the United Kingdom (with possible exceptions like Romania and Albania). For most of my life Britain has been moving steadily towards the demolition of local authorities and it is being accomplished by a government elected with slogans about setting the people free from the state.

It wasn't the current prime minister, but Clement Attlee, who set his government's policies firmly against local initiative and local control Even in the 1930s he stressed the need to have central government officers "sent down into a locality to see that the will of central government is obeyed and its plans implemented."

His government removed local control of a dozen locally initiated services, like water, gas, electricity and hospitals. And it was precisely that centralism which has enabled our current rulers to do what they like with a whole range of public activities which here a century ago, or abroad today, it was taken for granted were a local matter.

The key is the power to gather revenue. When the poll tax comes, councils will no longer be able to set their own business rate. This will be pooled and redistributed in proportion to adult population. Brian Smith, county treasurer of Staffordshire, warns that "central government will regard the business rate as part of the overall exchange contribution to local government, and will as a consequence be tempted to regard itself as having direct control over about 75 per cent of local authority funding."

In all parties there is a minority of thoughtful people who pause and think about the range and scope of regionalism and localism. When the current fervour to concentrate all power at the centre has run its course they need to be ready with a programme of decentralisation of revenues and a restoration of the possibility for local initiative. Historically and philosophically this is not even a party matter. It would have seemed important for Burke, Gladstone, Disraeli and Keir Hardie. And it's something the Italians could tell us a lot about.

24. Colin Ward learns about everyday green values

It's over forty years since Orwell asked his rhetorical question "is it politically reprehensible, while we are all groaning under the shackles of the capitalist system, to point out that life is frequently worth living because of a blackbird's song, a yellow elm tree in October, or some other natural phenomenon which does not cost money and does not have what the editors of the left-wing newspaper call a class angle?" For he had endlessly met the statement that "a love of nature is a foible of urbanised people who have no idea what nature is really like."

Both attitudes survive. Jonathon Porritt reports that "greenery seems to have become irrevocably entangled in the barbed wire of class antagonism by being perceived as being overwhelmingly middle class." And when he interviewed Harold Evans for his book *The Coming of the Greens* (Fontana) Evans complained that Labour Party leaders had an arrogantly contemptuous notion that the working classes are not interested in the environment: "They have a vision of the working class as proles just waiting to be liberated. You see a similar attitude in the new breed in the Tory Party, the ones with a microchip on their shoulder."

Jacquelin Burgess and Carolyn Harrison of the geography department at University College, London, confirm the survival of the disdain for the environmental values of "ordinary people" that Orwell noted so long ago. They went to a recent conference at the Royal Society on public perceptions of the countryside, and they report with dismay (in the November issue of the RTPI journal *The Planner) that* "Throughout the proceedings the general public was portrayed as insensitive, ignorant and passive; as people who do not share the same insights, knowledge or active concerns of the committed few."

Drs Harrison and Burgess were entitled to be dismissive, as for years they have been conducting an extended series of interviews and group discussions to discover the concepts, beliefs and values about the green environment among residents of different neighbourhoods in the London borough of Greenwich: from white working class groups in Thamesmead and Plumstead, to a group of Asian women in Woolwich and middle-class people in Eltham.

They found that all groups, regardless of social class, income or residence "gained great pleasure from the natural world", less in parks or playing fields than in daily life. The sensuous experience of encountering the natural world gave enormous pleasure in "walks along the riverside", round the houses and on the way to school; waste places seen from the top of a bus or used by children; streams and scrubby bits; farmland, woodland, golf courses, cemeteries and squares in shopping centres."

All these spaces, especially "the wild bits" and most especially among people living in estates without gardens, were highly valued because they provide places "where children can have adventures, experience independence for the first time, enjoy the companionship of other children, and discover the natural world."

This view of the social role of the urban green was given great stress by the Asian women, "separated from their childhood by geographical distance as well as age" and whose ordinary experiences of open spaces include racist abuse and physical harassment. Indeed since everyday fears, especially of more wooded and secluded places, include assault and violence, sexual dangers to women and children, vandalism, glue-sniffing and every kind of contemporary horror, Harrison and Burgess stress the need for more *social* management of these places which have such a *social* meaning.

Trying to find a concept that really reflected the aspirations of the groups whose green values they explored, which embraced the sensory experience of contact with nature, a wonderland of adventurous play, and a shared experience with children, families, neighbours and friends, the memorable phrase which occurred to them was outside the vocabulary of the parks department, the director of leisure services, and even, I fear, that of the conservation lobby. It was "gateways to a better world."

25. Colin Ward learns from Ivan the shepherd

We thought 10 years ago that John, a farmer up the road, was more like a character from fiction than an NFU member. At one in the morning he would move his flocks of pedigree sheep down the lane because it would occur to him that they had eaten too much from one particular pasture and needed to be in another. Sheep on his scale weren't economical and he actually employed a full-time shepherd, Ivan.

John, carrying his crook, had a biblical view of his mission. He belonged to the United Reformed Church and would preach on Sundays in a little wooden chapel, built by his father, a hundred yards up the road from here. Suddenly, a few years ago, only in his mid-fifties, John died.

One direct result was that the flock of sheep was much reduced, and Ivan the shepherd was out of a job. It's incredibly hard to get a place as a shepherd in Britain, because in the sheep areas of the country farming is a closed family affair, while elsewhere people just keep a few, not enough to provide full-time work.

Ivan picked up odd bits of employment while looking for a regular job in his own line, which he finally found at the other end of the county. Fortunately we still see plenty of him as his friends and relations live round here. He's a larger-than-life character just like his lamented boss, but in quite different ways. For a start he, dresses up to his public persona. With his collarless shirt, neckerchief, open waistcoat and belt with its big brass buckle, obedient dogs at his heel, black-bearded Ivan is everyone's image of a wild country rover.

But this is only the flamboyant outward aspect of Ivan. His real interests cover three important aspects of rural history. The first of these ever-interesting topics is that of poaching. He loves its folklore and its secrets. Ivan is aware that the English never quite accepted the idea that because some favourite of William the Conqueror was granted a chunk of England, this would entitle him and every single successor and

purchaser down to the present date, to the birds that flew over it, the hares and other beasts that ran across it or the fishes that swam through it.

He knows that the whole dreadful history of maiming, imprisoning, executing or transporting poachers was not done out of necessity, but simply because it interfered with their sport. And he has watched ordinary farmers infected by this sporting bug, rearing birds for shoots and intent on keeping the peasants off their pheasants.

His second field of inquiry is equally suggestive. He believes that the land described on old maps as "glebe land" or as "poor's allotments", resulting from the 18th century enclosures, was designated for the poor and has since been turned into a source of income by the Church.

"For goodness sake, Ivan," I said, "you're stumbling into a legalistic quagmire." "Never mind," he replied. "The truth will out, sooner or later.

I know through having touched the fringe of this area of investigation, that it has all been buttoned-up years ago in favour of the people who actually control rural land, but he works on a different time-scale: self-evident and historical rights must surely be recognised some day. And I realised that Ivan operates on the level, not of our ordinary assumptions of legality, but on that of morality, which of course is something quite different.

The third aspect of life that fascinates Ivan is, naturally enough, that of the informal economy. Deep in the woods he comes across people who, in ancient shacks or caravans, still live a life like that of Wordsworth's leech-gatherer. Quite apart from the firewood collectors or car-breakers and seekers after mushrooms, there's the secretive old man who scrapes a living by gathering harvests of moss for the floristry trades.

"How's he going to get by when they send out the poll tax investigators?" Ivan asks. And of course Ivan is right to perceive that there are still people who actually managed to evade the National Registration Act in the last war, who have no National Insurance numbers and no place in the PAYE system of income tax, but who are to be winkled out finally by local council inspectors, paid for out of a special fund just to drag in those ultimate nonconformists Ivan is always hankering to join.

26. Colin Ward gets lost in the Bull Ring

In the early nineteenth century Birmingham grew at the same pace as Sao Paulo. A guidebook warned the visitor to "expect to find a street of houses in the autumn where he saw his horse at grass in the spring," and the rate of change was recorded in a popular ballad *I can't find Brummagem.*

The song and the experience were revived in the 1950s and 60s, as the city engineer Sir Herbert Manzoni ploughed through his long-planned inner ring road to relieve congestion. The war and the post-war mood gave him the opportunity for wholesale redevelopment to accommodate traffic, relegating the pedestrian to a series of bewil-

dering and universally hated underpasses between traffic intersections and multi-level "integrated" shopping centres.

Neither citizens nor strangers could find their way around the city on foot, while traffic, as always, expanded to fit the space made available for it. The Bull Ring Centre in the middle of the city was opened in 1963 after extensive demolition in which the one preserved landmark from the past was St Martin's church. Traders from the ancient market were relocated below ground, together with an open space named Manzoni Gardens, surrounded on three sides by traffic.

Vast new shopping centres, the Pavilions and the Pallasades, were developed at each end of the area. But the inner ring road, for the sake of which so much of central Birmingham had been destroyed, was by the 1980s seen as a noose, separating the city from its heart. The Bull Ring itself, after less than 25 years, is seen as the very symbol, says Joe. Holyoak, the city's unofficial architectural watchdog, of "the unfortunate image of Birmingham created in the 1960s—big, brash, over-scaled, and lacking in humanity".

Last year the London and Edinburgh Trust bought the Bull Ring from Laings, and in May this year, submitted for outline planning consent a proposal to redevelop the area at a cost of £250m.

The proposal was for a structure of incredible size, "a huge aircraft carrier settled on the streetscape of the city". Negotiations with the market traders led to a plan to rehouse them in a new space by St Martin's, but the only other open space would disappear. Critics say that "Manzoni Gardens, it must be admitted, is not a good public place. It is poorly and unimaginatively laid out... Yet while it remains, it is capable of being turned into a better space. Once it is built over it is lost forever."

But the heart of their objection was one to which every reader will respond. "Essentially it is *too big.* In the traditional city, street blocks reduce in size the nearer they are to the centre. There are good reasons for this. In the city centre the mixture of uses and buildings gets more complex, and they are all competing for street frontage. The smaller the blocks are, the more the street frontage. This relationship produces a lively city centre—busy streets, varied activity, varied buildings."

Meanwhile the city council, instead of asking the citizens, appointed a firm consultants to prepare a scheme for "humanising" the centre. They reported that large areas should be pedestrianised, subways should be eliminated and the motorway-style inner ring road should be turned into a tree-lined urban boulevard. And the week after a royal person had criticised the Bull Ring proposals on TV, the architects responded with a completely new scheme (valued at £400m) for a revival of classical principles of urban design. "What is more," they said, "the new plan offers the city a major new piazza centred on St Martin's, that with a little imagination almost recalls St Peter's in Rome...This means that the Bull Ring returns to the city as a public space."

It must be bewildering for the citizens to see one giant scheme instantly replaced by another of an entirely different character, especially as the objectors to the first

proposal have, presumably spent time, energy and resources in opposing it But, as always, the scales are weighted against an objector.

One thing I can prophesy is that if I get lost again in the Bull Ring in a few years' time, it won't be in anything like St Peter's Square. It'll be in a third vast shopping mall, policed by day, and closed at night, killing off the trade outside the inner ring road.

27. Colin Ward goes to Bradford in search of Tumerite subversion

The day before the Nobel Prize presentations last week, the "Alternative Nobel Prizes" were presented in the parliament building in Stockholm. These were the Right Livelihood Awards, introduced in 1980 by people who felt that the Nobel Prizes "had become too narrow and specialised in focus" and that there was a need to "honour and support those working on practicable and replicable solutions to the *real* problems facing us today."

I went to the conference at the School of Peace Studies at Bradford held to enable us to meet this year's true heroes. There was Inge Kemp Genefke, the Danish doctor who started that symbol of the 20th century state, the International Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims. One of her disturbing achievements has been to bring to light the involvement of members of the medical profession in the practice of torture. Others were the founders of Sahabat Alam (Friends of the Earth), risking their lives in attempting to save the tropical forests of Sarawak, Malaysia, and Jose Lutzenberger, father of the environmental movement in Brazil.

The fourth recipient was a quiet revolutionary, the English anarchist architect John F C Turner, who has laboured in the background for half a lifetime on a world scale to change our perception of housing from a noun to a verb. He has argued endlessly that the basic human need of shelter is not a *commodity* to be provided by landlords or the state, but an *activity* as natural as life itself.

Long ago (in the book *Freedom to Build)* he formulated, very carefully, the proposition which I'm always quoting as the first law of housing, as applicable in Lusaka or Lima as in Leeds or Liverpool:

"When dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contribution to the design, construction or management of their housing, both the process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being. When people have no control over, nor responsibility for key decisions in the housing process, on the other hand, dwelling environments may instead become a barrier to personal fulfilment and a burden on the economy."

This is the lesson he absorbed from ten years' activity in squatter settlements in Peru and Columbia, where he learned how inappropriate was the wisdom of the professionals.

He was lured from Latin America to the USA and there found the same truth, and returned to Britain to witness a crisis of confidence in housing policy, not in the Thatcher period, but in that of the Wilson government, where the same lesson emerged.

John and Bertha Turner set up AHAS (Associated Housing Advisory Services) whose latest publication is *Building Community: A Third World Case Book,* with 20 case-studies and 244 illustrations of poor people housing themselves. Needless to say, this good news is not in your bookshop. (It can be obtained by post for £13.50 from Building Communities, PO Box 28, Dumfries, Scotland DG2 ONS).

The message isn't welcome to the paternalist left, with its faith in government as provider of housing for the inert but grateful poor. It isn't welcome to the market-minded right either. For Turner knows that we don't live in an anarchist world and consequently that "while local control over necessarily diverse personal and local goods and services—such a housing—is essential, local control depends on personal and local access to resources which only central government can guarantee."

I've known Turner for 40 years, and know how monotonously correct he has been about housing. His opinions are off at a tangent from the right-to-left continuum. In the 60s he achieved a reversal of the conventional wisdom on third world shantytowns, discovering as Peter Hall puts it "what multiple sociological and anthropological research was later to prove."

Isn't it time to use the wealth of recent British experience of self-build and housing co-ops as a weapon in the Turnerite subversion of current housing legislation? There are, as discovered in Latin America, chinks in every ruler's armour, including that of our own legislators.

28. Colin Ward looks for Papageno in the Isle of Dogs

As the life of the Inner London Education Authority draws peacefully to its close, I'm always hoping that some of its employees with time on their hands, will go down to the archives in the sub-basement of County Hall (a building that back in the 1940s I learned to call the Kremlin) and dig out some biographical facts about some of the many thousands of people who for a century were employed by, first the education department of the London County Council, and then the ILEA.

Just for a start, there will be found there the record of how Sidney Webb and Bernard Shaw, on behalf of the LCC technical education committee, made the inspired choice of William Lethaby as the first principal of their Central School of Arts and Crafts, and how Lethaby achieved the impossible in persuading his bosses to employ craftsmen instead of teachers as instructors.

Another thing the historian could learn from those piles of files is how Alex Bloom came to be appointed as head of St George's-in-the-East secondary school just after

the war; and about the appointment of another progressive, Michael Duane, as head of Risinghill, and how the ILEA was never willing to take on the face-to-face confrontation of firing him.

But the life history I would most like to see unearthed from those records of who got appointed to teach what, where and when, is totally unpolitical. For years I've wanted to know more about Charles Smith.

Now you won't believe me, but 70 years ago, Mozart's *Magic Flute* was not a very well-known work in this country. If it was performed, it was done before the first world war in a garbled version of its set-piece arias under the name *II Flauto Magico,* as though it was an Italian opera, not a Viennese pantomime.

Then in 1919 this LCC teacher Charles Smith staged a performance of the *Magic Flute* with boys aged seven to 13 in an elementary school on the Isle of Dogs, which was then, as now, in spite of redevelopment, a run-down corner of the East End of London. Professor Edward Dent found it "astonishingly convincing" and a distinguished singer who went with him to see it said to him, "I have sung in this opera a dozen times in Germany; I now understand it for the first time."

Others said, "You've got a marvellous bunch of kids down there. Maybe it's all that fresh air blowing across the docks." So Mr Smith went on to another LCC elementary school in Whitechapel (where the air wasn't so good) and coaxed another performance out of the children there. Nobody expected Mr Smith to do the *Magic Flute.* The education authority and the Board of Education never asked him to get involved in curriculum innovation. He had a class set of 50 copies of the *National Song Book* in tonic sol-fa. Why didn't he settle down to "Oh, No John" and "Hearts of Oak" like any other sensible teacher? There weren't even curriculum development projects on hand to accuse him of cultural elitism and hand him out a few tin whistles to rescue the neglected indigenous culture of the Isle of Dogs.

Well, times have changed enormously since then. Ten years ago, children from one of the famous London comprehensives, Islington Green, took part in the making of a best-selling record. It wasn't of the *Magic Flute,* but of a song in which they provided the refrain "I don't want no education/Teacher, leave my mind alone," as though schooling was just another variety of child molestation.

Who am I to contradict them? When I used to mention this particular paradox at meetings of teachers, they would say that that number had been an absolute liberation for their pupils, bringing to the surface thoughts they could not express themselves. I've always been more worried by the profoundly anti-educational culture that surrounds the young than by the whittling away of public spending on schools.

But I also have the feeling that if someone were to dig out the record of that unknown London teacher Charles Smith, we might learn a little about his Mozartian faith that there was something to be said for the pursuit of wisdom.

1989

29. Colin Ward celebrates house purchase by hook or by crook

There's a now-forgotten novelist from the 30s and 40s, Frank Tilsley, who in 1936 wrote *I'd Do It Again* which I kept around for years to reread if I should ever have to go into hospital and needed cheering up. Happily the occasion never arose and I gave it to someone else, so I rely on recollections of it.

Its narrator was a young man who, with his newly-married wife, lived in a pair of rooms in inner London. He worked as a book-keeper for a succession of shady firms in the city, trying to get his weekly income up from £2.00 to £2.50. One weekend they take the Northern line to look at the show-house on a new speculative builder's estate.

Carefully he works out ways of cooking the cash accounts to get just a few shillings more and make the dream house theirs. It's difficult because the bosses automatically assume that anyone handling money is on the fiddle. But his speculations work, they move house, and everything changes about their lives. She decorates and he digs, turning the morass of clay and rubble into a garden with seeds from Woolworths, plants and cuttings from neighbours.

The couple have a new respect for each other, even their sex life is much improved. He, of course, sweats through the agony of the auditors' visit, but he has covered his tracks well and his thefts are undiscovered. He doesn't make the usual error of either increasing the sums or continuing them, and gets a better job that covers those few shillings a week extra for the mortgage repayments.

I enjoyed Tilsley's novel immensely for several reasons. I liked its moral subversion of the way the British admire big crooks but despise petty ones as sneak-thieves. I liked its accurate evocation of the texture of life in office, slum and suburb in those days. But most of all I admired Frank Tilsley's understanding of environmental psychology: of the importance of housing in people's lives and the satisfaction that comes from being in control.

This is why I felt devastated by the announcement that building society repossessions rose from 2,530 in 1979 to 22,630 in 1987. Clive Soley says this is the fastest growing reason for homelessness, accounting for one in ten of people presenting themselves to local authorities as homeless. It's a drop in a bucket in the total number of mortgage holders certainly, but can you imagine the ripples of quiet misery that spread out from those 22,630 families or couples and how it affects every aspect of their lives?

In the years that Tilsley was writing repossessions were very rare indeed, for two main reasons.

The first is that the building societies were mindful of their origins as friendly societies, recently abandoned. They would do everything to avoid seizing the house for nonpayment, by extending the mortgage period, by agreeing to the repayment of interest only, excluding the capital element, or even by adding the interest to the capital. The house was there. Sooner or later someone would redeem the debt.

The second is that in the inter-war years, interest rates were not the mechanism through which governments sought to influence the economy. The mortgage rate in those days fluctuated between $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, improbable as that seems today. People knew what their commitments were, and budgetted accordingly, by hook or by crook in the case of Tilsley's hero.

All post-war governments have chosen to use the price of credit as an economic regulator and the people this hits worst are those householders who are just on the brink of mortgageability and the small enterprises just on the edge of creditworthiness. Established homeowners and bigger business can weather the storm of a rise in interest rates. Small people can't.

There are Scandinavian countries which provide special low-interest credit for house-purchase, and countries like Italy which provide below-market loans to small business. The social benefits, in terms of reductions in homelessness or unemployment, are there for all to see. But this degree of sophistication in public policy is beyond the reach of Westminster, Whitehall and, of course, the City of London, financial capital of the world.

30. Colin Ward confesses an addiction to public libraries

As both reader and writer I naturally see the public libary network as one of the glories of a civilised society: an open university in every high street. I remember my mother telling me of her excitement when she was 13 in 1904 when the West Ham public library moved over from a system where an indicator showed which books were in or out and you asked at the counter, to a browse-for-yourself open access system.

And when I read in Ralph Glaser's book about growing up in the Gorbals, his hymn of praise for the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, I recalled the wartime Sundays I spent there, taking notes I still use from old pamphlets and journals I have never seen since. Sunday opening is a thing of the past, for one of the aspects of the reduction of services which every library committee has been obliged to make is a shortening of hours, or a closure of the reading room, or a reduction of the number of papers taken.

You can't, for example, read this journal in Sudbury, Suffolk, until a few weeks after publication, when the Bury St Edmunds library has finished with it.

Suffolk County Council libraries committee adopted a dodgy policy of shortening the borrowing period on books so that readers would run up fines to help pay for its new computer system that links its 32 libraries. This hasn't worked, and the system has cost more than was anticipated, so a six-week freeze on the purchase of new books has been imposed.

It must be humiliating for our bookloving county librarian, Peter Labdon, to adapt his professional ethos to these strategies, but this is a general situation, and for example, there is a dreadful tale to be told about the London borough of Camden.

Invariably in committee discussions of the savings to be won by closing the reading room or the reference department, some member claims that the main users seem to be dead-beats coming in out of the cold, or foreign students writing their essays.

I would see it as a matter for rejoicing that there is a clean, warm and book-lined room available to both parties. Just think of those overseas students in the inhospitable atmosphere of shared rooms, grasping landlords, slot-meters for the electric fire, and the noise of the transistor next door.

Or think of the poor old chaps (among whom I count myself) and the refuge that the public library provides. I've very often found myself in a strange town on a wet day with hours to go before the train to somewhere else, and although I should have been exploring the local economy, somehow the library is a cosier habitat. Many is the book I vaguely knew about that I have found in unexpected places, from which I have gleaned priceless nuggets of information. And the people you meet in libraries, all following their own preoccupations...

My friend Chris Culpin was in the Carnegie Library at the top of the main street in Bodmin, Cornwall. His particular quest was in the Local Studies Room on the first floor, well-lit from its north-facing window. In came a battered-looking guy who selected a seat with the light falling over his left shoulder, got out his gouache colours and his Whatman paper, opened a handbook on fresh-water fishes, and set about a large and meticulous painting of a pike.

His name was Paul and he was a one-time medical illustrator who had gone native. He was just like those 18th century travelling artists who would turn up and do a series of family portraits or a picture of the house, your farm or your favourite hound. He had actually come across country from Hertfordshire, on horseback, from pub to pub, offering a painting of whatever was in demand.

It might be the building, it might be Aunt Annie who served behind the bar for 40 years, or it might be Rusty, the Alsatian, or the fish that got away.

Or it might be a copy of the birds-eye view of the barns and stables, drawn by an unknown surveyor in the Tithe Map of 1840, only to be found in the local collection.

Paul, like Chris and you and me, owes a huge debt to the public library service, available to all.

31. Colin Ward picks up a few tips about the arms trade

A whimsical item on the back page of the *Weekend Guardian* on 7 January suggested that the Czech government should exercise a certain restraint of trade and restrict sales of Semtex to in-flight duty free outlets.

It also commented that the Royal Ordnance should move from its obsession with property speculation into updating the British plastic explosive Amatol, so as to make it a real competitor in world armaments markets.

From the standpoint of a trading nation I am sure that the *Guardians* joker was right. Back in the good old wartime days Britain had a world lead in this branch of the demolition industry.

Generations of sappers in the Royal Engineers were trained in its effective use, and I just can't imagine how decades of successive governments have slipped behind in selling this great little killer to the whole world, and in eliminating that tell-tale smell.

I'm just hoping that someone will write in to protest at the paper's appalling bad taste in suggesting a fair trading agreement to moderate market forces. The sordid truths about the traffic in weapons are close at hand, just to rebut any charge of frivolity.

For once we have paid every kind of deference to personal grief, it is a fact that every major government and many a minor government in the rich world is endlessly busy promoting the sale of lethal weapons to those of the poor world. Anarchists like me have tediously pushed slogans like "war is the trade of governments" or "war is the health of the state" and have been ridiculed for our cock-eyed view of reality.

Well, I only need to draw attention to the January issue of *Geographical,* the monthly magazine of the Royal Geographical Society, (available at any branch of Smiths, Martins, Menzies, McColls, etc) which carries an article by Richard Evans on the international arms trade, including league tables showing who sells war materials where.

The chart is topped, needless to say, by the Soviet Union, but the good news is that "During 1986 Britain overtook France for the first time in decades to become the world's third-largest arms-seller. During 1987 Britain did even better: it closed on the United States and nearly became number two, signing $8.6 billion-worth of arms contracts as compared to $9.2 billion signed by US manufacturers."

A major activity of the industrial nations is selling weaponry' to the rich rulers of the poor world or to intermediate governments who can be relied on to change the labels and pass them on. "An estimated 20 per cent of France's industrial workforce is employed, either directly or indirectly, in the business of defence. Roughly the same applies to Britain, West Germany and Italy," says Evans.

And of course it applies to cosy little countries like the Netherlands, Switzerland or Sweden, and to an increasing number of Third World nations. Back home, why did you imagine that a town like Stevenage is so prosperous?

Everything comes home to roost, as we learnt in the Falklands war. The Israeli government updated China's old Russian tanks and sold its missiles in Beijing, only to find the Chinese government selling them on to Saudi Arabia, prime target also for arms-peddling missions from Mrs Thatcher, Mr Howe and endlessly from defence secretary George Younger—all of them busy saving jobs at British Aerospace and other leading armaments firms. "The Israeli government complained bitterly to the Chinese, but looked rather foolish in doing so," comments Evans.

British charities busily involve us in rescue attempts for the starving poor of Third World countries, while their rich rulers are busy buying war material in every major capital of the sophisticated world.

Like it or not, we are all enmeshed in the weapons traffic, and there is no point in differentiating between governments and illicit free enterprise. There's duplicity and connivance all round. Business is business. Isn't it?

32. Colin Ward worries about "actively seeking work"

Hungry Mitchell was a trawlerman from Fleetwood. In the twenties the boats would go out for five days at a time, but Hungry Mitchell ate all the food in the first two days and his shipmates had to return to port. Word got around and after a while no one would work with him and no skipper would take him on. So as an unemployed person under the National Insurance Acts of 1911–1927, he applied for unemployment pay.

But a committee and its local investigator decided that Mitchell was not "genuinely seeking work" and was therefore not entitled to benefit. So he built himself a hut on the allotments behind the sea wall and scrounged what he could, always around, according to my informant, Little Joe, when the boats came in, and the trawlermen had full pockets.

He didn't die of hunger. Little Joe told me that "one night, a few years before the war, the sea came over the wall and the fields were flooded. The water rose up and old Hungry Mitchell, who nobody would go to sea with, was drowned at sea in his bed."

Fifty years later his food craving might have been diagnosed and treated, but the industry he had grown up in has disappeared. He wouldn't be the only unemployed trawlerman in Fleetwood, expected to take a job sweeping the floor in the chip shop. But today his constituency MP could be Mr Michael Jack who complained to the House of Commons on 10 January about the people who choose to ignore work and

remain on benefit. There were also those, he explained, who were prepared to work, but not legitimately.

The Social Security Bill, whose successful second reading Mr Jack was supporting would, he claimed, "remove a thorn from the side of the taxpayers". The thorn has been there ever since St Paul told the Thessalonians that "if any should not work, neither should he eat", but the most charitable thing that can be said about our legislators' anxiety to make unemployed people prove that they are genuinely seeking work is that they have no idea of the miserable history of the application of this test.

In 1919 for example it was used to attempt to drive sacked women munition workers with fully stamped insurance cards into domestic service where there were plenty of vacancies.

The elderly liberal Sir William Beveridge, who drafted our post-war social security legislation, wrote in para 371 of his report that subsistence payments *should* be made to people "disqualified for unconditional benefit through refusal of suitable employment". He was echoing Bertrand Russell's insistence, in the first world war, on the need for a "vagabond's wage" but he was reflecting even more his own experience of the bullying way in which the sheep had been sorted from the goats ever since the introduction of unemployment insurance in 1911.

In the Commons debate, Margaret Beckett reminded MPs of Beveridge's conclusion in 1931 when the government, with great reluctance, abandoned the test of eligibility for unemployment benefit. Beveridge wrote that it should never be allowed to rise "from its dishonoured grave".

This wasn't because he sympathised with the idle but because he was aware of the absence of real jobs and of the personal disadvantages of the people hunted down for scrutiny. Alan Deacon, in his book *In Search of the Scrounger* (Bell 1976), used government papers to tell the inter-war history, including the Orwellian experience of John Hilton (then Assistant Secretary in the Statistics Division of the Ministry of Labour) who, dressed in workman's clothes, toured the north of England pretending to be job-seeking. Horrified, he reported that all tests were in practice "a test of a man's ability in talking rather than his activity in seeking work... The facts became immaterial, the capacity to tell a tale, remember it, and stick to it becomes the stuff of the decision."

Maybe the DSS at this moment is sending out staff members to impersonate the idle poor. The snag is that, under the old or the new Official Secrets Act, we won't know for 30 years.

33. Colin Ward peers into the waste paper basket and doesn't like what he sees

Our "discovery" of the informal economy, belatedly recognising the significance of something that was always there, is embarrassingly recent. It dates from the 1972 International Labour Office report on Kenya, studying the ways in which people stayed alive instead of relying on the statistics used to calculate GDP or GNP, which, if taken seriously, would show that most people just couldn't exist.

The informal sector was defined by its "ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprises, small scale of operations, labour-intensive and adaptive technology, skills acquired outside the formal school system, and unregulated and competitive markets".

Once identified, the concept spread like wildfire among the academics, but got lost in discussions of whether there was really a polarity between formal and informal economies, or whether each was dependent upon the other, as they obviously are. This was a pity because the ILO report *Employment, incomes and equality: A strategy for increasing productive employment in Kenya* was full of wisdom that the rich nations should have absorbed. A trivial example stumbled on by the ILO mission stays in readers' minds. This was that of the waste paper basket.

They noticed that every office in every business or government department in Nairobi had a waste paper basket, and the more important the office, the more likely this insignificant container was to have been imported with scarce foreign currency. Yet all around were displaced villagers anxious to use local materials and traditional basketmaking skills, and on the very doorstep were carpentry shops and sheet-metal workers recycling plywood or tinplate to make containers of every sort. At this humblest level of demand and supply, wouldn't it be in everyone's interest to match the two?

Naturally there's a precise parallel in Britain. There was a time when the basketmaking trade relied on regular heavy-duty orders from the building industry and the potteries, and light-duty ones for the school and office trade. Every classroom in the country, every office and reception desk had a waste paper basket. Most local authorities would automatically put in their yearly replacement order to the Blind or Disabled Workshops, either run by themselves, before municipal enterprise became a sin, or by a local voluntary body.

But the day came when basketry was out of fashion, when machine civilisation was thought to need machine products, or when the auditors thought that a more competitive quotation could be got from the office furniture trade in battleship grey or army green. Then came plastics to replace them all, and finally we moved into the era of the designer, determining that the bin should be not an afterthought, but part of a total corporate image, in which it is *en suite* with the rest of the furniture in spun anodised aluminium or teak-finished laminated plywood.

Another lovely irony arrived. Time-and-motion studies applied to the cleaning business showed that it would be simpler to insert a plastic, instantly removable liner, so that the cleaner could instantly whip out the full one and insert an empty for next day's use.

There is, however, something vaguely unaesthetic about the blue plastic bag whose edges straggle over the edge of the bin. So an entirely new hierarchy arose. You used to be able to grade the seniority of any public servant you were dealing with by the size of the carpet. Today the really top people insist on a wicker or bamboo basket, reminding them of the nusery, primary (or, more likely, prep) school and would never tolerate a plastic liner.

I wish this was the result of an urge to support small industry. Sadly it transmits a different signal. It is there to remind the personal secretary that this load of waste paper is to be hand-fed into a shredding machine (costing £1,600) by no-one below a certain level. Six floors below they put their rubbish into cardboard cartons from the executive cafeteria.

34. Colin Ward strikes a discordant note

I once worked for an old architect who recalled how, when office rents were low, his was on a first floor in Baker Street above the showrooms of the French piano-maker, Pleyel. Once a year the pianist Alfred Cortot would come for his British tour and would be given the freedom of the shop for practising.

Up through the ceiling would come the sound of Cortot moving from one piano to another, seeking the elusive ideal instrument, tuned and voiced to perfection. For, as Alfred Brendel remarked decades later, many pianos are like unmade beds.

Pianos are in fact like cars. They were once made everywhere to meet the needs of both concert and domestic markets. Camden Town in London was the centre of a big piano building industry. Beethoven played a Broadwood, Chopin a Pleyel, Liszt a Schiedmayer. Slowly the market was winnowed down to three or four household names at the top of the trade: Steinway, Bechstein,

Bliithner and so on, and a mass of ordinary utility models threatened, just like the motor industry, by the influx from Japan and its industrial satellites.

Just as car manufacturers depend on the prestige that comes from sponsoring grand prix motor-racing and its ace drivers, so the top firms in the piano trade cosset the international concert soloists. Vladimir Ashkenazy expects Steinway's top technician Bob Glazebrook to follow him around, Oscar Peterson depends on Bosendorfer and Richard Clayderman is never without attention from Yamaha. But the same economic forces that oblige you to scrap a car rather than face the cost of repairs unless it was a quality vehicle in the first place, are at work in the piano market.

The handful of firms in the West End—once with a staff of experts and a workshop full of wisdom—now have one senior person, known throughout the trade and among

celebrity pianists, and a shoal of junior technicians. The overheads are so high that the labour-intensive task of restoring pianos is too pricey for any business that relies for its income on selling new models.

This is by no means a loss for ordinary piano owners. It has meant that the people who had once relied on a flow of work for a big dealer now operate on their own all over the country. Good reputations travel far; bad ones remain local.

Brendel remarks that today "we have an incomparably larger number of passable pianists than of piano technicians" and he urges that "their status and standard of living needs to be improved in many countries." In Britain there are just a few centres for training. There's the Royal College for the Blind at Hereford, which has trained generations of tuners, the London College of Furniture in Shoreditch, the College of Technology at Newark, and the Welsh School of Musical Instrument Making, tucked into one of the South Wales valleys but known throughout Europe. Few of the graduates are short of work.

When it comes to adequate maintenance, pianos are even more like cars. The biggest retailer in London finds that 60 per cent of sales are new instruments, most of them economy models, and 40 per cent are old ones which, when properly restored, are a better buy. Quality uprights are disappearing from the market, while the restoration of lower-grade products is just not financially worthwhile. Exactly what the man at the garage said.

It's like the story of the 3-litre Lagonda found in a field with a tree growing round the drive-shaft, lovingly reconstructed and sold for a fortune at Sotheby's. If you can grab a battered but once top-grade school piano for £250 and spend ten times that sum on rebuilding and repair, you have an instrument worth £10,000. If you buy a "cheap" new piano it gets more worthless every year, like new furniture or your new car.

The big firms have priced themselves out of the market, but the dispersal of their expertise and the spread of professional skills means that if you ask around long enough you'll have the fringe benefit of hooking on to the network of piano enthusiasts. The only alternative is to take up the guitar.

35. Colin Ward is dismayed by yet another attempt to teach children about architecture

Why did my heart sink when I read that an organisation called the Building Experience Trust is appealing for £500,000 "to make young people aware of the world of architecture and building"? After all, it is supported by the top names among British architects and is "advised" by the RIBA.

I hope my cynicism is misplaced, but I have watched the same educational urge surface in every decade from an endless series of bodies: the Design and Industries As-

sociation, the Design Council, the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the Royal Fine Art Commission and its Art and Architecture Education Trust. By the time they have unlearned their intitial simplistic assumptions and gained some sophistication about the way education works, the urge to support them has dwindled away. For the money is won by the suggestion that it will be used to induce the young to like whatever version of contemporary architecture is in vogue at the moment, or to persuade them to love the architectural heritage, or (heaven help us) the building and property development industries, which by now are synonymous.

But the task of telling people what to like brings diminishing returns. And increasingly the people employed to do it begin to question its utility and educational validity, and find themselves involved in something else: the effort to impart to schools, teachers and pupils, the environmental know-how that could enable *them* to influence decisions about their surroundings. They become involved in townscape appraisal and the development of a critical vocabulary.

A whole repertoire of techniques has been evolved for this direct involvement, by, for example, Joan Kean and her association at the Newcastle Architecture Workshop, by the Bristol architect Jeff Bishop with his ploys for turning children into designers, or by Eileen Adams and Ken Baynes, formerly of the Schools Council Art and the Built Environment Project, who have been trying to knock a little sense into the Royal Fine Art Commission's project.

Somehow the paymasters find these genuinely educational efforts unattractive. The RIBA switched off its support for Architecture Workshops as though they were woodworms in the panelling. This is inevitable. Environmental education is concerned with land-use conflicts. It is equally inevitable that teachers, alternatively bullied and patronised by the present government, will switch off from *their* earlier involvement in built environment projects.

I remember going round Bath with a school party back in the 1970s. They noted the fact that several of the houses in the Royal Circus were just too valuable to be used. So squatters had taken them over, discreetly placarding the windows with slogans like "Property is Theft", carefully noted by pupils in their report on their findings. We moved on to the Royal Crescent, and of course the children were ecstatic: not about architectural unity but about that one householder who had painted the front door yellow instead of white, and the story of the lengthy planning appeal and enquiry that followed. They noted how the planning authorities were concerned with trivia while really important issues were sidestepped.

But the real excitement came round at the back of the Royal Crescent. Instead of the smooth, well-mannered uniform facades, there was this cliff of rough masonry, with every kind of lean-to, back addition and tacked-on bulge. Sixty feet above our heads was a precarious projecting loo supported by rusty cast-iron brackets. Duly recorded by the class, it was seen as a tribute to the endless adaptability of buildings untouched by architects.

I bet these aren't the kind of building experiences that the Building Experiences Trust wants the young to put their trust in.

The author of *Chinese Chequers* in *Race & Society*, 3 February, was Kweku Ampiah.

36. Colin Ward circulates among the power elites and glows with local pride

Ideas are cyclical. We are in a period when the dominant ideology crudely separates private enterprise (good) from public enterprise (bad). First gas, and next electricity and water, are or will be sold off on the stock market.

Later generations will find this incredible, but anyone old enough to remember the wartime debate will know that it was couched differently. The argument then was between national (good) and local (bad). But in the metropolis, for example, it was unimportant that the Gas Light and Coke Company was an allegedly private business. It could be nationalised without anyone noticing. The significant thing was that it coordinated the output of dozens of gasworks, some privately run and some set up by local authorities.

Similarly with the National Grid. It was an *idea,* and its symbolic importance, celebrated by poets and composers like Auden and Britten, was just that it linked together the capacity of innumerable local generators of electricity, indiscriminately owned by councils and capitalists. Underneath the ideologies there's a heroic history of local attempts everywhere just to provide useful services. In our nearest town, Hadleigh, the silk factory made gas for itself in 1836 and was asked to extend the supply for street lighting. But in 1853 dissatisfied ratepayers ordered the captain of the fire brigade to stop up the pipes and take down the lamps.

Then in 1861 they formed the Hadleigh Gas Consumers Company and built the gas works (now the town council office) in Bridge Street. There are still people around to tell you that when demand was greatest, to cook Sunday dinners, the gas man and his children would sit on the gasholder to increase pressure. Electricity came to Ipswich in the same public-spirited way. A councillor who happened to be a Scot visited relations in Glasgow' and was dazzled by the trams and bright lights in Sauchiehall Street. By 1897 he had persuaded the Corporation to generate electricity in Portman Road and to electrify its horse-tram system.

Private or public, it was local initiative that counted, and it gave rise to endless useful experiments, squashed by the imposition of national policies. For example, round the corner from the office of this journal, there's a building in cobbled Coronet Street, London N1, (just a few yards from the Bass Clef nightspot) with a terracotta panel on the wall saying *E Pulvere Lux Et Vis.* This is a beautiful slogan for recyclers, meaning

Light and Power from Dust", and it celebrates Britain's first successful generation of electricity by burning domestic refuse. Built by Shoreditch Parish Vestry in 1896, it was ceremonially opened by Lord Kelvin in 1897, when it had an output of 250 kilowatts and supplied three substations.

But not only that. A step or two away there are a couple of doorways remaining from the Public Baths, now demolished, which used the waste heat from the generating station to heat the water. There was no room for cooling towers in Shoreditch. but beyond that, it w as sensible to make every possible use of resources.

Nowadays, this close and local integration makes no sense. For generations we had national plans and a technocratic bureaucracy centralising everything. The outcome in those days was to shut down all those ludicrous local efforts to meet local needs. It was as automatic as today's solution of turning everything into shares and releasing the magic of the market.

Current denationalisation is a disreputable parody of local control and local initiative, combined with an absolute circumscription of enterprise by councils. The modern world has no use at all for the people who brought gas to Hadleigh or electricity to Ipswich or Shoreditch. But remember that the privateers of the Right have only been able to achieve this as heirs to the centralisers of the Left.

37. Colin Ward digs into a matter of growing concern with deep suspicion

Next Wednesday in the beautiful Guildhall in Northampton, an Inspector from the DoE will hold a planning enquiry concerned with the issue of growing and selling. On one side will be a solicitor and two planning officers, and on the other a pensioner from Far Cotton, Mr Cyril Easey, appealing against an Enforcement Notice prohibiting him from selling vegetables and plants from his allotment on the Wootton Fields site.

Northampton is an "expanding town" under the New Towns Act, and has grown successfully, taking in the villages on its fringe. Last November the council got a Private Bill through parliament which repealed eleven Local Enclosure Awards made by the Enclosure Commissioners in the 18^{th} century for these surrounding areas. As every student of history knows, the effect of enclosures on the rural poor was devastating, and led to a growing insistence that every Local Enclosure Bill brought before parliament should include allotments for the poor. The General Enclosure Act of 1845 belatedly made such provision mandatory.

The legislation did not distinguish between feeding the family from produce or from selling produce, and the mountains of subsequent allotment laws do not exclude this possibility. "Wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family" is the phrase used in the 1922 Allotments Act.

I don't know how much Mr Easey can consume, but I'm deeply suspicious of the motives behind the Enforcement Notice. Anyone knows that the Wootton Fields allotment site is worth millions for any property developer building "executive houses". And anyone knows too that the earnings from small-scale plant or vegetable production are trivial. If it was profitable, everyone would be at it.

He has had to pay £66 for an application to deflect the Enforcement Notice and it is easy to calculate the time it takes to earn that much by growing. You can pay £66 to a garage for half an hour's work on your car, but just try to get a sum like that for your fruit or veg!

The local secretary of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners tells me that the "Liberties of Wootton" was one of the rights in local village enclosure acts extinguished by that private act of parliament last year.

Could it be that the Enforcement Notice against Mr Easey arose from the fact that, unknown to him, ancient liberties were being denied him? What future does Northampton Borough Council envisage for the Wootton Fields site?

I don't suppose that poor old Cyril Easey has the opportunity to gather from the county record office the details of his liberties as an allotment holder. He has to fall back on the claim that permission to sell his product was granted by a long-abolished local council before Wootton was absorbed by Northampton or on the record that his predecessor on the same site had sold produce for about 40 years. In other words, by establishing what the planning industry calls an "established use right over the land".

But the case of Mr Easey exhibits several uncomfortable truths. He exemplifies current interest in the "Enterprise Culture" and its bureaucratic enemies. He also exemplifies the present urge to encourage old people to retain a place in the community. "What else could I do if I didn't come here? I'd be stuck in my flat and I like meeting people," he told the *Northampton Citizen.*

Sad to say, the whole issue is a textbook example of the way local authorities in pursuit of long-term policies, whether wise or foolish, seize every opportunity of employing the law and the publicly-funded machinery of law enforcement to eliminate trivial little nuisances like Mr Easey, who chance to get in the way. Inevitably they push us all, right or left, local or not, on to his side.

38. Colin Ward rejoices that we don't break children's spirits like we used to in the good old days

If you missed Tuesday's first instalment of Channel Four's *Century of Childhood,* be sure to watch the other seven programmes. They accumulate oral history, heightened by the device of taking men and women to the visual stimulus of the place where they

lived or worked or played as children. There they think aloud without the intervention of an interviewer.

The result is both touching and arresting. The producers Joanna Mack and and Steve Humphries were themselves astounded by the depth of emotion that emerged as participants seemed "to regress psychologically and relive their experiences in front of the camera It was cathartic for them, and a disturbing glimpse for us of the life histories that made the British in this century.

There is a deliberate ambiguity about the choice of title. The filmmakers provide a record of the changing experience in different generations but they also indicate that this *is* the century of childhood. There has been a quiet social revolution in our attitudes towards children, who today live in a world which was inconceivable to their great-grandparents' generation.

Of course this is what the old endlessly tell the young, and we are rightly sensitive to the exceptions: the histories of child abuse that make headlines today and would have been unnoticed in the past, the plight of children reared in bed-and-breakfast accommdoation, the street kids living a Victorian life in central London.

But it is important to be reminded sometimes that these experiences *are* the exception rather than the rule. The evidence from the past gathered by the makers of *Century of Childhood* reveal an automatic callousness towards the young, whether they were among the vast number reared in penal institutions for the sin of being orphaned or handicapped, whether they were 12-year-old workers destined for long hours of hard labour, or even whether they were among the children of the rich parked at eight years old in boarding schools.

Hardship and brutality seem to have been deliberately imposed: it was for their own good and would "break the spirit". Among such recollections I am always struck by the way that children were regarded as fair game for jokes and tricks from adults that simply exploited their uncertainty and lack of experience.

My neighbour Alan has often told me, for example, of an event in his life as a little boy. His father sent him to take a horse over the fields to the smithy near us to be reshod. "But mind you lead him, don't try to ride him," father warned. When the job was done on this troublesome horse the smith watched him pick up the reins and said, "What are you scared of? A big boy like you ought to be able to ride him home." So Alan mounted the horse and, just as his father had feared, was thrown off. The blacksmith just laughed, and Alan had to try desperately to conceal his bruises and muddy clothes to avoid another punishment back home.

Folklore is full of tales of country children who dared not return to their father or their employer because some task had been bungled or an animal lost. They were found shivering and weeping or frozen to death, or may even have committed suicide out of despair.

One favourite trick of adults was to count the sheep and pretend that one was missing. At the Kentford junction on the road from Bury St Edmunds to Newmarket there is a wooden cross, periodically renewed, recording "Joseph, the unknown gypsy

boy"; a memorial to a boy who hanged himself having been told, just to tease him, that one of the flock was missing. He was also reminded that he was bound to be accused of sheepstealing, punishable by death, so he took the law into his own hands.

It's a reminder of the immense changes in attitudes that *Century oj Childhood* investigates.

39. Colin Ward frets over small schools and meets the New Right

Over lunch at Saturday's tenth anniversary conference of the National Association for the Support of Small Schools, conversation was bound to evoke horror stories. Like mine. Two years ago the county council announced its intention of closing the school in Polstead, the next village to us, using the standard educational arguments. Parents have been complaining ever since. Our county councillor, Alan Crockett, resigned from the Conservative group on the council last year in protest. Our Conservative MP, Tim Yeo, led a delegation to our Conservative Secretary of State in November to persuade him not to confirm the closure, but in December Kenneth Baker announced his support for the council.

The school will close in July 1990. The county council will spend at least £25,000 on enlarging the school in the next village, Stoke-by-Nayland, to accommodate the Polstead children. No figures are provided for the cost of bussing them in perpetuity.

Until the NASSS was founded in 1978 the DES didn't bother to compile data on school closures. They were seen as acts of God, not as something to be argued over and campaigned against. Happily there is evidence nowadays that when closure is discussed behind closed doors before the case is presented at council meetings, the level and influence of opposition is one of the considered factors. This small change is thanks to the existence of the tiny coordinating body (NASSS, 91 King Street, Norwich NR1 1PH) and its endless trickle of information sheets.

Conference speakers reflected this slight shift in the climate. There was Dr Clare Burstall, Director of the National Foundation for Educational Research, stressing once again that there was *no* educational evidence against small schools as such. If anything, there is much to be said for them as an ideal environment for early learning. She was followed by the impressive Andy Slater, head of Salterlee School in Calderdale who, with local parents, had successfully fought back. His slogan was: Get your retaliation in first!

But the most thought-provoking star in this galaxy was Stuart Sexton. He supported NASSS from its inception and became adviser to education ministers like Rhodes Boyson and Keith Joseph. I was sitting next to an ex-secondary head who whispered to me that Sexton had urged the minister to ignore the two-inch thick file from the LEA justifying closure and to ask around in the neighbourhood about whether the

school was really serving its locality. In other words, I couldn't from a NASSS point of view ignore this guy just because he is educational director of the Institute of Economic Affairs and will doubtless be smoothed into a safe seat in the next general election. So I listened with special care.

Sexton said, rightly, that in a nation with a diminishing child population, closure decisions are made for political and administrative convenience and are justified with a smoke-screen of cynical educational arguments. He thought that the Education Reform Act would result in decisions being taken by the market, i.e. parental choice, and he looked forward to a renewed demand for "educational vouchers" to be spent at the free choice of parents. That would be the one guarantee that village schools could survive, and the intolerable bureaucracy of county hall and the DES would wither away.

Plenty of people were there to argue that schooling is a service rather than a commodity, available to the remotest child in isolated places where there was no possibility of shopping around. My conclusion was different. I think Sexton and people like him are right-wing Utopians (just as I'm a left-wing utopian). He is used by politicians in the way that communist idealists were used by the power-holders in the Soviet Union, as a cover for the ever-increasing centralisation of recent years.

Poor old Stuart Sexton has served his ideological purpose, and that's why Kenneth Baker has little use for him anymore.

40. Colin Ward tries to grasp why advertising is directed at animals, of all people

I pondered when young the passage in Richard Jefferies where he tries to come to terms with the sheer *strangeness* of animals and birds. He invited us to pass our hands over the head of even a nice friendly creature like a dog and to reflect on the unknowable difference of the thoughts that intelligent skull contained.

If I look into the eyes of our cat Cleo, she responds with a muted cry, and I never know whether she is expressing affection, sympathy, disapproval or remonstration. Maybe she's just sorry for me.

The best of the revelations that have accompanied the salmonella scare have been the facts about chicken feeds, compounded into pellets made of ground-up bones, shit and feathers, just everything that couldn't be packaged for humans. Fowls lived in an enforced atmosphere of cannibalism, and we don't need to kid ourselves that the same isn't true of bought-in food for cattle, sheep or pigs.

On the cosier domestic front, don't you, like me, find inexplicable, the investment and effort devoted to advertising food for dogs and cats? Everyone in the entertainment industry knows that children and animals steal the show, and we re used to Cubs and Brownies selling everything from soap to fish products and Bernard Matthews's bits of turkey. The endless pet food ads are less easy to understand.

I'm told that they don't register with the animals themselves who received them simply as a flickering pattern of light and dark. But we, who are their masters or slaves, are just as bewildered. What kind of con-artist managed to persuade the three or four firms that package most of them that endless changes of name, and ever new claims for a new and improved recipe, would win over yet another slice of the retail trade for their brand?

Just why has Mr Dog (a tinned dog-food) disappeared from the shelves? It can't be the result of a protest from Bitch Liberation, since its new name is in fact Cesar. Fathom out the creative thinking behind this change. Maybe Mr Dog evokes a floppy, sloppy old beast, while the new name implies, especially since it is spelt in the Spanish style, a more macho animal ready to seize enemies.

My Nottingham friends Kate and Ross, having eliminated flesh from their lives, hoped that they could gradually cut it out for their Labrador and several cats. The dog was patient and obliging and didn't complain. The cats were adamant, so meaty tins were still bought for them. But with closer observation they found that the dog, who had lived amicably with cats for years, was nosing them out of the way and appropriating their dishes of Whiskas, Kit-e-kat and Choosy. The cats were foraging for themselves on the well-named Hunger Hills at the back of the house, bringing back every mouse, shrew, robin, thrush and even rabbit, just to feed the household.

The offerings on the mat were an umistakable rebuke, more distressing than the canned ouptut of Spillers, Pedigree and Quaker Products, who between them have tied up most of the market. We are all in their hands, since in the dwindling number of places where you can still buy scraps of meat, offal or cheap fish you will find that they are actually dearer than pre-packaged foods. Your pets regard the real thing with suspicion, just for lack of familiarity.

But what strange calculation of which margin of the market led to the big decision to change Mr Dog to Cesar, or, from a cat's point of view, to relaunch Munchies as Brekkies? Imagine the conference table surrounded by ad-men, marketing stylists and the sales force rolling the new crunchier name round their mouths, or the endless hours in the studio waiting for those temperamental animals to go through the appropriate gestures of appreciation.

If you were somebody's pet wouldn't you spend those hours between meals just contemplating the sheer *strangeness* of humankind?

41. Colin Ward reads the writing on the council house wall

Shelter's endlessly energetic director Sheila McKechnie said to me: "You must feel like a prophet turning up on Doomsday." We were at a meeting with tenants, managers and housing activists to discuss strategies for responding to the Housing Act of 1988,

with its deceitful doublethink in advocating Tenants' Choice while meaning Landlords' Choice.

Well, my knowledge of the story of the Writing on the Wall comes more from *Belshazzars Feast* than from the Book of Daniel. But those words, like all biblical questions, can be applied to anything, including local authority housing. *"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting,"* is all too sadly true. *"God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it,*" obviously equates the Prime Minister with the Almighty. *"Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians"* clearly indicates the government's intention to divide council housing between property speculators and the North British Housing Association.

Future historians will undoubtedly be very harsh on the ruthless opportunism of current policies and their pursuit of ideological goals that ignore ordinary realities; and on the way the Department of the Environment invents the rules under the Act, week by week, in ways that are as opaque to the experts as they are to tenants. But the ideologists of the left have for years been equally to blame; just for ignoring the writing on the council house wall.

As an irresponsible outsider, I published an article in 1968 called "Tenants Take Over", urging that the solution to the malaise of local authority housing was the transfer of estates to co-operatives of tenants. Neither side of the political divide recognised that there was anything to worry about, but I was asked to expand the topic into a book with the same title published in 1974.

It is long out of print and totally out of date. At the time there were fewer than 100 homes in housing co-ops. Today there are 25,000 in Britain, admittedly an invisible proportion of British families, let alone of the 50 million people or more throughout the world living in co-operative housing. But at that time, just to find an example of the transfer of council property to tenant co-ops, I had to rely on Andrew Gilmour's detailed study of Oslo.

I had a chapter called "One by one or all together?" which anticipated the Right to Buy legislation and urged a collective buy-out. I was never opposed to the sale of houses to individual tenants and have argued that the Labour Party's objections were spurious. What I failed to anticipate was this government's ban on on the investment of the proceeds in promoting new housing.

Council tenants are endlessly disadvantaged and are slowly realising the ways in which (contrary to the stereotype) the Housing Revenue Account is manipulated to subsidise the General Rate Fund. Their situation is worsened by the new Act. Those who want to set up Transferred Ownership Co-ops will have to raise the money in the commercial market. Naturally, they will be unable to prove, as could a landlord or a housing association, a financial track record and experience. The dice are loaded against them. Rents, like anyone else's, will rise, but co-op rents are likely to rise still more.

Co-ops lack the automatic finance and staff available to a private landlord, or to a housing association, for the business of explanation and management of the transaction.

Just because it depends on involvement rather than bullying, a co-operative transfer needs a long process of information and education.

There will be local heroes bent on overcoming these disadvantages. Co-op housing has some loyal friends both within the DoE and in the Housing Corporation, which at least has some experience of funding housing co-ops. There are plenty of people around within the governmental machine who realise how remarkably successful co-ops have proved in the last ten years, and who can bend the rules to make them possible as alternatives to the miserable options the Act makes available.

How soon will tenants be *enabled* to take over?

42. Colin Ward picks up a few tips on time-management

Like the bit of folk wisdom that says if you want charity you must go to the poor, it's a universal experience that if you need anything done you must either do it yourself or go to a busy person: never to people with time on their hands.

The art of intelligent timemanagement has always eluded me. This is a matter of self-reproach since time is, after all, our most precious possession. F or one thing, I am endlessly optimistic about the amount of time to be taken up by any task. My time-budgeting is absurd, and it leaves me with a harvest of selfapproach for the jobs left undone.

You will recognise the syndrome instantly, so I must pass on the best diagnosis of the problem I have found. This came from Ivan Illich, who in a moment of insight said, "There is a strong tendency for us to overcommit the future, so that when the future becomes present, we seem to be conscious all the time of having an acute scarcity, simply because we have committed ourselves to about 30 hours a day instead of24."

It's blindingly obvious, but unless you are rich and buy other people's time, how can you avoid it? Our problem was a flood. We have a pond that gathers surface water from fields and streams. When a certain level is reached it feeds a buried 50 yards of drain, spilling out into a ditch and away. When it seized up we were in trouble, with water everywhere. It's many years since it last happened, and the drain is more folklore than discoverable fact. It must also be curved.

The bonus is that a pair of moorhens couldn't believe their luck and colonised the swollen pond. They haven't been seen here for years either. People said, "You must ring up Chick'n." I found him in the book under the name Blockbusters and discovered that he is known as Chick'n because when he was at school the other boys had blue blazers but he wore a brown jacket. They called him Brown Chicken as he stood out from the flock.

He is really Dave Folkard and he arrived instantly with his van full of pumps, probes, hoses and rods, and in among them was his trumpet. He explained that the only time

he felt able to practise was when deep in the country, annoying no one, while waiting for the water to start flowing. He also, I learned, plays the keyboard and electric guitar, country-and-western style. But his hobby used to be (as he told me when I warned him about wading too far into the pond) deep-sea diving.

He began work as a garden boy at a big house and still looks after a few old people's gardens just for pleasure. Then he went to work for the district council, where he was in demand for another of his attributes, which he then demonstrated: looking for the lost drain, his water-divining rods twitched convincing.

Then he set up on his own, unblocking drains and sewers, pumping out flooded basements, pressurejetting and sump emptying. But what he likes doing nowadays is painting. He started using bicycle enamels for action portraits of the Ipswich speedway champions. Then he moved on to oils and aircraft pictures. "They always notice," he said, "if you've got the details wrong."

When the pressure is off and the phone isn't ringing, he enjoys taking over the kitchen. His wife doesn't altogether welcome this, as his philosophy is to use every surface of the stove and every inch of the oven while baking a great bout of pies, puddings and dumplings. "Suppose you get called out?" I asked. "Well," he said, "I just leave everything simmering till I get back. When you're working on your own you have to pick up the knack of keeping several jobs going at once."

As he rolled up his lengths of second-hand fireman's hose, he gave his parting advice. "When you've got time on your hands," he said, "just dig a few holes, here and over there. If you bury a few old bits of plastic pipe just to let the water trickle through, you won't get any more trouble."

All I'm waiting for is the time when I get time on my hands.

43. Colin Ward embraces the metropolitan intelligentsia

No group of antagonists excites a more pronounced snarl from the ideologists who shape the opinions of the current government than the effete left-wingers who in their view, dominate the climate of education in the metropolis. Mention the ILEA or the LSE and they froth with rage and contempt.

The animosity is hilariously misplaced, of course. The LSE, for a start, has for years been the seedbed of market economists. The ILEA is not the nest of enlightenment its defenders have been obliged to present it as. But it does employ some remarkable teachers, almost in spite of its bureaucracy.

I've mentioned before a dominant memory from my years at the then Wandsworth Technical College. When questioned about formative influences, the students on day-release from employment frequently mentioned a handful of teachers at schools like Wandsworth, Mayfield, Elliot and Southfields. You can hardly expect any teenager to

ha e a good word to say for his/her schooling, but the names that cropped up were always those of teachers of English, art, drama and dance, and music.

That's how I learned that the arts really *a re* the basis of education, and I actually met some of these mentors, like Maurice Copus or Russell Burgess, who had made such a mark on their classes.

One of them was Susan Downes from Southfields School, who has taught art and drama for longer than she cares to remember in London schools, oblivious of all those influences that are said to make teaching impossible. I'd like to see any of the smug right-wing philosophers of education lasting 17 years in inner-London schools.

So it was a tonic when the parental generation of the Downes family dropped in on us last week. I well remember the day when her husband David (professor of social administration at LSE) came to talk to my class of electrical installation apprentices and concluded that they were as able to grasp sociological concepts as his own post-graduates.

Looking for a common factor in the Downes's contribution to the education industry' in London, I have to grab at awkward phrases like "a humane self-awareness", which aren't included in Mr Baker's National Curriculum. Generations of students, for example, have been reared on David Downes's book *The Delinquent Solution* (1966) which had the nerve to show, with impeccable documentation, how the behaviour we stigmatise as delinquency was a rational response to the situation of the urban young. Everything that has happened since reinforces the message.

The bright new sociologists of deviance from those days have followed a variety of paths, but Downes has been faithful to the tradition of careful, unsensational research. His latest book could be worth many millions of pounds to the Home Office and the taxpayer, if only we could be persuaded to listen. Called *Contrasts in Tolerance* (see *NS&S* 4 Nov 88) it shows how an escalation of criminal prosecutions has had opposite results in Britain and Holland. As everyone knows, our prison population has doubled. In Holland it has been halved.

Praise or blame has to rest squarely on the judiciary. In Britain, a learned judge can use prison as a sump for every social nuisance. In Holland, there have been intense efforts to find alternatives to incarceration or to get prisoners out quickly.

The day the Downes came was a reminder that there are other dimensions to the political debate than the contrast between socialist bureaucracy and entrepreneurial initiative. Right across the spectrum of social policy there's a network of quietly unflappable and certainly unshockable people trying to insert common humanity into the system, whether it's the education machine or the criminal justice juggernaut.

Naturally, I'm sorry that the good and the wise haven't been as influential as I would have hoped. On the other hand, defending their own particular corners, they have shown an extraordinary staying-power.

44. Colin Ward enjoys the Lloyd Loom revival

Everything gets a "relaunch" nowadays, from ailing journals to the DSS's failed Family Credit Scheme. At least the one I went to was genuine. It was celebrating the birth of Lloyd Loom furniture and if you've forgotten what that was, think of auntie's lightweight occasional chairs that refused to wear out, even in the garden.

My walking-on part in its saga was that when I was 161 measured up the factory of W Lusty & Sons at Bromley-by-Bow, devastatingly bombed the previous year, where ammunition boxes were being made amid the ruins. After the war I made the drawings for the rebuilt bending ovens and drying kilns, ready for an earlier Lloyd Loom revival.

That's how I got to know the five Lusty brothers. Will, Arch, Jim, Frank and Harry, who, with hindsight, epitomise that inner city industry whose death everyone now laments.

In 1908 an American manufacturer, Marshall B Lloyd, patented a process of spinning kraft paper made from wood pulp around a galvanised wire spine, forming a tough, flexible material that could be woven on a loom and fitted onto a bentwood frame. He used it for baby carriages. In 1922 Lusty's, who were packing case makers in Upper North Street, Poplar, bought the rights to the patent and started making furniture in a series of old factories between Empson Street and the Limehouse Cut.

It was a gamble. The weaving machinery had to be imported. Bentwood technique had to be learnt. In a densely populated district of casual work, new skills had to be picked up by dockers, draymen and their sons and daughters. And the formula actually worked.

The fact that the chairs and tables produced were both very strong and very light meant that they were bought in bulk by grand hotels, by Butlins, and endless homes of the 1930s. The ocean liner *Empress of India* was entirely furnished with Lloyd Loom. So was the doomed airship R100. Lusty's finally closed in 1968, and the demise of the firm has been accompanied by every kind of irony.

Lloyd Loom furniture went through the same metamorphosis as any other artefact. It was at first despised because it was cheap and advertised in the popular press, and because it wasn't "genuine" bamboo, wicker or rattan. The makers claimed that it was superior to all of them.

It then became quaint or amusing, and so very 1930s. Then it became desirable and collectable. Its very durability meant that there was a lot about. The Lustys made short runs of many designs, and prices have shot up in the second-hand market. In Buckinghamshire there is a Lloyd Loom restorer, Graham Mancha. In London there is a Lloyd Loom historian, Lee Curtis, and in in Chipping Camden, Geoffrey Lusty (son of Jim) and Sarah Lusty (granddaughter of Will) have recommenced production.

For their celebration at the Futon Factory in the Balls Pond Road, they had taken the trouble to bring dozens of old employees with a host of memories to swap about factory life in Poplar and Bromley-by-Bow in the twenties and thirties. There was Mr Billing who started there at 14 and 12s6d a week, and Mr Barber, the union steward,

who was paid by his mates when they took him out of the shop to argue, and by the firm when they called on him.

I had glimpsed the days when Bromley-by-Bow and Poplar were hard and tough urban villages, but villages all the same. The sting in the tail came when Geoffrey Lusty explained the financial viability of the Lloyd Loom revival. The patent had expired and his firm in Gloucestershire employs another to weave and cut the material, which is containerised and send to Indonesia, made up on bentwood and sent back here.

Lusty's village industry, begun when granddad began making boxes for the Billingsgate fish-porters and crates for shippers and exporters, is now part of a global village. I hope, just for the sake of the Indonesian equivalent of Mr Billing and Mr Barber, that the enterprise pays off.

45. Colin Ward cuts the bogey woman syndrome down to size

Since both supporters and opponents are mesmerised by the thought that the decade of Thatcher has brought fundamental changes to Britain, I wanted to find people whose lives had been unchanged, just to reassure us that the antics of our rulers are not the most important factors in our lives.

The rich are evidently richer and there are more of them. The poor are evidently poorer and there are more of them too, but the kind of people I know tend to be among the low-income, small-spending, self-employed; prudent and frugal, paying their way as best they can.

They ought to be the ideal Thatcher-fodder, but they are too intelligent, and maybe too creative, to identify with stock-market manipulators and property speculators. What totally revolts them is the spectacle of service monopolies like electricity or the water supply investing millions in advertising as if they were selling soap or potato crisps.

But their creative scepticism extended to the opposition too, with its lack of creative alternatives. They reminded me that in elevating the Prime Minister to the status of Bogeywoman, the left is the victim of its own propaganda. In at least six areas the Thatcher decade is the culmination, not the contradiction, of trends that were already visible.

1. Long before Thatcher, unemployment was reaching what were seen as unacceptable levels.

2. Long before Thatcher, the finances of the NHS were in a state of permanent crisis, and its reorganisation, advised by the consultants McKinsey's, was admitted by the "experts" they employed to have been a disaster.

3. Long before Thatcher, council housing was in a mess and council provision of new dwellings had reached a post-war low.

4. Long before Thatcher, a Labour secretary of state was chopping local authority spending and warning councils that "the party's over".

5. Long before Thatcher, Labour ministers like Dennis Healey and Edmund Dell were advocating monetarist budgetary policies.

6. Long before Thatcher, James Callaghan initiated a "Great Debate" on education, foreshadowing a National Curriculum, while the Manpower Services Commission (another pre-Thatcher body) was recommending the integration of schooling with training for work.

My informants have seen superheroes come and go, and don't spend their time reading political gossip. They know that the only difference between the Thatcher regime and the preceding one is that policies they adopted shamefacedly, or by stealth, or at the dictate of the International Monetary Fund, are now pushed through blatantly and triumphantly, and described as major reforms.

Our ruler has made so many enemies within her own party that some kind of palace revolution is more likely to supplant her than a change of political complexion. But the independently minded people are aware that having inflated the Bogeywoman, her successors won't have much more than a handful of slogans to replace her.

After the national sigh of relief, will come the moment when the next lot gulp and realise that they are now in charge. They will then bring out an endless stream of excuses to explain how all the problems they blamed on her will still be with us, and why nothing much can be done at the moment to rectify any complaint.

Will they abolish the poll tax? Will they renationalise this or that? Just what changes will they make to the workings of the NHS or DSS? And just how will they set about reducing homelessness and joblessness? What particular steps will they take to ensure that policies are made locally rather than in Whitehall?

People I talk to manage their lives as best they can. They are too wise to believe that the Bogeywoman is responsible for our problems and too sophisticated to believe in her solutions, some of which just make them worse, and some of which are grotesquely irrelevant. They aren't scouring the horizon for someone to vote for—because they know all too well that it is the politicians who have made politics irrelevant.

46. Colin Ward celebrates Floradora

Mooching through a brand new shopping mall in West Yorkshire last week and seeing the cascades of philodendrons and rhoicissis tumbling down from the balcony, all the usual naive questions went through my head. How did they get the plants

growing so luxuriantly so quickly? How could the slender cantilevered floor support that weight of soil?

Then the scene clicked into place. They were artificial plants growing in self-sealing polystyrene. But you must have shared my experience, finding yourself in an office, restaurant, hotel or shop and furtively reaching out to finger the foliage to discover whether it was real or simulated.

Just how does that experience alter your feelings about your surroundings? Wilfred Blunt, the author of the definitive book on *The Art of Botanical Illustration,* tells an engaging anecdote from a century ago about the biologist Herbert Spencer who bought artificial flowers and carefully arranged them to decorate his drawing room:

To a friend who said (in a tone of unutterable disgust), "Whoever would suppose that Herbert Spencer could have anything but real flowers in his house!" Spencer replied, "Pooh! Real flowers would want constant replenishing." And pointing to a landscape painting he added, "Why in the world, now, do you object to artificial flowers in a room any more than to an artificial landscape?"

We could argue endlessly about his view. But while everyone likes flowers and foliage in the internal landscape, it is often asking too much of nature to expect plants to survive in the too high or too low light levels imposed by most indoor environments, any more than they can survive in low, or more usually, high temperatures. Nor can builing users accommodate the sheer weight of the necessary soil, and they certainly can't provide the labour for picking off dead flowers and collecting dead leaves.

What you do at home is your own affair, but in a public space you have to adapt to the situation that makes interior planting possible. At Kings Norton, outside Birmingham, I met a woman who has taken all these issues to heart.

Elizabeth Galloway is a landscape architect whose particular expertise has been in the upgrading of allotment sites into leisure gardens. Birmingham has some impressive examples of her success, much appreciated by the plotholders, and in the expansive seventies her expertise was in great demand.

But the problem she found elsewhere was that half a dozen councils, while enthusiastically hiring her wisdom at agreed fees, then showed an endless reluctance to pay the bills.

It's a common enough experience. ICI's invoice is paid on the spot, but the small supplier or adviser is kept waiting for ever in the knowledge that no-one can afford to sue.

Liz Galloway gulped and moved to a market where the clients actually pay. Trading as Floradora, she became a supplier and maintainer of artificial planting and found herself loaded with work. The customers were as aware as anyone else of the crudity of the plastic plants of the sixties and vaguely realised that there were better things available from the Far East, where artificial flowers have been made for a thousand years. They had also learned that the wisdom we patronise as "flower arrangement" is a branch of aesthetics we notice only when absent, as it often is.

So Floradora nosed out suppliers in Hong Kong and Singapore of very sophisticated polyester silk plants, and found her own outlets for her expertise. She loyally attended all the courses about "running your own small business", but had to pick up the hard way the difficult distinction between the jobs that are appreciated, and the ones which use up ingenuity and endless work but aren't financially viable.

Take a look, in central Birmingham, at the vast difference between doing it badly and doing it well.

47. Colin Ward supports plots against the Bishop

The Bishop of Durham is a favourite hate figure because he has the extraordinary honesty to say in public what any theologian will say in private conversation: that the accumulation of supernatural tales about Jesus, the virgin birth, the resurrection and the ascension, aren't really "true", but are myths invented to explain larger truths to simple people.

He is thus regarded as a subversive influence by Our Leader, in whose hands, hilariously, lies the appointment of bishops in the Anglican church. This in itself earns him a certain sympathy from ordinary unbelievers like you and me. But, sad to say, he has revealed that he, too, is a worshipper of the great god Market Forces.

In Durham, in the lee of the wonderfully-placed cathedral, there is a site that has been used for allotment gardens for 130 years. It is glebe land, meaning that its income is used for the benefit of the clergy. A bright entrepreneur proposes to purchase the land for redevelopment, and the Bishop, instead of insisting that his company (Church of England plc) is concerned with other issues than selling to the highest bidder, declares that it has a duty to realise its assets.

Don't take my word for this. If you listen to Radio 4 on 14 and 16 May to the programme *Regional Network* compiled by David Clayton and Neal Walker, you can hear him explaining his point of view. It is no different from that of any other controller of a speculative goldmine.

Ruefully, Harold Todd, chairman of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, warns members that: "Unfortunately, these days too many residential development firms are looking for land to build on and all too often allotment sites appear to them as a cheap source of land. They can apply to the local planning authority for outline planning permission for residential development, without informing either the owners or occupiers of the land, and once this outline planning permission has been granted there is little that can be done to save the site."

He is all too right. In the morass of allotment law, sites are classified as statutory or temporary. The first category is protected and the approval of central government is needed for any change of use. It was never thought necessary to give statutory protection to church-owned sites as our predecessors believed that this particular landlord would always act in the public interest. But quite apart from an unrecorded diminu-

tion of temporary sites, which may have been there for a century or more, 51 acres of statutory allotment land was lost forever between 1 January and 30 November 1988.

The loss is happening everywhere, as much in little Yorkshire or Berkshire market towns as in urban sites. Mrs D F Randell, of the East Midlands Allotments Panel, explains how the scales are loaded against the objector. Reading an announcement in the local paper, objectors have to go, in working hours, to the other side of town to "view the plans" in a remote planning office, neglecting everything including their livelihoods to oppose the paid professions on the developers' sites. "Oppose and organise, that's the next step. Fine, so who on your committee knows how to type? How do the funds stand for stationery and postage stamps? Who has access to a duplicator or even a printer? Who has the time to distribute door-to-door publicity, lobby councillors, write to the local papers, book the local hall, call and chair a public meeting?"

Allotment holders don't. Nor have they access to figures about the demand for new private housing in their area. Nor have they been prepared to see themselves as selfish squatters on land which could make others rich.

Does it matter? The demand for allotments fluctuates every decade. And it is very easy for a developer to claim that a site is underused and ripe for improvement. The point is that selling land to the highest bidder is destroying, not just today but in perpetuity, the ancient right of citizens to grow for themselves.

48. Colin Ward ponders the roofless young

Knowing that I could spend my life just getting to know the place where I live, I think it's pointless to go anywhere unless I really can't evade it or unless someone else is paying. So it's a shock to reflect that in the past year I've been to eight British, six American, one German and four Italian cities. What could I possibly learn from this frenetic travelling?

Well, I watch out for several indicators, the most obvious of which is the accessibility and the price of public transport. Is it available and cheap? Another is working-class housing: how does it differ from the rest, is it well-maintained, is it way out there in the hinterland where nobody except the residents ever goes? Yet another thing to watch for is the evidence of a busy, informal and unofficial economy. But the final one is inevitably that of beggars in the street.

In the truly poor cities where I've never been, they tend to be children, importuning everyone. When they're not around you know that you really are in a police state. In France or Italy they tend to be worn and ravaged old people, holding out a silent hand. But in Philadelphia, just about the richest city I've ever visited, there were more beggars per yard of the revitalised, regenerated city centre around Market Street than I have met in a lifetime. I would say that they were mostly in the 20–55 age range, and they held out placards to explain just why they needed your small change.

Whenever I go to London I'm aware of an endlessly growing number of people cadging money in the streets. And the most obvious are not pathetic old winos, but people in their teens and early twenties. Plenty of them belong to an age-range calculatedly cut out from social security benefits, as in theory they might have signed up for training placements which turn out not to exist. Or they are even younger, on account of the gap between the age at which you get out of local authority care and the point when the adult world assumes any responsibility.

Nick Hardwick of Centrepoint in London makes a chilling comment on the way we have hedged around the social payouts with such restrictions that it's simpler to ignore them. Warning us all, he says that once such a situation exists, "it's impossible to get the street culture genie back into the bottle".

With a commendable lack of commonsense realism the body called Charity Projects commissioned Danny Levine, with long experience of coping with the single homeless, to report on how the footloose and roofless young could change their lives by housing themselves. What an absurd proposition! Haven't we all read that they're into drugs, Aids, prostitution, nicking car radios and everything else reprehensible?

Levine quietly set about the task and has just produced his report *(Building young lives: Self-build and young single homeless people,* £3.50 from the National Federation of Housing Associations, 175 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8UP). He burrowed through the obstacle race we have set up to prevent anyone from doing anything, and looked beyond the fact that land speculation has made sites too valuable to be useful. The possibility really does exist, he finds, drawing upon the experience of groups like Zenzele in Bristol, Giroscope in Hull, or the Walter Segal Self-Build Trust.

It really can happen, but unless there are people around to initiate projects, it probably won't. This is Levine's careful message, just as it is that of Steve Platt who introduced it with the comment that "something can be done and there is something that everyone can contribute towards doing it".

One thing I did learn on my travels. Everywhere I went, whether it was Klaus the Fiddler, fighting in the district court for the rights of the roofless young to recolonise central Cologne, or the People's Homesteading Group in north Baltimore, battling to twist the legislation to help the young homeless as well as the smart folk, there is an endless need for the city sophisticates to bring their knowhow to the lost and bewildered young. The importance of the Levine Report is that it suggests how.

49. Colin Ward bibliographises an alternative European diversity

The only thing more depressing than the Prime Minister's attempt to "do a Falklands" in exploiting popular xenophobia about Europe, is the ignorance of her opponents. Federalism is an immensely important principle of human organisation. I

have always assumed (since, whoever's in power, we are governed by graduates), that politicians have read the great classic on this theme, de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America.*

Maybe Mrs Thatcher didn't read him because he was French, and maybe the left didn't read him because he was a conservative. But there is another immensely sympathetic, though ignored, literature about how to do it well and how to do it disastrously. I should just mention Leopold Kohr's *The Breakdown of Nations* (Routledge 1954, 1987) and loan Bowen Rees's *Government by Community* (Charles Knight, 1971). The reason why you've never heard of either of these serious discussions of localism and federalism is that they weren't thought worth reviewing in the journals that you and I read.

I belong, myself, to an even more way-out tradition: that of the anarchists. What could they possibly have to say about European unity? The answer, which may surprise you, is that the classical anarchist thinkers of the last century developed a rich and relevant federalist philosophy.

In 1863 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon published his book *Du Principe Federatif,* urging, from the example of the Swiss Confederation, a society in which "the organs of administration are local and be as near the direct control of the people as possible. Above that level the confederation becomes less an organ of administration than of coordination among local units. Thus the nation will be a confederation of regions, and Europe, a confederation of confederations." (Richard Vernon's English version, *The Principle of Federation,* appeared from the University of Toronto in 1979.)

In 1867 came Michael Bakunin, arguing that "to achieve the triumph of liberty, justice and peace in the international relations of Europe, and to render civil war impossible among the various peoples which make up the European family, only a single course lies open: to constitute the United States of Europe." *(Selected Writings,* Cape 1973). And: "Just because a region has formed part of a state, even by voluntary accession, it by no means follows that it incurs any obligation to remain tied to it for ever. The right of free union and equally free secession comes first and foremost among all political rights; without it, confederation would be nothing but centralisation in disguise."

Another Russian anarchist remarked 70 years ago, in words his country's present ruler should be heeding: "Imperial Russia is dead and will never be revived. All the attempts to bring together the constituent parts of the Russian Empire, such as Finland, the Baltic provinces, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Siberia and others, under a central authority are doomed to certain failure. The future of what was the Russian Empire is directed towards a federation of independent units." (Camillo Berneri: *Peter Kropotkin, His Federalist Ideas,* Freedom Press 1943).

I'm sorry that the politicians don't read the same books as I do. Because what I've learned from Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin is that the prerequisite of international federation is local autonomy. Way back in the 1830s, de Tocqueville put the writing on the wall for the Thatcher government when he said: "I do not think one

could find a single inhabitant of New England who would recognise the right of the government of the state to control matters of purely municipal interest."

She, for demagogic reasons, applies this doctrine to the Eurocrats in Brussels. But it relates far more devastatingly to her government. De Tocqueville spelled it out for everyone. "The strength of free peoples," he found, "resides in the local community. Local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they put it within the people's reach." This is just what we can't bash into the heads of our illiterate rulers.

50. Colin Ward meets the Soviet elite

I've lived a sheltered life and the only Soviet citizens I have ever known were ex-Soviet citizens, exiles embittered by their sufferings, or Latvians or Ukrainians, implacably hostile to Moscow.

So, last month, we were excited by the news that two dozen top-level Soviet technocrats were coming to the next village, and that we were welcome to provide beds for a pair of them. The visit was the brain-child of Denis Pym, who is a kind of consultant dissident at the London Business School where the Russians were on a short course. He is a deeply subversive advocate of what we variously describe as the domestic, informal or alternative economy (see his book *The Employment Question,* Freedom Press 1986), and felt that the visitors should encounter other aspects of our common life besides Rank-Xerox, IBM and ICI.

Brilliantly, the Pym family set up a memorable bout of truly Russian hospitality in a barn, with our local musicians playing Russian tunes to set their feet tapping, while Sergei and Mikhail did their ragtime and Beatles improvisations and recalled 'UB40's visit to Leningrad. Deep into the early hours of the morning we sat at home over the whisky discussing the implications of the Jugoslav, the Hungarian and the Thatcherite economic models.

Talking to our guests we learned that the change in business language so evident in Britain, where for example, British Rail now describes passengers as customers and British Telecom calls its services a product, is coming into use in the Soviet Union, where the financial profitability of the individual undertaking is becoming the paramount standard by which it is judged.

Poor old V runs a foundry south of Moscow with 4.000 employees. What is to happen when technical improvements make a large proportion of them redundant? He was confident that after three months' severance pay, they could be re-employed somewhere else. But where? Other visitors were less sure that there would be jobs for the large number of military officers made redundant by reductions in the armed forces, for example.

S, who was very much a westerniser, was young, a physicist, formidably well informed and well educated, delighted that the London Business School is close to the

mythical home of Sherlock Holmes. He's a keen reader of Frederick Forsyth, Galsworthy and Graham Greene. His grandfather was executed in some pointless purge. He asks why.

We met a Soviet business manager who actually has a signed photograph of Margaret Thatcher on his office wall, and we also met Y who insisted that the problems of Soviet industry revolve around a lack of incentives in the labour force and management accountability. Worker-shareholding is the solution he offers. There were obvious disagreements among our visitors, a reflection of the remarkable pace of change in the Soviet Union. Plenty of them spoke of the inertia imposed by 140 (or was it 400?) ministries in Moscow.

After the excitement was over, I felt a quite unsought depression from our brief encounter. One reason was the sheer fragility of the liberal reforms introduced by one man who happened to have worked his way to the top of the hierarchy. The other was that the burden of change is going to be suffered, not by the pleasant people we met, but by ordinary working families who have been obliged to implement every lurch in policy from one governmental line to another, for more than a lifetime. I've seen the miles of empty steel mills on the line from Rotherham to Sheffield and in the Mon Valley outside Pittsburgh. When the Soviet managerial moguls demand that quality specialisation should take precedence over quantity production they are probably right. But *they* don't have to suffer the consequences of their shift in perspective. We learned nothing to indicate that these drastic changes will be made any more painlessly in the Soviet Union than in the United States or Britain.

51. Colin Ward likes short books—and long ones sometimes

When Sean French reviewed John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany* in these pages he called it "an almost alarmingly bulky book". Waldemar Januszczak, talking face to face with the author on TV, dared to remark that "Three quarters of the way through one of your novels is a long, long way."

It's a common complaint. Back in the forties there was a character in the art world in London, Jack Bilbo, who ran a gallery. Years before he had written the book called *I carried a gun for Al Capone* and he took it into his head to write an autobiography. It was privately printed in large type on thick paper and had a fat red padded binding. It was alarmingly bulky.

He sent a copy to Herbert Read, a revered critic in those days, and poor old put-upon Read screwed himself up to return it with a note that said: "Dear Mr Bilbo, Thank you for sending me your book. It's such a pity that I only like small books."

We all know how he felt. In the last century when novels were inordinately long and were usually published in three volumes, Charles Darwin, who did all his reading in

bed, would reach for his jack-knife that had accompanied him on the *Beagle* and slit awkwardly large books down the middle for easier handling.

Fiction is of course under the control of the writer (though novelists tell me this is an illusion), so prudent authors keep it down to 80,000 words. But if their reputation or their publishers' expectations make it a potential block-busting best-seller, they are positively encouraged to go on and on. And there is the odd book that the reader finishes with acute regret that it doesn't have just a few more chapters.

With factual books it's different. The research dictates the length, though I've been told endlessly by all the obvious firms that this or that proposal is marvellously interesting but more suitable to a Sunday magazine article than an actual book. I too have had the humiliation of cutting a book down to size on the publisher's orders. Snip, snip, and out goes that precious nugget of hard-won information, scrupulously gathered. I put these bits aside in the vain hope that some-one will some day commission a book out of the left-overs. I have also read books where it is obvious that the poor author was itching to tell us more, but had been forcibly truncated.

On the other hand I'm always reading books which, with intense sympathy for the author. I just find too long. From a sense of duty I have just finished Alan Stanton's *Invitation to Self Management* (Dab Hand Press, £6.95). The cover says "This book will change the way you feel and think about your workplace", so it is important. It tells how the Newcastle Family Service Unit changed from being a conventional hierarchy to a co-operative, self-managed body. The trouble is it is 384 pages long.

I don't deny that long books have their uses. Panicking at Heathrow at my folly in bringing only boring books, I bought Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities.* I'd got halfway by Pittsburgh and thankfully put it aside in America where I travelled by train and could look out of the window. I would have finished it on the way back, but for the fact that my neighbour was a bankrupt and voluble plant hire contractor from West Virginia who was picking himself up, dusting himself down, and starting all over again. His tale was more salutary than Tom Wolfe's and I haven't had the heart to pick up the book since.

But the best story about long books comes from Ashville, North Carolina. Tom Wolfe's namesake, Thomas Wolfe, came from there, and his mother had a boarding-house. When the oral historians were compiling their classic *Our Appalachia,* they learned that for this reason the family was looked down upon. But what about her son the novelist? The old lady next door replied. "I've read parts of *Look Homeward, Angel* and I had a complaint that my father made about a book once. He said he didn't like the ending. I said, 'What's wrong with the ending?' He said, 'It's too far from the beginning.'"

52. Colin Ward finds a belated change of educational heart in the Tory shires

We were met to discuss rural problems, and the scandal of village primary school closure, raised here more than once, was brought up once again. Lord Y. was worried that moves to make schools responsible for their own budgets would provide yet another excuse for shutting them down.

I thought him wrong since anyone involved knows how accountancy can prove just what the paymasters want proved. But the matter was settled by a very experienced County Planning Officer. "Don't worry," he said, "it's going to drop off the agenda in a flash." His reason was that village school closures were Tory vote losers, and in my county at least, he has turned out to be right.

In 1986 Kenneth Baker, Secretary of State for Education, issued a draft circular telling local education authorities that only in exceptional circumstances should primary schools with less than 60 pupils be retained because they would lack "the necessary range of mix of teacher experience and curricular expertise". It was widely used, just as he knew it would, to justify the closure of this or that rural school among the 1,500 to 2,000 affected.

Then on the eve of the 1987 General Election, after the councils had made their decisions, Mr Baker withdrew the draft circular, saying that his Department's views were "...not to be interpreted as narrowly prescriptive or as providing a set of benchmarks for the closure of schools". He placated the rural voters with the remark that "I recognise the wide degree of support that many rural schools command within their local communities."

Our local voters thought there was new hope for their school when the minister remarked on the radio that "Closing a school does not save as much as you'd think. The local authority has to expand another school or lay on transport." Exactly what they had been arguing. If they believed they had converted him they were mistaken. For the moment the general election was over, Mr Baker issued a new circular, saying nothing of the kind and telling local authorities that "Schools of any size with a substantial proportion of surplus primary places incur disproportionately high unit costs in maintaining under-used capacity."

My own councillor, Alan Crockett, first resigned from the Education Committee, and then failed to seek re-election, because he could not stomach the council's policy on school closure. The county council chairman, Sir MacDonald Miller, lost his seat since his local Conservative Association refused to re-adopt him because he had sanctioned the closure policy. The Conservative candidate who succeeded him was defeated in the county elections last month by an independent candidate who had led an unsuccessful struggle to save the threatened Reydon High School.

Quick as a flash, on the eve of the county elections, the chairwoman of the education committee told the press that further closures of small schools in Suffolk was "unlikely."

It was reported that "She attributed this change of direction to the success of groupings of between four and ten small schools, using shared expertise such as a science or music teacher... Adopting a county-wide approach to this, by supporting these kinds of initiatives, was now seen as an alternative to school closures and a way of delivering the new' national curriculum in small schools."

This is a neat bit of double-talk, concealing the political necessity that has made all the arguments previously used for the closure of my neighbouring Polstead School out of date. Those local parents who wore themselves out in the struggle to keep it open will want to know whether the closure next summer, confirmed by Mr Baker, and the expansion of another school at a cost of £250,000, are really still to happen.

No foundations have been dug, no contracts let. Couldn't Suffolk County Council, bereft of its former chairman, just climb down an inch or two, in a gentle, neighbourly, recognition of political realities? And if not, why not?

53. Colin Ward salutes Leopold Kohr and the economy of beans and dumplings

Leopold Kohr likes to tell the story of Cesar Andreu Iglesias. He was Secretary General of the Communist Party of Puerto Rico, an unpaid post, and supported himself in an ordinary humble job. In the McCarthy period of the early 50s, the House Committee on Un-American Activities in faraway Washington lost Iglesias his job. Instead of surrendering to "the masochistic joys of self-righteous grief', he moved to a mountain top, lived on rice and beans and singlehandedly built himself a house.

With a house and a rice-and-bean diet but no job he spent the next six months writing a book which brought him honour and prestige; and "a succession of bourgeois literary prizes that opened the door to more congenial sources of employment." It's a tale bound to appeal to Kohr, who is 80 this year, and has spent his adult lifetime as a teacher of economics. He subverts the conventional wisdom of his subject by presenting the unfashionable virtues of self-help *and* community mutual aid.

A similar message was preached by Proudhon, who wrote of his childhood in the mountains of Jura, "In my father's house, we breakfasted on maize porridge; at midday we ate potatoes; in the evening, soup, and that every day of the week. And despite the economists who praise the English diet, we, with that vegetarian feeding, were fat and strong. Do you know why? Because we breathed the air of our fields and lived from the produce of our own cultivation."

Kohr was born in the village of Oberndorf, near Salzburg, in the doomed years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In that city, as a schoolboy in the bleak days after the First World War, he learned that "though a dumpling with a little sauce, a slice of stone-hard black peasant bread three weeks old, or a bowl of lentil soup, are not much to look at, they can form both an adequate and an enjoyable meal."

He was a newspaperman on the losing side in the Spanish war and emigrated across the Atlantic. After the war, visiting his native village, he found that his old neighbours had survived once more on a dumpling diet. "Aware that it costs as much to subsist in idleness as at work, they began by diverting their under-exercised labour power from analytical tavern oratory to the rebuilding of their houses. They added floors or constructed new homes altogether." Dumpling-fed labour power and dumpling-produced raw materials had enabled them by the use of their own direct labour to reach a *Wiener Schnitzel* level of affluence "far beyond the reach of the high-cost *financial* resources available to the middle class." They built their own *social* capital.

A small city-man, Kohr spent decades as Professor of Economics at the University of Puerto Rico, moved to become a humble extra-mural tutor at University College, Aberystwyth, and now lives in Gloucester. As the Puerto Ricans left by the boatful for the slums of New York, Kohr preached in vain in the local Sanjuan press the philosophy of small-scale renewal by the inhabitants.

It's a nice birthday tribute that a Welsh publisher has just produced a stylish collection of those articles from Sanjuan, *The Inner City, From Mud to Marble* (£4.95 from Y Lolfa Cyf, Talybont, Dyfed SY24 5HE). Why bother, since no-one took Kohr's advice back in Puerto Rico? Because he was ahead of his time and credits readers with sense to see that "the problems and solutions illustrated against the background of Buen Consejo, La Puntilla, or San Juan are the same as those of Boston, Calcutta, Pimlico, or the docklands of Gloucester and London."

In a week that sees the publication at a local level of Douglas Porteous's *Planned to Death: The annihilation of a place called Howdendyke* (Manchester UP), and at a global level of Hernando de Soto's *The Other Path* (I.B. Tauris), about the importance of the informal economy in the third world, Kohr's paradoxical common sense turns out to be not just timely, but even newsworthy. I hope he celebrates with a really tasty bean and potato stew, with dumplings.

54. Colin Ward praises quiet philosophers

Forty-one years ago I began to receive, on an exchange basis for whatever I was editing, an eight-page soberly printed weekly from Los Angeles called *Manas.* A note in each issue explained that the title came from a common root suggesting "man" or "the thinker", and that the paper was "a journal of independent inquiry, concerned with study of the principles which move world society on its present course, and with search for contrasting principles."

The format never varied. There was a front page piece, an inside editorial, a feature called "Review", one called "Children and Ourselves" and another called "Frontiers". Nothing was signed, since *"Manas* wishes to present ideas and viewpoints, not personalities".

When I ceased to edit anything I still received it, two months late as it came by surface mail, thanks to the kindness of its editor, Henry Geiger. I only found out who he was through occasional correspondence both ways over permission to quote.

Readers quickly learned which of the thinkers of the past most influenced him. The first was Socrates (just as it was for the late I F Stone). He was followed by Lao Tse, Buddha and the authors of the Hindu scriptures, a series of Renaissance authors like Pica della Mirandola, plenty of later heroes: Jefferson, Tom Paine, Thoreau, Ortega y Gasset and Gandhi; and a host of contemporaries: Arthur Morgan, Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil, Abraham Maslow, John Holt, Paul Goodman, and E F Schumacher.

The list of names indicated Henry's mental map of what was worth thinking about. On 16 February this year, I got the last issue of 1988 with an announcement, quiet and anonymous as ever, that publication was ceasing, and thanking helpers and friends: "We can think of no more satisfying career, yet no work that is more demanding." I airmailed Henry at once to pay my tribute to his endless circulation of good ideas, but later heard from his colleagues that he had died on 15 February, aged 80. There were no obituaries, they explained, as he wouldn't have wanted it.

Piecing fragments together I learnt that Henry had little formal education, had been in the chorus on Broadway, was a conscientious objector in World War II, and was a trade journalist and commercial printer. He had been a reporter on a weekly magazine for shopkeepers, visiting retailers and attending their conventions. Writing of himself in the third person as usual, he recalled that: "The paper he worked for had become part of the lives of these readers. But when the paper went monthly, all that changed... So when it came to starting *Manas,* this editor laid down a rule—do a weekly in order to have an impact on people's lives, or do nothing at all."

Now, before the war, in Whitechapel, David Rose pubished a paper for the clothing trade industries called *The Sewing-Machine Times.* After the war he went back to the printing shop to restart it. In the meantime, as the anarchists had found it harder and harder to get a printer during the war, they had bought the firm, with the old machinery buried in fallen ceilings. Mr Rose had the good luck to talk to my dear old friend Philip Sansom. "Sure, I'll bring out your magazine", he said, and, like Henry Geiger, he did so from 1946 to 1986. Then he retired.

But the readers, once in the mainly Jewish trades, and now in predominantly Bengali-run businesses, wrote to Dave's daughter Daphne. They said that they *missed* those editorials with their homely philosophy attempting to relate the bread-and-butter of the needle trades to a wider view of human destiny. So Philip had to be dragged back as an editorial consultant responsible for inserting a broader message. Exactly what Henry Geiger did for his American retailers and then for 41 years for readers of *Manas.*

Philip Sansom approaches his readers with the same respect both for their intelligence and for their aspirations beyond making a living. Both these anonymous editors have an important message for those of us who live by peddling words. If you start with

the assumption that your readership consists of citizens yearning to be philosophers, they'll return the compliment.

55. Colin Ward visits the house for Nicaragua

Asked what the project meant to him and the others, Johnny said: "It's a chance to live your politics, learn skills, decide your own work routines, meet a changing network of 50 to 60 people. Some even came from Leeds to help. It's been a focal point."

The house for Nicaragua began with Tod. He trained as an architect but dropped out as he didn't see any social usefulness in what he was learning. He and his wife bought a shed in Essex and slowly turned it into a house, she working days as a nurse and he on nights in a factory. It was too much, and they parted. But selling the house brought them £20,000 each.

He moved to south London in a squat that arose because the GLC had compulsorily purchased a street of old houses, dispersed the residents and left the buildings to rot, to provide for an eventual extension to an ILEA school. As demographers could have predicted, the school was not extended. In fact it has since closed. The squatters had rescued the street and like several of the best squats, became legitimised as a housing co-op.

I would rejoice that direct action had enabled them to build their own nests, but Tod is a sterner character and saw them as simply feathering those nests. "Surely," he argues, "some of the money made out of gentrifying areas like this should go somewhere really useful?" Six years ago he saw John Pilger's TV programme about Nicaragua: the hopes of its people and the obscene horror of the US government's intervention. This decided him.

He invested his particular nest-egg in buying a totally derelict two-storey 1860s house in Vauxhall, once a cobbler's shop, and set about its reconstruction with the aim of selling it and investing the proceeds in popular projects in Nicaragua on 19 July, the tenth anniversary of the Sandinista revolution. There'll be a Nicaragua Festival that day in nearby Spring Gardens, opposite the City Farm.

The house for Nicaragua won't actually be finished this week. But it will be soon. In five years of work, using the materials that the affluent society dumps in skips, Tod's team have rebuilt the house with magnificent oak doors and lovely staircases. From the dump outside Bankside Power Station they reclaimed mahogany floor blocks, each one of which has been stripped of its bitumen screed by patient volunteers.

Most of the walls have been finished by a gang of trainee women plasterers from Camden. Helen and Ruth did the balustrading. Judy made the stained glass in the kitchen. Tod has added a light and airy top floor with a balcony. The plumbing, electrics and central heating are coming along slowly.

Bluefields, Nicaragua's main Atlantic coast town (twinned with the London Borough of Lambeth) was devastated by a hurricane last October. People from the twinning

group, and from this particular project, have worked there. The money from the sale of the house will be spent on the projects there that Bluefields people think are most urgently needed.

My impression of the place? Well, just because old materials have been used, it looks as though it has always been like that. An enveloping atmosphere of mellow brightness has been brought to a building that was derelict for a decade. It's a creative transformation. If you're a likely purchaser ring Trevor at 01–693 7467, leaving your number to make an appointment to view.

What will happen to Tod when the job is done? He describes his trade as that of a joinery refurbisher, so he won't be short of work. I suspect that he'll drift into some other ruined house and will gather another bunch of helpers around him to take on another hopelessly uneconomic, but beautifully enterprising, job.

He's a one-man revolution, standing out against the spirit of Britain in the 1980s. "I like the idea of giving away a house," he told me, "and I enjoy the fact that people see it as something quite shocking and outrageous." I hope he'll go on shocking us.

56. Colin Ward watches badger-watchers watching badger-baiters

Our neighbour Corinne was thrilled to see unmistakable signs that a new family of badgers had recolonised the site. There were the piles of excavated soil, the scratch-marks, the little pits of dung, and a series of new holes leading to the sett.

Like a real enthusiast she set about an evening watch, following all the rules the badgerwatchers scold us about: treading softly, presenting no silhouette and staying down-wind, as badgers tend to rely on their ears and noses rather than their eyes. She had no luck and the nights grew chillier.

There are two kinds of badger-minded people. The first love the badger like the huntsman loves the fox. Fox-hunters enjoy braying about giving their victims a sporting chance in the chase. Badger-baiters have no such hypocrisy. They want to be sure it has no chance at all. For badgers are strongly built creatures and though content to stay out of the way and live an exemplary family life, can bite back at anything remotely their own size.

Dogs are wary. So what do badger-diggers and badger-baiters do? Years ago Rennie Bere of the Cornwall Naturalists Trust described how they would trap a badger, mutilate its jaws, set a dog against it to show that there was nothing to fear, and then encourage the dogs, all unsuspecting, to tackle their prey in the wild.

Nobody eats badgers, nobody uses badger bristles for toothbrushes or shaving-brushes any more, so they had to be accused, on sparse evidence, of killing lambs and poultry. Then in stepped the Ministry of Agriculture, claiming that badgers were carriers of bovine tuberculosis. Everyone in the badger world declares that this asser-

tion has yet to be proved. But it gave a shoddy legitimisation to the badger-diggers, badger-baiters, badger-shooters and badger-gassers. At last their sport was OK! They were public-spirited citizens.

Fortunately the manic extermination of badgers provoked a response. Not just in the 1973 Badgers Act and the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, making them a protected species, but in the formation of Badger Groups in every county. In Kent, Chris Ferris has spent 23 years watching badgers and also watching the "lampers and lurchers". They found that the animal was quickly dazzled and frozen by a bright light and consequently encouraged their dogs to run down the beam of a powerful torch.

This year the Shropshire Badger Group reported that gangs were coming from far outside the county bringing their dogs and betting heavily on them, or taking badgers away for fights elsewhere. Tom Austin of Shropshire RSPCA says that some would pay £500 for a live badger. "What people tend to forget are the terrible injuries suffered by the dogs as well."

The second group of badger-minded people are these defenders, alert to the endless threats to their habitat. When the distributor road around Penzance was doubled in width recently they were able to insist on a badger tunnel. Two photographers spent 12 hours of darkness with an automatic camera to make sure that it was being used. And when a developer proposed a deer farm at Pebmarsh in Essex and claimed that the existing badger sett threatened his livestock with tuberculosis, the Essex Badger Patrol and the Nature Conservancy Council successfully contended that the badgers must stay undisturbed.

You can hardly blame the badger-watchers for being over-pessimistic about your chance of observing them. But from everything I hear, badgers seem to be, if anything, too trusting and bold. In an absorbing diary of watching in a suburban park outside Edinburgh in the current issue of *The Countryman,* Tom Gray notes how every TV programme on badgers brings out a new surge of watchers and disturbance, but how they tolerate it all. "These urban badgers seem able to deal with unlimited pressures." A frivolous linguist friend, Charlie Tait, suggests that the coming of the Channel Tunnel will give them greater mobility, since 'badger hounds' (which is what the German term *dachshund* means) are getting rarer. *Dachs* in German originally meant 'skilled construction worker'.

Last month my wife was with a group of friends near the Lizard in Cornwall, rejoicing that plants we no longer see in the attenuated hedges of East Anglia were flowering there. It was broad daylight. There was conversation and no concealment. What could those animals frisking around possibly be? Then she saw. The same thing happened to our neighbour Corinne. One day she had a letter from the Inland Revenue that drove her into a paroxysm of frustrated anger.

She rushed out into the garden to calm down. And there of course, not at all disturbed by her, was the whole family of those elusive badgers.

57. Colin Ward frets over the Stalinisation of education

Orwell used to say that Stalin's Russia was like the family that slept in one bed. When Father turns, we all turn. Old Soviet hands would bring back tales of how the fabulously expensive electricity plant imported from the west was rusting away on site because word had come down from on high that the underground gasification of coal was the new technique for solving energy needs.

British Secretaries of State for Education are the ultimate educational Stalinists. Not merely did a Labour holder of the office decree universal comprehensive secondary schooling while educating her own daughter outside the system (just like Stalin): her Tory successor, the fumbling free-market advocate, changed everything at a stroke of the pen.

The 16-plus exams, GCE and CSE, were to be replaced by GCSE, and not just soon but at breakneck speed. Sir Keith Joseph's decision came at a time of teacher demoralisation through disputes over pay and conditions, and cuts in resources. Funds, previously denied, magically appeared to enable them to change track instantly, as the first year of GCSE pupils and their parents learned overnight.

Publishers worked overtime, changing the textbooks. DES spokesmen were trotted out, just like Squealer in *Animal Farm,* to explain that everything was going swimmingly. If only those damn teachers would all pull together.

If we must have exams, the GCSE was a good idea. This has nothing to do with Lord Joseph. It was the work of the Schools Council, one of those quangos abolished with reforming zeal by the incoming Thatcher government, only to be reconstituted with new names, carpets and furniture under direct government control. Across the curriculum the Schools Council had worked on experiments to reform the old GCE, based on the needs of the small minority of school leavers who seek university entrance. The old CSE, a sop to the rest of us, was a bit of paper not recognised in the job scramble.

In science, maths, the arts and humanities, dozens of School Council projects had tried out learning-by-doing, assessment by course-work as well as the fatal exam day, and stressed techniques of inquiry rather than the memorisation of facts and figures. Well, if it's good, said Joseph, every last school and every last child should do it this way. And by next term, too. No arguments. We're the bosses.

GCSE came in. Teachers toiled to meet the new norms. But before they'd got through the first year, Joseph was put to bed in the Lords and in came Kenneth Baker. It was like *Yes, Minister!* The high-ups of the DES and the Inspectorate got together to decide how to please the incoming Secretary of State. It was also the precise equivalent of the Politburo, since they had enough experience of the Ministry of Truth (actually Elizabeth House in York Road, put up by an architect later jailed for corruption), to

know that the incoming minister would want every British child to be taught the way he was taught. He'd made it, hadn't he?

So the National Curriculum was cooked up, unencumbered by that hangover of research and experimentation in the 1960s andl970s. Like the last attempt to electrify the citizens, it is to be implemented at breakneck speed. "No time to be lost, comrades!" as Stalin said to the Stakhanovites. Take the sciences. To get your pupils through, they must stop experimenting with samples from the local river and start memorising the table of chemical elements. You do want them to pass the test, don't you?

The principles behind GCSE will go down the memory hole, except where they paradoxically survive in the private sector. In history, pupils may be dissuaded from messing around with social or world evidence, so that they can commit to an exam paper the saga of British achievement.

The Soviet Union has a National Curriculum. Last year's history exams had to be cancelled because, with *glasnost* and the message that the official version was composed of lies, distortions and omissions, the new version has still to be written. What alarms me is the way our own smooth-tongued, gentle, educational Stalin lays down a party line and the whole panoply of educational administration willingly concurs. It's a chilling example of the way nations trickle slowly into the hands of the thought police.

As Mr Baker departs, the DES is putting out "contracts" (in market language) for the development of SATs (standard assessment tasks) for children at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16. Successful "bidders" for the millions handed out to implement the Generalissimo's views will undoubtedly modify the crudities of this approach, just as Soviet functionaries had to modify their master's prejudices to keep the system going. The results won't be as dreadful as I might have feared. They will just limit the chances of innovation and advance. Schoolchildren are automatic saboteurs. But so, fortunately, are their teachers.

58. Colin Ward is glad to have been inoculated against motormania

As Neill's ready explanation of vandalism and hooliganism was that the young men involved had been prevented from playing out their childhood. Another great Scot, Patrick Geddes, had an equally thought-provoking explanation of adult acquisitiveness and the mania to accumulate collections. He thought that retarded adults had missed out as children on the ardent gathering of "pretty things", the gloating possession and the eager quests for more. Consequently they neglected the real business of adult life, just to work through this necessary childhood phase.

When it is gone through at the appropriate time: "Later life is immunised; the mind has been as it were vaccinated: the catharsis is successful." I find this an appealing idea, simply because it applies to me.

Between the ages of 11 and 14 I collected cars. Not model cars or even car numbers, just sightings and images of cars in their infinite variety. I would sit by the side of the Southend Road on busy weekends conducting, not a traffic survey, but a search for rare models and makes, of which in pre-war days there were multitudes. It seems impossible now, but there was once a time when cars were made in every manufacturing town in Britain, Europe and America. On a good day I might see a Star, a Steyr, a Stutz or a Studebaker, a Bean, a Beardmore and several bull-nosed Morrises.

My special favourites were the cars you could identify by sound alone: the Jowett from Bradford with its two-cylinder horizontally-opposed engine, or the train-driven Trojan. At the junk shop I would buy for a penny back numbers of the *Autocar,* the *Motor* and the *Light Car & Cyclecar.* I haunted car parks for the sight of a 1928 Hudson Essex, with its wooden-spoked wheels that kept the wheelwrights of New Jersey in business long after the horses had gone.

The mania left me as quickly as it came, but it immunised me in later life, just as Geddes predicted. In adult life I have never owned or driven a motor vehicle, apart from misadventures with a dumper during the war. But I still identify cars in old movies and admire the museum models rented to the film companies today.

And the back of my head is still lumbered with this discarded childhood luggage. I can tell you how the internal combustion engine was, like so many inventions, just looking round for its inventor, until it was patented simultaneously by Karl Benz and Gottlieb Daimler in 1884, and how they got together to form Daimler-Benz.

They had to, because everywhere in foundries and cycle-shops other people had started building cars. I can even tell you how, seeking to enter the French market with finance from the Credit Lyonnais, they renamed the car after the daughter of that bank's managing director, Mercedes; or how, when their racing cars were stranded in a French Grand Prix in August 1914, one was brought to Britain to provide the basis of decades of Rolls-Royce aero engines.

My attack of motor-mania coincided with the years when the Nazi government poured huge sums into Mercedes-Benz and its rival AutoUnion. This enabled them to win all the international motor-races and to buy in all the top drivers from Britain and France. Nuvolari remained faithful to Alfa-Romeo and simply stopped winning.

They were the days when every newsreel showed Hitler being driven through cheering crowds in his six-wheeler Mercedes-Benz. I developed a hostility towards the firm, and maybe that turned me off car-collecting altogether. Once in my life I have ridden in one. It was a taxi from Ipswich. I asked the driver why he had chosen so opulent and expensive a vehicle for such a workaday job. "Because I'll always get my money back," he explained. "People have this superstition that there's something special about a Merc."

And indeed they have. Every military dictator in Latin America has one. Watch the TV news and name the car that contained Gorbachev in his journey from the airport to the government palace in Beijing, or the president of Sudan through Khartoum,

Pinochet through Santiago, Menem in Buenos Aires, or the whole lot down the Champs Elysees on 14 July.

There are plenty of posh vehicles around. Crowds of people who've arrived somewhere or other give high status to Rolls-Royce. Our local self-made entrepreneur had one, and when his fortunes temporarily failed, sold it. "Oh, it doesn't matter," he told me. "I've had one, that's all that counts," and he drove off in his new Mercedes. As for royalty, after Edward VII drove the first British-made Daimler, they stayed with that firm for half a century.

But in a world perspective it's the Mercedes-Benz that indicates that a ruler has really arrived. I always think of the Fuhrer connection and wonder at the insensitivity. "You're very obtuse," said my friend Richard down the road. "Don't you realise that *they're* the firm that makes a guaranteed bullet-proof model?"

59. Colin Ward fell in love with records too

As we're into the Silly Season I might as well confess that, apart from cars, I fell in love with records. This enthusiasm too was one stage removed from the real thing. What I really studied was record catalogues. Where I lived there was one shop, Saville Pianos, that stocked the ordinary repertoire of 78rpm 10 inch and 12 inch standards. All quite pricey, and I had no inkling of those invaluable secondhand shops in London, the Gramophone Exchange and, later, Harridges in Moor Street.

Woolworths had its own sixpenny brands, first the 7 inch *Eclipse* and then the 8 inch *Crown.* Some of its artists, like Doris Arnold or Vera Lynn, later became famous and others used pseudonyms. But it also sold for sixpence odd discs from sets issued by the big companies. (In those days the average opera needed three volumes of six records each).

So to this day I retain an over-familiarity with disconnected slices of the Verdi and Puccini operas, or of the chamber music repertoire from great quartets like the Lener (on Columbia) or the Busch (on HMV). What I pored over were the catalogues of the major companies. In the 1930s there were (besides HMV and Columbia) Parlophone, Regal-Zonophone, and the new outsider Decca, with its access to incredible European discs, as well as the strange fruit of the imported Brunswick label. I didn't know, of course, that they were all trading markets between themselves.

Studying these lists, ticking off performances I chanced to hear on the radio or on other people's records, I gathered a haphazard folklore of musical chat. I now bore my family of musicians with the precise evening in Worcester when I heard the Beecham/ Roy Henderson performance of Delius's *Sea Drift.* I can tell them of the discs where Britten plays the viola, or Elisabeth Schumann sings a single word for Lotte Lehmann, who had thoughtlessly wandered out of reach of the microphone.

Needless to say, I can recall the nice story of how when HMV's engineer played back to John McCormack his performance of a great Handel aria, the singer listened

and exclaimed, "By God, it's impossible". The mere chance hearing on the radio of singers like Conchita Supervia or Tito Schipa brings me out in a rash of superlatives. The pre-war HMV catalogue also had a historical section, which simply accumulated spoken word records of famous people and a few musical performances which were too old or poorly made to be sold to unsuspecting punters.

As I remember, it was full of election addresses by people like Lloyd George, Stanley Baldwin, Ramsay MacDonald or J R Clynes, or the likes of Grieg playing his own works through a fog of technical defects. (The record trade had a conspiracy of silence about the fact that every composer from Debussy to Gershwin made piano rolls that enable us to know precisely what they sounded like.)

But the HMV historical list was a doorway to the very idea that sounds could illuminate history. It included, for example, records of Tolstoy or Gandhi. Later we got used to the fact that the BBC Sound Archives can, through the magic of Edison's cylinders, let you hear Gladstone, Tennyson or Florence Nightingale.

The marketers of every new technique had a vested interest in making the last one obsolete. So after the cylinder phonograph, used in folk-collecting by Béla Bartók, came the disc, the blatnerphone wire, the film soundtrack. Finally, after the delayed introduction of long-playing records, came tape, which has changed everything. Not just any performance, but anyone's recollections have for many years been instantly recordable. There's an avalanche of oral history, an overwhelming treasury from the past. What gets recorded no longer depends on a handful of impresarios. Unknown inventors democratised sound.

But somebody, somewhere, has to catalogue it, a task too amorphous to be contemplated. The National Sound Archive has just completed the next best thing. It has produced a handy, if pricey, *Directory of Recorded Sound Resources in the United Kingdom* (British Library £30), researched by Jeremy Silver and edited by Lali Weerasinghe. This lists with every detail nearly 500 holdings of recorded sound, ranging from the National Sound Archive's own two million commercial and private items, and the BBC's two incomparable accumulations, down to your local reference library's cupboardful of tapes gathered in the 1970s.

They've attempted the impossible, since it's so difficult to define what a collection is. But I'm so pleased to see in it, not only the wonderful gatherings of oral history that tape has made possible, but the old-style hoardings of unreformed gramophone nutters. Mr Leo Anthony Harris (author of *I Hear You Calling Me),* is there with his irreplaceable records by John McCormack, and Mr Hughes of midGlamorgan, who has endlessly pressed the claims of the Peter Dawson Appreciation Society.

60. Colin Ward revels in his bus pass

The moment I got this certificate from the DSS I was down the lane to the bus stop, paying 75p for my trip to the nearest town and only 38p for the journey back. At

the district council offices, despite the NALGO strike, I was instantly issued with my pensioner's bus pass, available not only on the Eastern Counties buses, but on those of half a dozen small private operators whose very names are a litany of the local history of country buses: Partridges, Beestons, Norfolks, Rule's and Chambers.

It's important to me, and much more important for many other people of my age, that while last week it cost me £3 to go the 12 miles to Ipswich and back it now costs half that. On Tuesdays and Fridays I can go 12 miles in the other direction, to Colchester, and back on Mr Rule's bus for a mere 80p.

I am, of course, subsidised by the county and district councils and I am naturally curious as to how the system works. Do the drivers of these very small firms tick on their journey-sheets the number of half fares taken, or does the county work on demographic assumptions?

Rural bus services present enormous problems for a society in which the decline of public transport obliges employed people of working age to be motorists whether they like it or not. Over the past 12 years I've watched a steady decline in the major services, coupled with huge price increases. Eastern Counties first cut our Sunday service altogether (imagine the effect of that for a family visiting its breadwinner and driver in hospital), and then it proposed to cut out the late night (ie, 9.45pm) bus. This brought a spirited protest from the then mayor of Hadleigh, Chris Culpin, on behalf of people attending evening classes in Ipswich. As a result the county council paid Eastern Counties to keep the service going.

The intolerable dilemma this creates in practice is illustrated by the fact that on odd occasions when I have used this service, I have found myself alone with the driver on a double-decker bus. But the county has not surrendered to the logic of the market. This service, and another two hours earlier, have been contracted to Norfolk and Sons of Nayland, a firm in operation as common carriers for 150 years.

Several solutions have been tried. One is the community minibus with volunteer drivers. This was encouraged by the Transport Acts of 1980 and 1985, and the Rural Transport Development Fund. Now it is under threat from the proposed European Commission "second test" for minibus drivers, and the 100 percent Vehicle Excise Duty increase for minibus owners in this year's budget. A second solution is the shared taxi system taken for granted in third world countries. A third solution comes from the sensible Swiss. Just as in the last century they developed a Democratic Railway Movement, so in this one they have a Post-Bus system. Swiss rural buses meander through the villages but they do provide personal mobility in the most remote areas. The Swiss take it for granted that passengers should be subsidised by the profit on the post.

My bus pass is my second transport liberation. The first was five years ago when British Rail, ahead of any other national institution, abolished sex discrimination by issuing Senior Citizen's Rail Cards at 60 to both sexes. That November BR had an incredible go-anywhere-and-back for £2 offer for the oldies.

The results were electric. We filled every train, bringing our flasks and sandwiches and gossiping about the best route from Bristol to Inverness. It was a one-off bonanza, of course. Not only have later special offers been less attractive, but a whole series of restrictions on discounted fares has ensured that the most popular journeys and times are out of reach. For BR has been instructed by the government to fill those trains with full-fare passengers.

But remember that bold transport experiment, the late GLC's Fares Fair policy, ruled illegal by the High Court. Had it continued, accompanied by a concomitant programme of capital investment, London would have escaped its current road traffic crisis.

Go to most cities in France, Germany or Italy, and plenty of rural places too, and you find vast programmes of investment in trains, trams and buses. Sterile argument about whether ownership itself should be public or private are absent, since a policy of supporting cheap, frequent and reliable public transport pays huge social dividends.

Every marginal motorist lured on to public transport and every load of freight lured back on to the railway is a small reduction in the incredible cost of road-building and maintenance, in accidents, in misery and suffering. Every attempt to provide personal mobility to the old, the young, the housebound and the poor is a gesture towards social justice.

This is why, in issuing me with a bus pass, my county and district councils are striking a blow for civilisation.

61. Colin Ward goes to Cornwall and finds a little gem among the rubble of the tourist trade

My late mother-in-law was one of those incomers whom we have all learned to deride in Cornwall. Only it *was* back in 1921, and she did become a local public figure, not to say landmark. And she *was* given an illuminated address by the Penzance Trades Council for her services to the General Strike Committee in 1926.

All the same, whenever I go there I am irredeemably a tourist, doing the rounds of tin mines and craft shops suffering from Heritage Fatigue. The local intelligentsia calls us "emmets" or "grockels". Hungrily eyeing the bookshelves of the souvenir shops I found, among the Poldark novels and the works of Daphne du Mauner, a book which throws light on the intolerable dilemmas faced by Cornwall, and of course, other peripheral communities in Wales or the Scottish Isles.

This is *Cornwall at the Crossroads* by Bernard Deacon, Andrew George and Ronald Perry, published last year by the Cornish Social and Economic Research Group (£4.25 from COSERG, 51 Plain-an-Gwarry, Redruth, Cornwall). It is a nicely ironical document full of quotations from literature as well as from policy statements to illustrate our assumptions about the county: "Cornwall is remote (and sometimes mysterious).

It possesses a timelessness (or backwardness). It is too small to be taken seriously. It's a leisure playground."

These assumptions led to strategies for population growth based on industrial development. But the bottom dropped out of the employment prospects. Migration in to Cornwall was still encouraged, while the top end of the job market, with better local jobs, higher pay and promotion, steadily moved up-country. For example, the headquarters of the police, the water boards and the regional offices of public bodies moved out of Cornwall to Devon or to "the South-West" in general. Old staple industries—agriculture, fishing, tin-mining, china-clay working and manufactures—have a declining workforce. Tourist figures are actually falling so "the planners are currently backing new brands of tourism—activity, heritage, culture—to replace the bucket and spade brigade". Of course, as tourism faltered, the "retirement industry" has been expected to become the new boom sector.

Actual jobs tend to be low-paid, casual, seasonal, held by the transient incoming population; or all four at once. One answer was roadbuilding, an effort to eliminate the distances and the differences between Cornwall and everywhere else. Another has been the property boom, ensuring that the young and low-paid cannot possibly live in the places they grew up in. It's an all too familiar story.

The authors reject the idea that links with Devon are the answer, since Cornwall would stay a poor relation. They look to the lessons provided by the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Development Board for rural Wales, but most particularly to the experience of Finistere in Britanny.

They see the effect both of market forces and public policy in Cornwall as the making of an Alice-through-the-looking-glass world. There, *"more housing* results in more second homes, more long-distance retirees and more new settlers, and seemingly fewer houses available for locals; *more factories* bring executives and workers to Cornwall, and result in less control by the locals over their own destiny; *creating jobs* means inviting in-migrants to occupy our top jobs; and *more roads* to solve traffic congestion are clogged up with more cars, resulting in continuing traffic problems and a never-ending demand for even more roads."

They explore these ironies in the free market in housing, where of course the non-owner occupier can't move anywhere, and the free labour market in which Cornish unemployment remains nearly twice the UK average. Cornish male earnings still lag 20 per cent below UK levels. And they discuss the questionable advantages of the pursuit of growth.

Finally they turn to alternatives, the most significant of which is making Falmouth play the same role for Cornwall that Brest has for Finistere: "South-east England is remote from Cornwall, so build maritime links to neighbouring places and use sea routes to more distant countries and open direct links with Europe." They believe that much would follow: developments in higher education and a reversal of the brain drain, with a whole series of measures such as a Cornish Development Agency, a two-tier housing market, and a series of modifications of market forces.

It's a brave attempt to treat real issues seriously, and I'm so pleased to have found it among the pixies, gemstones and ceramic models of dead tin mines.

62. Colin Ward pushes out his wheelie bin and worries that it caters for his trash habit

Most childhood recollections include the drama of the weekly arrival of the dustmen, humping out the bins with noise and clatter. Current Conservative think-tankers are haunted by the spectre of refuse collectors knocking off at midday and making vast sums by sorting saleable rubbish.

There is no shortage of people anxious to join the refuse team, even though it takes its toll in back troubles because of endlessly heaving heavy loads around. Anyone in the business tells you of the incredible things that householders throw away. Fifteen years ago the London Borough of Lambeth provoked the Totters' Strike by claiming that the material salvaged by the dustmen from the weekly round was in fact stolen from the council.

This was an incredibly short-sighted attitude since the whole problem of waste recovery and the reduction of the terrifying bulk of dumped material is that of making it worth somebody's while to recycle the stuff. In the US, the ultimate throwaway culture, I've stayed in places where it is compulsory for householders to separate metals, paper and glass, and where it is seen as automatic that organic matter should be composted. It is clearly *not* impossible to impose this burden on the disposers of domestic rubbish.

Here in sleepy Suffolk, councils, residents and the local press have been taking sides in the past two years on the issue of introducing wheelie bins. These are wheeled bins with hinged lids in heavy-duty plastic, two-and-a-half times the size of the ordinary kind. They are loaded into specially adapted vehicles with no lifting and carrying.

I've listened to endless debate about it. Some thought, slanderously, that our environment services officer must have been seduced by the makers at some annual sanitary conference. One councillor told me that it was all a ploy to ensure that when current legislation obliges refuse collection to be put out to open tender, only the councils could win. Others complained about the appearance of the Daleks in the narrow streets of ancient local towns.

Brian Allt, a Jeremiah from Sudbury, raises an ominous question, "Just wait until they have been in general use for a year or two. What are the collectors supposed to do when the wheels come off? Will the contract with the supplier make him liable for running repairs, or for injuries to collectors or householders who have had to try and lift them?" And the council, which expected the wheelies to cost £20 for each household, actually had to pay £24.95. One councillor argued that the bin manufacturers were operating a cartel. On the other hand it was claimed that in a town like Ipswich the change will save £100,000 a year.

In an effort to popularise their introduction the council lent bins to the villagers of Kersey last August Bank Holiday to organise the first National Open Invitation Wheelie Bin Race, a test of skill over a variety of terrain including a water-splash. Old ladies can be issued with mini-wheelies if they prefer, and the council tells us that if our bins aren't full we can top up with garden refuse.

Personally, I find it a great convenience. I don't have to renew our dustbins, it is easier for me to wheel our rubbish out to the gate, and it is certainly better for our amiable dustmen not to have to acquire those chronic and painful backbone problems that seem to be an inevitable occupational disease. I'm a beneficiary and in fact I see it almost as a challenge to throw away as much as possible each week.

But I'm being lured still further into the waste disposal mountain. Most of my junk is paper and the industry either demands or rejects our old papers following instant changes in the market. Every so often the youth club in our nearest town has a drive to collect massive amounts of paper only to find that when they've filled a vast container these fluctuations mean that the trade doesn't want to buy it. We've got into the habit of taking all the bottles to the heavily used bottle bank in the same town.

How much easier to pitch everything into our vast wheelie bin and forget about it. I wish we had a tradition of openness in local government. Our chief environmental services officer is a nice, conscientious public servant. I would like him to publish figures about the increase in the sheer bulk of rubbish he must dispose of as a result of the change. Because, whatever its benefits and whatever the savings or additional spending that the wheelies have brought, it would have been more in keeping with the facts of the 20th century to persuade us consumers to deal separately with the different kinds of rubbish we generate.

I love my wheelie bin, but I don't trust it. It caters for my irresponsibility.

63. Colin Ward argues with Harry the sweep—who blames everything on Arther Scargill

I used to use our drain rods and the right kind of brush to sweep our chimneys. But the chimney sweep from one of the local towns has better equipment and does it in half the time. I'm happy to join his queue. He gets more work than he can take up, as the agonies of VAT returns make it sensible for him to keep his one-man business below that tax threshold.

I like to question him about the economics of self-employment. But he always likes to lecture me on the economics of the coal industry. As the disposer of some of its waste products he has, of course, every reason to be interested. He has a round of smallholders waiting for his bags of soot.

For several years past I have been arguing with him about the miners' strike. He takes the view that Arthur Scargill led his forces, without bothering to take a vote,

into a trap carefully prepared for him by the then NCB and the government. I always oppose him, even though I held this view at the time with the result that all my friends called me a Thatcherite pig.

The reason why I argue with Harry is that his own evidence shows that the subsequent closures would have happened regardless of the actions of the miners. Not only the NCB but every other dealer in solid fuel already had a growing trade in coal from all over the world. It came either from countries where labour was cheap, or where a government subsidy encouraged exports.

During the strike these imports increased dramatically at a variety of east coast ports, including little places like Wivenhoe. There, Essex University students, when not demonstrating on behalf of the NUM, could push a barrow through the street and pick up their winter fuel supply which quite genuinely fell off the backs or over the sides of the lorries that roared through the town.

Their barrow-loads would consist of coal not only from West Germany and Poland, but also from South Africa, and even high-quality anthracite from the People's Republic of China, which was sold to merchants—according to Harry—at prices 40 per cent lower than the trade price of the Welsh variety. The ordinary consumers are never told where their fuel comes from, and imports, while not as frenetic as they were during the strike, have stayed well above the pre-strike level.

Harry's experienced eye can tell what kind of fuel the customer uses. He correctly identified the allegedly smokeless reconstructed briquettes we buy, just from the residue. They are inevitably imported, and for once Harry blamed this not on the miners but on the former NCB. He claims that because of our failure to invest in plant, British coal dust was exported to West Germany for processing and reimported here at more than seven times the price.

When he came for his annual visit a fortnight ago, I'd actually hoped that we could explore the whole business of being self-employed and solvent. But once we had discussed the kinds of really flavoursome tomatoes that he and my neighbours grow, too good for the trade to offer the ordinary consumer, we were back on the subject of coal.

I wanted to stay off it, just to avoid an argument, but it was the day after British Coal had announced the closure of the last Kentish colliery, giving as the reason that too few men turned up on the previous Saturday to make weekend working possible. Harry, of course, blamed this on Arthur Scargill. I claimed that it was simply an excuse for closures intended to blamed this on Arthur Scargill. I claimed that it was simply an excuse for closures intended anyway, and I managed to divert him into telling me that the Kentish seams were only discovered by accident in borings long ago for an earlier version of the Channel Tunnel.

This led us to the safe ground of geological faults and anomalies, and to the colliery at Brora in north-east Scotland. This was a drift mine exploiting a fault on the Duke of Sutherland's ground. It was one of those pits not thought worth keeping when coal was nationalised, and the miners formed a co-op to buy it through weekly deductions

from their pay. All went well and small local industries, like clay flowerpotmaking, took advantage of the cheap local fuel. Then in the early 1970s, North Sea oil brought the building of the oil rig at nearby Nigg. The pit closed, and the clay-firing works closed, as the miners went off to new jobs at three times the earnings on the rig. Once the structure was built, they lost them.

"There you are," said Harry, "everyone's too greedy." So I asked how he, as a family man, made out on his chimney-sweeping earnings. "Well," he replied, "my wife has this little job, and I have this office-cleaning contract in the evenings."

Since I'd learned that he was also a keen gardener, I asked if he ever had any time just to relax. "If you want your own freedom," he said, "there's always a price to pay."

64. Colin Ward plays parlour games while the nation is smothered by its own heritage

Those innocent parlour games of categorising people, that we all play, usually arise by accident. We divide people into Martha and Mary types, regardless of the biblical implications of the story. Isaiah Berlin alleges that he found in some obscure classical author, the line "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." He went on to classify some of the great names of history as one or the other of these woodland creatures, but got stuck when he reached Tolstoy.

Berlin devoted a brilliant little book to his hypothesis that Tolstoy was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog. Colin MacInnes devised a similar game in the columns of *New Society.* He divided us into Jews (moralising, prophetic, radical-traditional), Greeks (lifeloving, crafty, hedonistic-spiritual), and Romans (authoritarian, organisational, grandiose, rhetorical).

He too plotted well-known names on this psychological triangle, finding, for example, Harold Macmillan to be a diluted Roman posing as a Greek, and Evelyn Waugh, a Greek who wished he was a Roman. Similarly, he found De Gaulle to be a Jew who had read a lot of Roman literature. And he concluded, "So what, dear reader, are you and your friends?"

My contribution to the parlour games repertoire was more prosaic than theirs. Trying to find a way of categorising children's responses to their environments, I concluded that they could be divided between the *antiquarians,* who cherish an environment precisely because of its associations with continuity and familiarity, *explorers,* who positively enjoy and savour the change from one home to another in a different habitat, and *neophiliacs* for whom the surroundings inherited from the past have a smell of oppression and deprivation, while the new, just because it is new, promises hope and a more expansive life. And of course it applies to adults too, with the difference that the usual battering we get from life pushes us into different attitudes from those we start out with.

I used to say that I woke in the morning a neophiliac, spent the day as an explorer, and went to bed a weary antiquarian. It applies to many other aspects of life besides the environment.

What brought the whole theme back into my mind was the series of TV programmes made by Patrick Nuttgens, *The Home Front.* He introduced bits of old film from the 40s, 50s and 60s, which revealed a nation of neophiliacs, glorying in the new world of housing, with modern architects as heroes. But when he went around the country last year interviewing tenants and residents, he was, as an architect, shocked by the dislike and contempt people told him they felt for his profession.

So he set up a radio discussion a few weeks ago to unravel what went wrong, and a group of us sat round his breakfast table in North Yorkshire, playing the game of neophiliacs and antiquarians. As in all such discussions we were typecast and fell into our appropriate roles. John Donat recalled the excitement of his youth. "I came into architecture in the year of the Festival of Britain, and it was *electric.* We were moving into a new world."

Denise Robertson, filling the vox pop role, talked about the reassuring grandeur of St George's Hall, Liverpool, and of yearnings for cottages with roses round the door. Challenged for her backward-lookingness, she replied: "If the new was good perhaps we would welcome it, but the new is not good. That's why we hanker for the past, because the alternative is not an appetising one." My own task was to sidestep the issue of design and to stress that what matters is the principle of dweller control.

But behind the games people play, there is a huge shift in the national mood, of which architecture is an obvious and visible sign. In the world of art, patrons are throwing out their abstract impressionists and buying up Victorian genre paintings. In penal policy we have abandoned the rehabilitative experiments and rely on a policy of containment. In education, every ministerial statement indicates a yearning for the no-nonsense utilitarianism of the school boards of a century ago.

I don't think the architectural change of mood is necessarily part of the same syndrome. It is a swing of the pendulum from the arrogant technological romanticism of the post-war decades. But it is skilfully exploited politically, along with the heritage boom and the "upstairs-downstairs" country house legend. Cultivate the conservation of an imaginary past to cover up the opportunism of the present, and hire advertising agencies to ram home the message.

Apart from the professional neophiliacs and a handful of intrepid explorers, we are all antiquarians now.

65. Colin Ward gets steamed up over water racketeering

There is something malevolently devious about the government's responses to environmental issues. It first brushes aside public concern, then suppresses facts and denounces independent investigations as irresponsible. Then, in spite of allegedly supporting the principle that the polluter must pay, it scolds the green lobbyists as pernickety children. "If you insist on being so fussy, *you* must expect to foot the bill."

Its first concern is the effect on its strategy of selling off publicly-owned natural monopolies. Ignoring all our worries about accidents and waste disposal, it declares that nuclear power is clean as opposed to dirty old coal. Thus, at one stroke, it seeks to ensure the future of its nuclear weapons programme, *and* pursue its vendetta against the miners, *and* rebuke the anti-nuclear greens. And if the market itself is too prudent to invest in nukes, it slaps a levy on every electricity user. The consumer must pay.

Over water pollution and privatisation there is the same duplicity. Here in England's corn belt our local papers, the *Eastern Daily Press* and the *East Anglian Daily Times,* neither noted for their radicalism, get shriller week by week as the government unfolds its strategy. East Anglia has the biggest problem over nitrate levels because of the concentration on intensive cereal production in a region of low rainfall.

The situation is going to get steadily worse because vast quantities of nitrate in the soil have yet to percolate into water sources. Applications of nitrogenous fertilisers have risen from 210,000 tonnes in 1950 to 1,470,000 tonnes in 1983 and are increasing at 9 per cent a year.

Anglian Water announced last month that the government had approved an increase in charges to consumers of 5.5 per cent above inflation for the next ten years, or 13.5 per cent per annum at current inflation rates. Anglian Water called it "tough and fair" and the water minister Michael Howard told us all that: "We cannot have a cleaner water environment unless we are prepared to pay towards the cost of it."

At the same time, the Water Authorities Association dismissed the Friends of the Earth survey of water pollution as an "exceedingly well-presented piece of scaremongering". According to Paul Brown in the *Guardian,* the moment the water bill was enacted, "all staff at the Anglian Water Authority were warned that statements about water quality must be cleared with the organisation's lawyers and merchant bankers. They were also told that the penalty for non-compliance was up to seven years in prison, and an unlimited fine under section 77 of the Financial Services Act, 1986."

And, of course, the National Farmers Union has been busy protecting its members. Deputy president David Naish said that the NFU: "Will be encouraging parliament to scrutinise the legislation very carefully and if necessary amend it so as to ensure that farmers will be fully and fairly compensated for any losses they might suffer, whether through reductions in income or in the value of their interest in the land."

It has already given this encouragement to the House of Lords, whose European Community Committee reports that if the government is to comply with the European Commission's directive on nitrate levels in drinking water, more than half of the most fertile farmland in East Anglia will have to be taken out of production.

What about going organic? A farmer interviewed on Radio 4's *Farming Today* programme explained that only about 10,000 or 11,000 tonnes of organic grain is produced in this country. Since the changeover takes several years, we are actually importing organically produced cereals to meet the increasing demand. And the economics of it? After all, the Fertilisers Manufacturers Association (FMA) claims that in the Anglian Water area it is unlikely that financially viable farming would be possible in water production areas, and that "net income from agriculture could be cut by 50 per cent or more".

But that organic farmer said last month that he achieved two-thirds of the chemical yield, and that he was getting £200 a tonne, as opposed to the £115-£120 a tonne offered that day in Lincolnshire for ordinary grain. However, Mr Naish of the NFU says, without explanation, that a return to traditional organic methods of farming could actually lead to an increase in existing nitrate levels.

The NFU, the FMA and UKASTA (the agricultural supply trade association) all claim that the most cost-effective option is not cutting back on inorganic fertilisers, but blending high-and low-nitrate water, or denitrification. And who is to pay? Why, you, of course, says the government. This is what stung the *East Anglian Daily Times* to declare: "When householders see their bills, they will be loud in demanding that the polluter should be made to pay, and they will be well justified."

66. Colin Ward remembers the Peckham Health Centre

Kenneth Clarke expostulated to a radio interviewer the other day: "We've never run the health service as some kind of workers' cooperative."

More's the pity, I would say. But the real tragedy is that we have never run a health service, only an illness service. By stressing the word *health,* I don't mean preventive medicine, I mean the pursuit of the conditions for personal, family and social well-being. There was one unforgettable experiment in this direction, and it died with the foundation of the NHS. This was the Pioneer Health Centre at Peckham.

For people like me, curious about the preconditions for resourcefulness and independence, it was a verification of our deepest convictions. The founders were a husband-and-wife pair of doctors, Innes Pearse and George Scott Williamson. In 1938, they wrote about their Family Health Club: "It seems that 'a sort of anarchy' is the first condition in any experiment in human applied biology. This condition is also that to which our members most readily respond..."

It began much earlier, in 1926, when after welfare work in south London they concluded that most urban dwellers were so "de-vitalised" that babies were born deficient in health. To study the characteristics of health they devised the idea of a family club, to be joined on two conditions, first, that the whole family must join; and second, that families must agree to a periodic medical examination.

They started in a small house run as a club until 1929. The next step was to raise the money from charitable trusts to move to a purpose-built family club big enough to be self-supporting from subscriptions. By 1935 they had raised the cash and built the Pioneer Health Centre, designed by Sir Owen Williams. It was glass-walled inside and out, as the Peckham biologists needed to observe what members actually did. The centre of the building was a swimming pool, and there was a theatre, a gymnasium and a children's nursery on the ground floor, with dance halls, a cafeteria, a library and medical rooms.

It ran from 1935 to 1939, and after the war from 1946 to 1950. It ended in 1951 after all efforts to get it adopted by local authorities or the NHS had failed. Since "health centres" had become part of official doctrine after the National Health Service Act of 1946, the directors approached the Ministry of Health to incorporate it into official provision.

They failed for five reasons: first, it was concerned exclusively with the study and cultivation of health, not with the treatment of disease; second, it was based exclusively on the integrated family, not on the individual; third, it was based exclusively on a locality, it had no "open door"; fourth, its basis was contributory (2s 6d—12.5p—a family a week), not free; and fifth, it was based on autonomous administration, and so didn't conform to the NHS structure.

The centre died but the idea did not. Pioneer Health Centre Ltd still exists and in the past ten years has ensured the republication by the Scottish Academic Press of all the old Peckham reports. The same publishers have just brought out, at £7.95, a new study called *Being Me and' Also Us: Lessons from the Peckham experiment.* The author is Alison Stallibrass, a Peckham veteran and author of that modern classic of child development, *The Self-Respecting Child.*

Her book is fascinating from several points of view. First, she has sought out people who were members as children or young parents and gathered their recollections of what the place meant in their lives. It is an enormously impressive testimony. Second, she shows how ahead of their time the Peckham pioneers were.

They were founder members of the Soil Association and took on a farm to ensure that members could buy nutritious bread, milk and vegetables and to provide holidays in the sun. Fifty years later, old Peckham hands remember that delicious bread. Third, she demonstrates how the preoccupation with the family was not a limiting, but an enlarging, factor. Members gradually accepted all the children as part of the family, while children and adolescents related to all the adults.

Finally, she asks and ventures answers to the question: could we replicate the experiences of Peckham today? The original building cost about a fifth of the typical

super-cinema of the period, though it was expensive to run. A modern equivalent would be far more useful in any community than the standard local "leisure centre" which caters for a narrow band of the population and has no links with the ideology of self-catering, health-counselling, personal and social autonomy.

I only went there once, in 1949. I listened to Scott Williamson wittily addressing a meeting of the London Anarchist Group, and I visited Innes Pearse when she retired to Argos Hill windmill in Sussex. I never realised until I read this book that they must be considered as *the* truly creative figures in 20th century social medicine.

67. Colin Ward muses on the revolution that really happened—in dentistry

Francis Lambert, the forge-worker interviewed by Ronald Blythe for his classic *Akenfield,* thought that one of the good things about TV was the chance it offered him of seeing wonderful ornamental ironwork. As an instance of this he cited the continual close-ups of the gates of the Winter Palace in Eisenstein's film *October.*

I was reminded that we each have a special style of viewing when I came to London for a farewell lunch with Peter, the dentist. We had both seen on the previous night Frederic Rossifs old documentary *To Die in Madrid.* I was dismissive of it, disliking the way it slid over the fact that the popular revolution of 1936 had been destroyed in the interests of Stalin's foreign policy long before Franco's victory, and hating those facile shots of people in heroic poses using up ammunition as though there was an endless supply: the opposite of the truth.

Peter's reaction had been different. He had observed from those old newsreel close-ups of workers and peasants that the teeth of the Spanish poor of the 1930s were in better condition than those of their British counterparts. The Spanish were ill-fed, but with the elements of a less destructive diet. I realised that Peter must have a peculiar way of seeing the footage from the gritty British documentaries of the 1930s where the poor, even before middle age, had sunken jaws while their children's mouths were already full of decay.

His professional lifetime has witnessed an admittedly incomplete, but substantial, dental revolution, revealed by visual evidence.

We were meeting on the very day of his retirement, as I had been a patient of his for more than 40 years. Peter qualified in 1939 and became a houseman at the London hospital in Whitechapel, immersed first in the poverty of the East End and then in the extraordinary improvisations and camaraderie of the blitz. Called up, he became a Navy dentist, sent to the *Dunluce Castle,* a former cruise ship torpedoed early in the war in Scapa Flow. Beached in shallow water, the hull was filled with concrete and it was used as a naval depot. He was soon posted away but I spent most of the war years in Orkney, in a company of the Royal Engineers, among the ragtail and bobtail

of civilian contractors and Italian prisoners employed in building the causeways that now link the islands around Scapa. If we were sick we went to the naval medical centre.

Peter's recollections are that the doctors had a relatively easy time, apart from enemy action and accidents, since Navy personnel were selected for physical fitness. But dentists were worked off their feet, trying to bring recruits up to the standard of oral hygiene that the services, but not civilian life, demanded. His memory did not exaggerate. In the year he qualified, the Political and Economic Planning report on Britain's health revealed that 98 per cent of Army recruits, 96.8 per cent of Navy recruits and 95 per cent of school children suffered from dental decay.

In 1947 I was working in the same part of London where he put up his brass plate. He has moved upwards and I have moved outwards, but ever since then I have looked forward to our twice-yearly gossip. It's important to recall the huge change in the British attitude to teeth which his generation of dentists had engineered. (I give the credit to the practitioners rather than to the NHS simply because anything remotely like "free" dental care, except for children, is by now just a memory.)

For we can both remember the days when large sections of the population, after a bout of toothache, considered it both normal and desirable to have everything extracted in successive weeks and to opt for a lifetime of dentures. "Let's get it over and done with, once and for all," was a widespread attitude.

He also remembers patients who felt cheated if he insisted on preserving as many teeth as possible. He blames current complaints that dentists invent occasions for unnecessary fillings, both on the bad eggs you find in every profession and on what he regards as the unsatisfactory structure of NHS payments.

One of his passions is architecture. I suppose his own work is a kind of precision engineering, and I tend to see him in architectural terms. Paul Thompson's biography of a great Victorian architect describes how William Butterfield, after a period of ruthless demolition, decided that he intended "on principle, to reuse as much of the old work as possible in the reconstruction". Patrick Geddes similarly called for "conservative surgery" as the right approach to environmental design.

Peter's approach to my teeth has always been like that For decades now he has been saying: "Well, well just have to make the best of what you've got." And that's what he's done for most of my life.

68. Colin Ward teases out risks and freedoms in traffic

I don't suppose that, beetling around the suburbs of Hull in his Singer Gazelle, Philip Larkin was a menace to anyone except himself. But it was intriguing to hear on Radio 4 his correspondence with the novelist Barbara Pym. "Did I tell you that I am learning to drive?" he wrote. "It's terrifying, and merely serves to intensify my

amazement at the low figure of road accidents. Considering how many cars there are, and how lethal they are, and who is driving them, I should expect half the population to be in hospital or in the grave."

Learning from the passenger seat that the art of driving is intelligent anticipation of the actions of other road users, I have always shared his amazement. Our usual response is the opposite. Sensibly, we stress the horror of road accident rates by comparison with other causes of premature death like war and murder. The second world war killed 305,318 British soldiers and civilians. Between 1926 and 1976, 331,214 people were killed on British roads.

The US has far more cars, and there, between 1913 and 1976, the number of people killed on the road was more than three times the number of Americans killed in every single war in which the US was involved. John Adams, lecturer in geography at University College, London, stresses that these figures include the Vietnam war, Korean war, second world war, first world war, Spanish American war, civil war (both sides), Mexican war, war of 1812 and war of independence.

Yet when you relate accident figures to the numbers of vehicles and mileages, you find that the US is one of the safest driving countries in the world. Contrary to our film image of highspeed chases, an overwhelming majority of American motorists behave with immaculate discipline. We Europeans are far behind, and so are Latin Americans, Africans and Asians.

Whenever I meet traffic engineers I ply them with questions. I find them to be, not ogres intent on carving up country and town to get the traffic through, but serious people deeply sceptical of the demands made on them by politicians and the public. Take Sir Colin Buchanan, whose report in the 1960s did *not* recommend pushing motorways through cities. What he actually said was that if the community "finds that some proposed set of measures is altogether too expensive and too disruptive of familiar scenes, then it can have less expensive and less disturbing measures, *provided it is reconciled to not having as much traffic".*

Or take Sir Herbert Manzoni, the engineer whose name will go down in history as the man who carved up Birmingham for the benefit of the motorist. I actually heard him remark: "The average passenger load of motorcars in our streets is certainly less than two persons, and in terms of transportable load some 400 cubic feet of vehicle weighing over one ton is used to convey four cubic feet of humanity weighing about two hundredweight, the ratios being about ten to one in weight and 100 to one in bulk. The economic implication of this situation is ridiculous and I cannot believe it to be permanent."

Last year I met Barry Cooper, a traffic engineer, who had been an articled pupil of Manzoni, and I buttonholed him with my usual importunate questions. On national differences in accident rates he explained that in countries like the US, the children in the back seat behind mum and dad had absorbed that empathy with the actions of others that make aware drivers. In countries with first-generation motorists this automatic road wisdom has to be expensively absorbed in the driver's seat.

His second response was far more disturbing. He believes that training courses for 16-year-old motorcyclists actually increase their proneness to accidents. "Oh, for goodness sake!" I exclaimed, but he went on to explain calmly that every increase in confidence that you give a road user leads to an increase in risk-taking, and consequently in vulnerability.

Opinions like this are not what we want to hear. John Adams had used a barrage of statistical data to make the same point about our various bits of legislation designed to protect road users. He wrote two books which argue, among other things, that legislation on matters like motorcycle helmets or seat belts has a different effect from the ones which were expected.

Adams was abused from all sides in parliament for his claim that the seat belt law would temporarily reduce car occupant fatalities but would permanently increase deaths among cyclists or pedestrians. He and the people who think like him are in the uncomfortable position of appearing to support the claim for absolute liberty for the motorist, while really stressing the fact that legislation aimed at protecting car users from themselves actually decreases the freedom and safety of every other road user.

69. Colin Ward tracks the invisible handbag across eastern Europe

A Hungarian remarked the other day that, "We made a very bad socialism, but my fear is that we will now make a very bad capitalism." It is all too easy to see what she meant.

A "flying university" of Anglo-American policy advisers had been busy for several years, so I've heard, making contacts through British embassies with the appropriate Ministry people to infiltrate them with the sort of ideas they fed to our own rulers. Abandon old-fashioned labour-intensive industry, give carbon-fibres preference over steel, and artificial fabrics priority over that old-fashioned cotton, peg down wages and don't give an inch to organised labour. "That's easier for you than for us," they say with a knowing smile. Large-scale unemployment, they explain, is an inevitable hiccup in the development of a leaner, really competitive industry.

There are layers of unbearable irony here. Topmost is the fact that we are about to witness a Winter of Discontent in the eastern bloc. The formerly phoney trade unions will discover that, as nobody now dares to apply the instant repression normal in the Soviet Union for 70 years and in its satellites for over 40, they can really influence events. A second factor is that the green lobby in the east is beginning to spell out the implications of the absence of even those meagre environmental controls taken for granted in the west.

Maybe Stalin's former empire will replace Britain as the easy dump for toxic wastes. Certainly market economies demand that it should become the western equivalent

of South Korea or Taiwan, flooding our complacent common market with cheaper consumer durables. Gorbachev's warning to the Soviet railway workers, saying in effect, "Don't strike. You're impeding our progress towards... er... capitalism," is going to be repeated everywhere.

Think back just a little. Over 40 years ago Michael Polyani diagnosed the economic double-think of the Soviet bloc, when he observed that "under cover of the noise made by the Five Year plans the government went on quietly fitting into place one piece of commercial (ie, 'capitalist') economic machinery after another. Bit by bit every economic operation was fully commercialised. Adam Smith would have marvelled at this strange return of the 'invisible hand', doubly invisible as the carefully camouflaged secret of 'socialist' successes. Nothing could indeed be funnier than the way this kind of economics is taught in the Soviet Union. The official textbook is in two parts, nicknamed by Soviet students the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament tells you all about the evils of commercialism, or production for profits, of the fetish of commodities, of social relations being degraded to relations between goods, of the alienation of man within an acquisitive economy producing for the market. In the New Testament each of these commercial features is reintroduced, with each time renewed apologies, explaining that under socialism they are really and essentially different from what they were before, and that besides they are only temporary, etc, etc."

Today this gospel is being re-run without the apologies. The really dreadful aspect of the story is that the rulers of every country in eastern Europe, moving steadily to the right with age, have already wiped out every demand for "socialism with a human face".

They ground the left opposition out of existence or into exile, but they are now being won over by free-market managerialism, a system that guarantees their own survival. And in Hungary, Poland or the Soviet Union itself, whenever there's an anniversary, they exhume and posthumously rehabilitate a few more people who were hanged or shot when they were alleged to have been Anglo-American agents. No doubt it will happen soon in Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic.

There's an inevitable corollary of course. The same dynasties of top people who have ruthlessly run everything east of Berlin for decades will stay at the top. Having for generations urged the workers to tighten their belts for the sake of socialism they will re-issue the same imperative for the establishment of competitive capitalism.

The giant confidence trick of Jam Tomorrow is going to be worked all over again, and it isn't for us British to criticise this. But in just one respect the east Europeans have an advantage. Just to continue daily life they, like their rulers, have developed an impenetrable system of black, grey and brown economies to ensure that ordinary needs like soap, vegetables or access to the technical college are met. As eastern Europe becomes more consciously Thatcherite, and as below a certain income level we are obliged to become more and more like eastern Europe, we too are bound to develop that network of fringe benefits that actually ensure survival.

70. Colin Ward finds that discovery has to be both profitable and secret to win official approval

Bill Connor was a popular journalist of a rather more enlightened kind than we get nowadays. It was in 1942, in the darkest and most bellicose days of the second world war, that he chose to remind readers of his Cassandra column in the *Daily Mirror* of the international and non-commercial nature of medical discovery.

"Our children," he wrote, "are guarded from diptheria by what a Japanese and a German did. They are saved from smallpox by an Englishman's work. They are saved from rabies because of a Frenchman. From birth to death they are surrounded by an invisible host—the spirits of men who never served a lesser loyalty than the welfare of mankind."

With the institutionalisation of research, we are no longer inclined to feel such sentiments about the big pharmaceutical companies, while publicly-funded laboratories are under extreme pressure to make their work cost-effective.

It's a sign of the marketisation of everything that the press, radio and TV reporting of the latest discovery from the Medical Research Council's Laboratory of Molecular Biology at Cambridge should in the same breath describe the new way of producing miniature forms of antibodies both as a "breakthrough" in coping with cancer and as a currency earner.

The MRC, announcing its patent applications, said that "industry" both in Britain and overseas is already gearing up to exploit the opportunities" offered by the team led by Dr Greg Winter and Dr Sally Ward. They have discovered an easier and cheaper way of producing "single domain antibodies" to clear tumours and toxins from body tissues.

The work is a development from the discovery 14 years ago in the same laboratory of a method of making a hybrid cell or "hybridoma" secreting monoclonal antibodies. In explaining its pedigree, the science editor of the *Times* says that: "Unfortunately, the Medical Research Council was unable to profit because it failed to lodge a patent application and the findings were taken up and exploited freely by most of the larger drug companies."

Naturally, there's a story behind this. It emerged five years ago when the discoverer, Cesar Milstein, his former pupil, Georges Koehler, and the father of modern immunology, Niels Jerne, were awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine. Mrs Thatcher at the time described it as another triumph for British science. Even the names of the prize-winners suggest that there was rather more to it than that. Milstein, from Argentina, works in Cambridge. Koehler, from Germany, works in Basel. Jerne, from Denmark, used to work in Basel and moved to France.

When their 1984 prizes were announced, the *Observer* headlined its science correspondent's report "Lost millions of the Nobel magic bullets", and began it with the

statement that "Britain may have lost millions of pounds by failing to patent monoclonal antibodies..."

As a matter of fact Cesar Milstein behaved with the utmost propriety. Working as head of the protein and nucleic acid chemistry division of the MRC's laboratory, he had been obliged to assign to his employers all rights in his work. He wrote to them to explain its potential importance. With no answer, he and Georges Koehler published their findings in the science journal *Nature.*

Greg Winter and Sally Ward did just that this month, except that the MRC had already filed its patent claims. Milstein said to the press at the time that "really we have only seen the tip of the iceberg", and he turned out to be right. But he also made a highly significant personal comment. He said:

> "I think patents are financial swindles that prevent the public from having access to information. My work would have been surrounded by secrecy. I really think I would have been driven out of the country."

Anyone acquainted with researchers in fields far removed from the frontiers of medicine will know what he means. I mentioned on 13 October the traffic pundit John Adams. Interested in the proposals for road-pricing systems, he asked the police about a newly installed camera in the Dartford Tunnel. They said it belonged to the Home Office so he asked them for information. According to the *Architect's Journal,* "When it arrived, Adams was surprised to notice that the envelope had been addressed to John Underwood. In error, the sender at the Home Office had written Adams's middle name, which he never uses and which appears only on his passport. Before sending him the information—which was nothing more than a photocopy of a published article—the Home Office had done some careful checking on this innocent geographer."

Bill Connor was wrong. Research *is* obliged to serve lesser loyalties than the welfare of humankind.

71. Colin Ward sees a city awash with the homeless, jobless young

Floating on the surface of every city are teenagers who have overcome that last of British inhibitions: tapping fellow citizens for cash in the street. It's a feature, not just of Oxford Street, but of the Upper Richmond Road, Putney.

The ideology, though not the experience, of ministers and their advisers suggests that they should stay home with Mum and Dad. So an endless series of withdrawals of social security payments has made even the lucrative bed-and-breakfast industry shrink from the single young.

I would have said that most of us can't bear the thought of the physical danger that destitution and illegality imposes on the social flotsam, but for the obvious fact that we *can,* as can our rulers. Cathy Newman's *Young Runaways* report for the Children's Society, apart from finding that only 39 per cent of about 100,000 young runaways under the age of 17 were reported as missing from home, found that 34 per cent of her sample had run away from local authority care. Yet "care" accounts for less than 1 per cent of young people's legal domiciles.

Suppose we actually rewarded the refugees from that expensive "care" with the equivalent in housing? A room of one's own is a universal dream. Suppose that instead of whittling away the possibility, they were helped to provide their own bedspace, with access to a common kitchen, picking up a few skills in the process?

This thought inspired Charity Projects to commission from Danny Levine his report *Building young lives: self-build and young single homeless people.* I discussed it here (26 May) but felt resigned to the idea that no one was actually interested in direct, obvious and simple solutions. Undeterred by the lack of interest in an issue that obtrudes on every city dweller every day, the North West London Housing Association staged a meeting last month. It drew together people concerned with instant needs, from charities like Centrepoint, Barnardos and the Salvation Army, and people investing both public and private funds in self-help housing.

My first impression was that every initiative of this kind depends on individuals who, by sheer persistence, find chinks in every change in the rules. We met, for example, Stella Clarke, the forceful Bristol JP who initiated the Zenzele self-build project there and who won that important concession from the DSS that people could draw benefit while employed on housing construction themselves.

We also met people like Jose Ospina of Chisel Ltd, a secondary housing cooperative in south London which has been exploring self-build for rent, issuing loan stock to the people involved in building for the valve of labour they have invested. Chisel favours the Walter Segal system of cheap, dry and simple timber construction which the National and Provincial Building Society is actually funding with interest-only mortgages at the Sea-Saw Self-Build Housing Association for a mostly unemployed group in Brighton.

Gary Adams, of London and Provincial, was there to explain that the societies do have room for what the jargon calls non-status finance. Boldly, he declared that "the area of lending commercially to young homeless people is not generally recognised as the financial way forward by building societies. I, however, see the neglect of this area to be not only shortsighted, but a decision that overlooks the original function of the building society business which is to lend money for housing of *all* tenures."

Tony Shephard, of the government-funded Housing Corporation, explained that body's recent change of view on self-build, which it now sees "not as a fringe activity for skilled people seeking a bigger or better home but simply as one of the means by which social housing can be produced". In keeping with current ideology the corporation has "negotiated a package of private finance" with two major building societies to provide £160 million on attractive terms for self-build in the next five years.

It is also, he said, supporting the independent Community Self-Build Agency (chaired by Stella Clarke) which, with Community Service Volunteers and the London and Quadrant Housing Trust, is piloting a self-build rehabilitation programme for the young, homeless unemployed.

If you've read thus far you will be bewildered by the sheer number and names of public and private bodies trying to help the footloose young to help themselves. Individuals on both sides have committed themselves to this programme which seems so obvious to you and me. Half their energy is devoted to finding ways around the implacable hostility of the government towards our teenage adventurers.

72. Colin Ward eulogises a fraternal dialogue

It was only because of the *Guardian's* admirable policy of obituarising people who were interesting rather than famous that I learned that Percival Goodman had died, aged 85. He was from the upper East Side of Manhattan, a bright scholarship boy who won a classical training in architecture at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris, set up his office in Broadway before the war and for 25 years after it was professor of architecture at Columbia University.

Percy had a brother, eight years younger, who was a great source of worry. Paul was an equally gifted student, learning from Morris Cohen at City College, then fired from various teaching jobs, not because of his outrageous sexual behaviour but because of his defence of it. He was also an unpublishable anarchist poet and novelist. Why couldn't he settle down to domestic bliss like Percy and Naomi and build himself a solid reputation? Percy, after all, was equally avant-garde in his field, designing more than 50 synagogues in an uncompromisingly unorthodox way. He called himself "an agnostic who was converted by Hitler".

In wartime, writers flourish, but the drawingboards of architects and planners become bare. It's a time when all societies live on hope: that present sacrifices may bring future rewards, that guilt over past neglect may produce resolution for subsequent social justice.

Dozens of books were written on both sides of the Atlantic on the ideas that should guide the post-war reconstruction of towns and cities.

Most are totally forgotten. One remains relevant and exciting. The unemployed architect and the draft-dodging anarchist collaborated between 1942 and 1945 on *Communitas: means of livelihood and ways of life,* published in 1947 by the University of Chicago Press.

For years it had a kind of underground, word-of-mouth existence, thanks to the advocacy of famous academics like David Riesman and of writers like Lewis Mumford. They found it was the only modern contribution to the art of building cities which "deals with the underlying values and purposes, political and moral, on which plannning of any sort must be based".

When Paul had become a modish social critic as a result of *Growing Up Absurd,* the brothers revised their book as a Vintage Paperback in 1960, reprinted until Paul's death in 1972. This is the edition you can find in secondhand bookshops. They appended a chapter on banning cars from cities, and Percy became an increasingly radical critic of what was actually happening, taking part in a sit-down protest at his own university's real-estate imperialism in the neighbourhood and against the onslaught on Harlem. He insisted that his profession was only justified if it served all the people, not just developers.

When he came to talk at the Architectural Association in London in 1973 about his vision of life in the year 2000, he gave a delightful and profound account of *"The Double E"* (economy and ecology) which should guide popular involvement in the environment. His book of that name came from Doubleday Anchor in 1978.

Communitas begins with a laconic analysis of a miscellany of 20th-century ideals of urban solutions, which the authors divided into green belt plans, industrial plans and integrated plans. They then arrived at three quite different formulae for ideal communities. The first was the City of Efficient Consumption which had four main characteristics. "Work and life centre around the market. The moral drives are imitation and emulation. The decoration is display. Close by is the open country, for full flight." Do you recognise it?

The second was The New Commune, in which "by regional independence of industries and by the close integration of factory and farm workers... the industrial region as a whole can secure for itself an independent bargaining power in the national whole". It is an idealised version of the economy that actually sustains the Italian province of Emilia Romagna today.

The third was called Maximum Security: Minimum Regulation, exactly the issue that William Beveridge in his Liberal way was struggling with at the same time. It envisaged a two-tier economy. Everyone was obliged to work for a short period in the basic economy tending machines producing food, clothing and shelter, distributed free to all. The rest of their lives were in a luxury economy in which we all did what we liked. Medicine and transport would be provided by a financial arrangement between the subsistence and the secondary economies. It's a solution to many current ideological dilemmas.

I've said enough to show that this was one of the most useful and creative books of the century. Neither of the Goodmans could have conceived of it on his own. "Thus," they wrote 45 years ago, "the brothers alone can do together I what they could not do separately."

73. Colin Ward on the fringe of the History Workshop

Back in the late sixties, at the urgent promptings of a wandering scholar, Martin Small, who died tragically young, I paid my ten shillings and unrolled my sleeping bag at Ruskin College for what must have been the second or third History Workshop.

It was a revelation for me. I don't mean the pat-a-cake Marxism that was *de rigueur* in those days. I was used to that. What delighted me was the spectacle of a carnival of scholarship utterly different from the atmosphere of any place of higher learning I had ever visited. It was like our vision of the universities of the Middle Ages when bands of questioners assembled around particular researchers, picked up what they had to offer and then moved on.

Oxford was started by rebel students from Paris, Cambridge by rebels from Oxford, Harvard US by rebels from Cambridge UK, and so on. The History Workshops have moved on too, with that absorbing, pricey journal and a remarkable series of books based on themes originally ventilated at its annual bazaars.

I've usually managed to resist the temptation, but a few years ago I went to the one at Leicester, facing the usual agonies of choice between 20 simultaneous "streams" of seminars. The Blues guru Paul Oliver was talking in the popular culture stream about *Blacking Up,* the history and influence of entertainments known unblushingly as "Nigger Minstrels" or "Coon Shows". What legacy of assumptions did they leave behind? I never learned, as I was scheduled to talk in another stream at the time.

Last week I was lured to History Workshop 23 at Salford University. It was a fitting venue because in the immediate locality you can see the devastating results both of the collapse of manufacturing industry, and of heavy-handed municipal redevelopment in the post-war years. It is the setting of Robert Roberts's classic study of *The Classie Slum,* and of Walter Greenwood's 1930s novel *Love on the Dole.*

Indeed, we began with a showing of the 1940 film of Greenwood's book, and there on the platform was Edmund Frow, a local Communist Party veteran from the period. He explained how the presentation of him and his insistence on the reality of the class struggle was carefully diluted, first in the novel and then in the film.

One of the other 16 streams that I missed entirely was devoted to labour history in museums, important because of the travesty of popular history presented by the heritage industry. Right opposite us in The Crescent, Salford, is the Working-Class Movement Library.' Speakers in this stream described how, as a poor relation in this industry, the National Museum of Labour History had moved from the old Limehouse Town Hall to Manchester, since the urge to record "people's history" has "often been prompted by members in local authorities rather than by museum professionals". '

One of the minor bygones in the National Museum is the table that Peter Kropotkin used when he lived in Bromley and Brighton, which had formerly belonged to Richard Cobden. When he returned to Russia in 1917 he gave it to Brighton Trades Council. I

don't really care about that table. But the session I took care not to miss was Caroline Cahm's paper on Kropotkin and buses. She is the author of *Peter Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism,* to appear in December from Cambridge University Press. It studies Kropotkin's thought about revolutionary action, which was not limited to notions of "propaganda by deed", meaning assassinating Tsars, but embraced the developing role of the organised labour movement. "I wouldn't have spent 15 years writing this book if I didn't think it had some importance for us," she said, and went on to describe her local bus workers in Gosport, Hampshire.

A Labour government nationalised the bus industry to form the National Bus Company, which none of us actually liked. The Thatcher government "deregulated" it and put its component parts up for grabs. In many places there has been a management buy-out. In Gosport, agitators like Cahm urged that the workers should shop around for credit and buy the local company themselves. Now, with about 100 buses and 300 worker-owners, it faces the usual difficulties. Marauding plutocrats are busy trying to buy up local operators or to drive them out of business. Universal car ownership is, as everywhere, making the buses into a ghetto of the old, young, housebound and poor.

Cahm's on the management committee and thinks the venture might just be winning through, in spite of the fact that other bus operators in the locality can provide better wages and conditions, just because of the "greater enthusiasm to provide a serice which follows the needs of the passengers".

It was worth going to the History Workshop just to learn about this connection between historical assumptions and life at the bus stop.

74. Colin Ward watches the dethronement of the Lord of the Flies

What a delight that the pupils of Trinity School, a comprehensive at Leamington Spa, have rumbled *Lord of the Flies!* The 16 and 17 year olds there, in a film Nigel Evans made for Channel 4, reported that no less than 36 examination boards have used William Golding's novel as a set book for 20 years. They asked the simple question, "Why?"

We have had a barrage of documentary material on how schools are adapting to the entrepreneurial society. So it was an unexpected pleasure to see a film where pupils themselves stressed that, as every parent knows, most children can't wait to get into school at five, and look forward to "the big school" at 11, but can't wait to get out by the time they are 15.

Something gets smothered in between for an uncomfortably large regiment of juvenile conscripts. That it didn't happen to this particular bunch of A-level candidates was generously attributed by them to the influence of Peter Hastings, head of Trinity School from 1967–1988. Their film, *Catching Alight,* used snippets of Peter Brook's

film of Golding's novel, and of the author's opinion on original sin, to explain the irresistible charm of the fable for believers in educational order and discipline.

I thought their demolition job useful because our writers really are our unacknowledged legislators and the makers of telling fables *do* influence us more than we like to admit. Like *Robinson Crusoe* or *Animal Farm,* this particular story has entered the world's folk wisdom—Golding was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983.

The last sceptical voice I heard was A S Neill, writing long ago in *Anarchy.* "Golding," he said, "has condemned our whole system of education, and this is not theory; it is a belief founded on half a century of practice. Golding might have introduced at least one girl to soften the hateful hearts, but a girl would have spoiled his pet thesis—that boys are born original sinners and can only be saved by the stern discipline of grown-ups. I hasten to add that some suppressed schoolgirls might also have joined the hunting gang. Golding has studied the wrong children. Presumably he has never seen children who were free from outside moulding, children who got love instead of hate, children who had natural charity and tolerance. He has not seen, as I have for over 40 years, juries of children trying a young thief. Never once was any punishment demanded, only paying back."

The Trinity students underlined his point. It can't be verified experimentally, but there actually exists an account of a real-life situation like that of *Lord of the Flies,* told by Susanna Agnelli in a book about something quite different *(Street Children,* Weidenfeld 1986):

"In 1977, six boys in Tonga, all friends, went fishing. Their boat was caught in a storm and after several terrifying days was wrecked on a reef. The crew had just enough strength to scramble ashore, on to an unknown tropical island. They realised that it was totally uninhabited. Confronted with their predicament, they I promised each other that as long as they were there they would never quarrel, because that would spell the end of them; that they would always go about in pairs, in case one had an accident or got lost; and that two of them would keep guard, day and night. They kept their promises, and 15 months later were found and rescued."

This was a different ending from Golding's, where poor, defeated Ralph looks up at the majesty of the disgusted naval officer. Susanna Agnelli believes that "they owed their survival to a shared faith; to the fact that none had any reason to exploit the other; and especially perhaps, to a culture which gave more weight to cooperation than to competition".

She added a remark Neill would have endorsed, and about which it would be fascinating to hear Trinity School students' comments. She said that "modern education has gone to such lengths to subvert this principle that, faced with a similar situation, the urban youngsters of today would be unlikely to react with the same unselfishness and self-reliance".

You can easily test this conclusion by imagining whether you would like to be stuck on a desert island with any of the transient heroes of contemporary British society: Sinclair, Murdoch, Maxwell, Branson? Or do you think of yourself as a child survivor,

along with creeps like Parkinson, Gummer, Baker and Fowler as shipmates in the wreck of human values?

There's another great modern fable, where Winston Smith discovers the proles. It suddenly occurs to him that the proles of *1984* were not loyal to a country or a party of an idea, but that "they were loyal to one another. For the first time in his life he did not despise the proles or think of them merely as an inert force which would one day spring to life and regenerate the I world. The proles had stayed human."

75. Colin Ward hears about proud German cities

Our foremost urban geographer, Peter Hall, breezed into London last month to address the 75th anniversary conference of the Royal Town Planning Institute. He ranged, as he tends to these days, from Keynes to Kropotkin, and very tellingly, from Galbraith to the Greens.

And he brought the scorn of all of them to bear on London, the triumph of the entrepreneurial society. "We live," he observed, "in good, well-furnished and graciously decorated houses, we eat increasingly good food washed down with good wine... we live, literally, the lives of princes. But this world ends as soon as we go outside our front doors." London, he told the planners, with humour, "has become the sink, the cesspit, of the urban world".

Remember that these are the words of a man who knows every metropolis around the globe. "I used to say," he went on, "that we have third world standards in the middle of the first. Now I think that unfair: many so-called third world cities, in Asia and Latin America, are actually in far better physical shape."

But in reminding us of the total lack of balance between our private and our public lives, the contrast he chose was that of the cities of the German Federal Republic. The reason he found them as exhilarating as he found London depressing was not merely their affluence, it was the plain and visible result of the influence on German politics and policies of the green movement. ("The so-called Greens," as our Prime Minister dismissively calls them.)

Simply to undermine our resignation, it is well worth quoting Peter Hall's German impressions, so you can make the necessary comparisons: "In every city—in Munich, in Stuttgart, in Frankfurt—they have built magnificent new public transport systems: underground railways and suburban trains that tunnel under the city centres. In every one, virtually the whole city centre has been turned into a pedestrian precinct, an oasis of peace and calm from which the car has been banished and people walk free. The streets are bursting with life; the crowds are almost overwhelming. They are happy, relaxed, carefree crowds. Scores of entertainers, some familiar, some exotic, perform for their pleasure..."

He went on to lament that he had not carried a video camera to record the sounds he heard in German streets, to try to convey the *quality* of street life. But he had a similarly significant thing to say about the urban hinterland:

"Just off centre, in the older inner-residential districts, they have now adopted a different battery of tactics. The traffic is being calmed by making it drive at walking speed; main streets are actually being narrowed to provide more space for pedestrians and bikes. Everywhere, bikes have their own lanes at the kerbside of the pavement: a device we adopted along our arterial roads in the 1930s and then allowed to fall into disuse. The sheer volume of bike traffic is amazing. Sidewalk cafes make walking a pleasure. The cities are being won back for people."

Now, I think his comments very important. They should be widely exploited by interest groups like Transport 2000 and the London Cycling Campaign, by those who share his horror about London, and those who feel dismayed as he does at our "extraordinary act of intellectual abdication" over planning issues.

A week later the Chancellor made his autumn statement, surrounded by the same atmosphere of secrecy and conjuring tricks as the spring budget. He announced that in the next three years £7.7. billion will be spent on roads, £3.7 billion on British Rail and £1.7 billion on London Regional Transport. He gave no indication as to how much of these last two sums would be met by government.

The way such decisions are made in centralised secrecy in Britain contrasts, as much as the resulting condition of the cities, with the situation in the German Federal Republic. There, not only the 11 *Lander* but the cities themselves have considerable autonomy and revenue-gathering powers.

Peter Hall deplored the fact that England never had an equivalent of the great German or Italian 15th-century free city-states. He regretted that the provincial urban tradition, exemplified by Victorian Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds, was allowed to wither as a result of the dominance of English central government, while "London, the legatee of this process of drainage, failed to benefit. It never built up a strong and proud tradition of urban adminstration," precisely because "the central government was always too frightened of London to give it much rope".

This is why he urged that "in the cities, we need a return of civic independence and civil pride, coupled with a devolution of responsibility to the most local level". Is that on *your* agenda?

76. Colin Ward hears why Breton broccoli is on the menu in New York

I wrote recently about the report *Cornwall at the Crossroads* from the Cornish Social and Economic Research Group in Redruth, and its urgings that its county should learn from the experience of its French equivalent, Finistere in Brittany.

As France's north-west is far more prosperous than England's south-west, while equally remote from the capitals where important things happen, this is good advice. But you can scour the business sections of all the posh papers and their discussion of integration with Europe, only to find that they are all about money and returns on investment and not about people producing goods to earn a living.

So I was eager to watch BBCl's *Country File* on 19 November at the unsocial viewing hour of midday, as it promised a direct Cornish-Breton comparison. We got a lot of mugshots of the Duke of Cornwall (Prince Charles) telling his vassals to buck up their ideas, and of fish wholesalers talking of their efforts to provide a bigger value-added quotient to dead fish by investing in freezing plants, thus opening up the south-European markets.

This in itself is a familiar story. I've mentioned how we export coal dust to Germany because there has been a willingness there to invest in the plant to produce briquette fuel for re-import here. I was told the other day how Britain imports American wastepaper because it's cheaper than systematic collection for recycling here. A Paris-based firm has just taken over refuse collection in the patch of rural Suffolk where I live.

A visitor from another planet would conclude that we are all in thrall to the transport industry. *Country File's* Breton interviews certainly implied this. At St Pol de Leon we were introduced to the secretary of SICA, a cooperative of growers. He was a solid square-faced character who bashed out three messages. The first was the endless co-op advice for rugged individualists everywhere: you're lost on your own, but together you can achieve something. The second was the importance of cheap credit. It's the same lesson from anywhere in Europe where small-scale production has actually succeeded. High interest rates spell death, cheap borrowing spells life, both for you and the lender.

In Britain, of course, we have got used to the idea that manipulation of interest rates is *the* economic regulator. The rest of us just have to suffer the results.

The third lesson from Brittany was rather less acceptable. The man from SICA explained how, when the shipping firms weren't interested in a ferry to Cornwall, the co-op financed it itself. It took typical Cornish products like fish and cauliflowers from there to here, and, naturally, tourists from here to there. The ferry is now flourishing and selffinancing.

But the Breton growers' co-op didn't stop there. It lobbied for the enlargement of the airport at Brest, and aided by both French government and EC funds, achieved it. Now it flies vegetables to New York and Montreal on one plane a week. "In a year," said Mr SICA, "we'll have two planes a week, and in five years, two planes a day."

Now who, other than the expansive SICA members and the air freight firms, actually rejoices in this? Over the river from New York is New Jersey, which has always called itself "The Garden State", since for a century it has grown vegetable crops for the huge metropolitan cities of the East Coast. Montreal has always been fed by poor French-Canadian farmers in Quebec.

New Jersey tried to survive by importing cheap Puerto Rican labour, but was outclassed by both California and Florida, with their huge reservoirs of Latin American pickers and packers. I've never been to Brittany and I've no idea whether or not those delicious fresh broccoli are picked, processed and packed by the philoprogenitive Bretons or by third generation North African immigrants—one of whom will now be dreaming up a scheme for exporting Algerian vegetables all over the world.

I don't know where this process ends. It's no solution for Brittany and it's no solution for Cornwall either. We're stuck in a technical fix. Anything can be produced anywhere, thanks to every kind of climate control, fertiliser and pesticide, and then transported everywhere, since once you've started a service it's cheaper to keep it going than to run it down.

The market rules, and it also excludes any producer wanting to break in. Why shouldn't Brittany, or Cornwall, or Korea or Vietnam conquer the world's consumers, but for the fact that production for a local market is simple, logical and useful? There is also evidence that the transport of everything everywhere builds up a legacy of waste, pollution and financial corruption that everyone, everywhere will have to pay for. It is a very heavy price.

77. Colin Ward hears a tune the pianola cannot play

In the next village, John Bulman turns his hand to every skill from book-binding to bee-keeping. So when his daughter bought a clapped-out pianola she assumed Dad would be able to fix it.

If you've ever seen the insides of one of them, you will know that they are an indescribable triumph of several fields of mechanical engineering: a series of smooth-running cogwheels and sprocket chains, dozens of bellows, large and small, delicate punched-paper rolls, and a mass of perished rubber tubes.

The problem was how to fit these 3-milli-metre tubes on to 4-millimetre pipe ends, one for every note on the keyboard. He asked around among every kind of specialist. An aeronautical engineer suggested the use of expanding forceps, and a surgeon who used the same device for keeping arteries apart had the same idea. A chemist urged that he should soak the tubes in xylene to expand them to fit. A civil engineer argued that, after expanding them in this way, they should be frozen to -20 degrees Celsius and assembled before they warmed up.

John pondered over these intriguing examples of technology transfer, but vaguely remembered seeing a games teacher effortlessly getting rubber grips on to cricket bat handles. So he devised a piece of wire with a nodule at the end, like the way the spokes are held into a cycle wheel rim, and accomplished his mission.

We all bring our preconceptions to any task, since as Mark Twain put it, "if your only tool is a hammer, all problems look like nails".

Marxists all over the world, confident that history itself was on their side, saw themselves as the hammer of their mythological proletariat. Like the Christians who converted the rulers of the Roman Empire, they saw the conquest of the power of the state as the way human destiny would be fulfilled. Once you've got that hammer in your hand, you can drive in every nail.

First expand the people with hopes of liberation, then freeze them and reassemble them the right way before they warm up. Don't worry about those who are beyond redemption. This is the logic of every hammer-man from Lenin and Stalin to Mao and Pol Pot. Sometimes there's a power failure and the freezer doesn't work any more. Hence the current jubilation in eastern Europe.

The engineers in different fields are busy with alternative methods of making the people fit their chosen system. The expanding forceps of nationalism, religion and ethnic differences are guaranteed to keep the people apart. But they won't pull the people together.

Among our regrets, one is that there are plenty of places where the machinery of terror and intimidation still work. Another is that, at every stage in the demarxification of eastern Europe, we have had apologists in safe little capitalist Britain to explain that the events in Berlin in 1953, Poland and Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland again in 1970 and 1980 were simply fomented by the Americans or the Catholic church.

I'm endlessly reminded of one of those jokes from the Gomulka period in Poland. "Tell me," a young man asks the priest or rabbi, "is it possible to have socialism in one country?" The cleric replies: "Oh, yes, it's possible, provided you live in another one."

But the biggest regret is that the experience of Marxist rule has set back the cause of socialism by a century. Of course, every ideology uses its forceps, its freezing and rewarming device, or a simple stretching, to make us fit. It suits our current rulers to redefine passengers, patients or pupils as customers, just as they have been renamed as the proletariat in the east. In both systems, the rulers have their own private transport, medical care and schools, and would not dream of using the means provided for their subjects. Hard steel at one end, flexible rubber at the other. It works with pianolas, assuming the pedals, cogs, bellows, tubes and pipes are all intact. But it doesn't work with human societies, whatever the tune that is fed in.

Lenin, like the man with the hammer, assumed that "the whole of society will have to become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labour and pay". As the nails got bent he tried his New Economic Policy. Disconcerted with the results, he decided that the reason was that it had "lost sight of the cooperatives" which he had previously dismissed as "collective capitalist institutions".

So he banged home another simple message: that the remaining task was to "organise the population in cooperative societies". What he and his endless successors never understood was that you can't do this with a hammer, with a deep-freeze, and not

even by stretching them to fit. It's a kind of socialism that can only evol e from below in its own way and its own time. You can treat people like rubber, force them into your system and make them play any tune you like. But rubber perishes. No amount of technology transfer will stop the survivors from making their own choices.

78. Colin Ward Bides-Awhile at Distant Point

Christmas comes but once a year to Bide-Awhile, the shop where, having fed their machines and themselves, motorway travellers linger, almost reluctant to leave the oasis, and gather up crisps, sweets, cigarettes, novelties and a great weight of newspapers and magazines.

For me, unfamiliarity gives the service areas on major roads the same romance that attaches to the lineside stopping points on the Trans-Siberian railway: little lonely depots where the locomotive takes on fuel and water, and where the passengers stretch their legs and buy in stocks of hardboiled eggs, cucumbers, bread, sunflower seeds and vodka for the next lap of the journey.

I envisage little settlements around the distant points where political exiles and people with a past to hide build log cabins, a wooden school for their children and a church for their souls, and timetable their lives around the sequence of arrivals and departures. Ancient towns and cities grew this way at crossroads and river junctions. Whatever happens in central Asia, our planning legislation makes sure that it can't happen at British motorway interchanges, where the service staff inevitably drive in on the nearside lane from the closest human habitation.

Actually, so travelogues tell me, even in the far east the sellers themselves board the train at the last recognisable place, and kip down in the guard's van, where they heat up their sausages, borscht and tea on little kerosene stoves. Once arrived at the lonely stop, they set up their own Little Chefs or Happy Eaters along the platform. And the nomads ride in on their camels or pack-horses from their seasonal camps, bringing cured skins, beadwork and richly-woven prayer mats.

Passengers buy them as souvenirs of the journey, or as presents for their grandchildren in Irkutsk or Akademograd, while picking up sugar-candy and the metropolitan papers from the itinerant equivalents of the Drover's Rest or the Welcome Break.

The transient moment at Distant Point would be celebrated by the purchase of some title object of carved soapstone, ram's horn or pinewood, to sit on a shelf of knick-knacks back home for half a lifetime. In the 19th century the same thing happened here. When changing coaches at the Cock or the Bull at Stoney Stratford or trains at Crewe, people would buy a bit of Goss china, the decorated boxwood known as Mauchline ware, or just a picture postcard of the place.

All these mementos of particular locations began as unconsidered trifles, and then became household junk. Slowly they were transformed into curios, then bygones and finally antiques. Collectors now seek out and trade in these transient keepsakes.

Today, down at Bide-Awhile, the staff drive in to cover the unsocial hours and unpopular weekend shifts, guided through remote control by the supervisor. Their big headaches, apart from that of ensuring that the right collection of supplements are inserted into the correct Sunday papers, occur when purchasers change their mind having seen the cash rung up. As noone can afford to trust anyone else these days, the assistant has to phone through to the supervisor for authorisation to repay 30p to a customer who objects to that price for a bag of crisps.

The real money is in impulse purchases of objects that confirm the fleeting visit. Normally they're stuck with authentic replicas of red telephone boxes, guardsmen, Highlanders or London taxis. But Christmas brings a brisk trade in seasonal novelties. At the bottom of the range there are Jolly Bendeers. These are moulded plastic reindeers with flexible wires through their limbs so that they can adopt the posture of your choice, at £1.50. Then at £3 there are fluffy snowballs on skis. You wind them up and they go round in circles. For the big spenders, at £13 (only one left at the time of writing) there is a Teddy Bear who, if you squeeze its paw, will sing Jingle Bells, Old MacDonald or Frere Jacques. A more recondite adult pleasure costs only £2 more. This buys you a pot of Plastic Flowers that Wriggle. If you shout or sing or whistle loud enough, their stems slowly girate.

Children coming into Bide-Awhile discover that if you put the singing Teddy in front of the Wriggling Flowers, you can make the one operate the other.

Buy now, while stocks last, but keep them unworn in their original polythene bags. History tells us that if you can store them long enough, the cycle of taste will ensure that, like fairground plasterware, clay dolls, tinware toys, Dinky and Matchbox models, all this instant rubbish will be seen as a charming epitome of the 1980s by the collectors' markets of the 2030s. Hold on to it, unless by chance you have other things to think about.

1990

79. Colin Ward shudders at our allotted roles as victims or executioners

In a recent High Court libel action, Nigel Nicholson, a former publisher and Conservative MP, told the jury of his experience in May 1945 when he was an intelligence officer in the First Guards Brigade. He and other British officers locked thousands of Yugoslav men, women and children into cattle trucks at a station in southern Austria, telling them that they were going to Italy.

The train was then boarded by Tito's partisans and "it was then that the really horrible moment arrived, when they began hammering on the sides of the trucks and reproaching us with having betrayed them". He reported to his superiors that his soldiers undertook this "unsavoury" task with the utmost distaste. He was ordered to rewrite his report and submitted another a little later which contained "not a word of truth". He was "disgusted" by the order and now thought he should have disobeyed it.

Every war is full of such horrors, carefully written out of history. Vast numbers of Europeans played a similar role, packing the trucks at wayside stations, and have ever since shared the same regret. The machinery of the state ensures both their complicity and the elimination of the events from the historical record.

The state, everywhere, relies on popular silence about the outrages involved in maintaining its authority. Hence the inability of people, anywhere in the world, to bring to justice the death squads of the previous regime. The record has already been changed, and the survivors have every reason for keeping silent.

It's nothing at all in the numbers game, but the example on the doorstep all my life has been the 342 people executed with the utmost legality under the authority of the Army Act between 1914 and November 1920 for desertion, cowardice and so on. Since this was done as an example to the rest of the first world war army, most veterans had some vague knowledge of it, as had most war-resisters who were threatened with the same fate. For everyone else it never happened.

When the dance band leader Victor Silvester died 12 years ago, the author of *The Monocled Mutineer,* William Allison, revealed that he had left behind an account of his involuntary involvement. A month before the mutiny at Etaples in 1917, Private Silvester was found reading a list, intended for officers only, of the men to be executed. The general told him: "I am not going to punish you but you will be detailed to take part in the next five executions."

Silvester recalled that "the first man I had to shoot was a private in my own regiment, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders... Mortified by the sight of the poor man struggling, 12 of us raised our rifles unsteadily. Some of the men, unable to face their ordeal, had got themselves drunk overnight. The tears were rolling down my cheeks as the victim went on struggling to free himself from the bonds tying him to the chair. I aimed blindly and when the gunsmoke had cleared away we were further horrified to see that, although wounded, the intended victim was still alive. Still blindfolded, he was attempting to make-a run for it still strapped to his chair. The blood was running freely from a chest wound. An officer stepped forward to put the finishing touch with a revolver held to the poor man's temple. W e learned later that in fact the victim had been suffering from shell shock." Victim and executioners were teenagers.

After taking part in four more executions Silvester said: "I was screaming in my sleep and physically sick every day, I was put into a military hospital and strapped down to the bed to stop me running away." If he had run away, no doubt he would have found himself in another group of victims. As it is, his posthumous memoir only gained publicity because he had become a show-biz celebrity.

That generation is now dead. In the intervening years, apart from the effect of the Official Secrets Act, the files have been weeded out and destroyed. But the same sense of historical rectitude that has led some people to seek out responsibility for the endless massacres of the second world war, whether at Auschwitz, in Polish forests or the gorge outside Kiev, has impelled Julian Putowski and Julian Sykes to search casualty records, newspapers, war diaries and lists of those not entitled to medals, to compile *Shot at Dawn: Executions in World War One by Authority of the British Army Act* (Whamcliffe Publishing, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, S. Yorks S702AS, £15.95).

Like every other wartime tale, it's a story of the inarticulate, poor and ill-educated, whether bewildered conscripts, Jews, Ukrainians or Serbs. The victims are rounded up for death by the confident, well-educated and articulate people who run the show on every side and are amply capable of eliminating the record to ensure that *no one* can call *them* to account.

80. Colin Ward seeks Nowhere somewhere

In the anniversary industry the great thing about 1990 is that it marks the centenary of William Morris's *News from Nowhere.* Dismissed for decades by socialist academics as sentimental mediaevalism, it stands out today as the least authoritarian and most relevant criticism of capitalist values in the whole vast library of utopian visions, and as the one which appeals most to modern green and feminist awareness. On one test after another, with key issues like making work enjoyable, or giving children a place in the economy rather than in a ghetto called school, Morris challenges all our assumptions.

Paul Thompson provided the best of all modern interpretations in his book *The Work of William Morris* (coming out again this year from OUP), where he commented

that: "Socialism was originally the product of the age of the factory, and it bears that mark in its primary focus upon work. This is the major reason why socialism has always had a more direct appeal to men than to women, and eqally why, with the growth of leisure and a home-centered way of life, its significance to ordinary life has become less and less obvious. But Morris stands alone among major socialist thinkers in being as consistently concerned with housework and the home as with work and the factory. The transformation of both factory and home was equally necessary for the future fulfilment of men and women. Morris wanted everyday life as a whole to become the basic form of creativity, of art."

Just as salutary for us is Morris's own mode of production. He didn't spend years researching utopias. He just wrote his novel in instalments on Sunday nights as a serial story for next Friday's issue of the socialist weekly *The Commonweal* between 11 January and 4 October 1890. Before the days of "instant" book production, book publishing was far more instantaneous. Roberts Brothers of Boston, with neither airmail nor fax to help, actually got it out as a book in 1890, followed by Reeves and Turner in London in 1891 and Morris himself in the beautiful Kelmscott edition of 1892. Desktop publishing was a reality a century ago when there wasn't a barrage of editors and wordprocessors between writer and reader.

Ideas too flowed more freely before we had intellectual "disciplines". Busy, hardworking Morris absorbed the usual homegrown mentors like Carlyle and Ruskin, and exotic imports like Marx and the refugees from the Paris Commune and Tsarist Russia. Nearer at hand, in the same *Commonweal* in June 1889, an obscure young engineer, Raymond Unwin, had described the Sunday outing of the Chesterfield socialists to an early 18th century house, Sutton Hall, in words that sound as though they had slipped out of *News from Nowhere*:

> "Small wonder that, as we stood looking at the house and the splendid view that it commands, we should fall to talking of the 'days that are going to be', when this Hall and others like it will be the centre of a happy communal life, each one having his own den upstairs... and downstairs would be large common dining halls, smoking rooms—if indeed life shall still need the weed to make it perfect. And we chatted on, each adding a bit to our picture; how some would till the land around and others tend the cattle, while others perhaps would start some industry, working in the outbuildings or building workshops in the park, and taking care not to spoil our view..."

This creative recycling of the inheritance of the past was in the minds of those colleagues of Morris who founded the Commons Preservation Society, the National Footpaths Preservation Society, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty.

Ironically, what really happened in the "days that are going to be" was that under the banner of the National Trust, the aristocracy stayed on as custodians of their great

houses while the rest shuffled reverently around the loot of ages, like *moujiks* in their felt boots doing the Winter Palace heritage trail.

The legacy of *News from Nowhere,* and of other serialised socialist best-sellers of the period like Robert Blatchford's *Merrie England,* was endlessly distorted, watered down or absorbed into bureaucratic managerialism. Raymond Unwin, for example, became the first architect of the first garden city at Letchworth, then of the Hampstead Garden Suburb, but finally the mentor of government housing policy which became progressively estranged over the decades from popular aspirations.

Wouldn't it be refreshing if we celebrated the centenary of Morris's little masterpiece by wiping away our automatic sneer about his irrelevance in the era of the microchip, market values and cheap labour in the Far East, and began to work out our own dreams of the kind of society in which we would really like to live, and how we propose to get there? Read the book to discover what might happen next.

81. Colin Ward goes in search of a railway guide

Experience tells us, when we see TV campaigns for a state-owned industry, that it's a build-up for a sell-off. So, when BR revived its 1988/9 campaign, a rewrite of W H Auden's *Night Mail,* rhyming commuter with computer, it was an unmistakeable signal.

But look at the shelves marked Transport in any bookshop or public library. While you will find a vast range of fully illustrated books on every aspect of railway operation, you will discover nothing at all about railway *policy,* whether BR's own changes or the present government's intentions.

For that huge specialist literature, and its market, is entirely devoted to the past. It caters for steam nostalgia, although the early years of diesel locomotives are by now long enough ago to have generated their own enthusiasts. Nothing on the shelves informs the citizen who believes in railways as the safest and least environmentally damaging form of inland transport, and is concerned for their future.

In saying this, I do a slight injustice to Ian Allan Ltd, biggest of the specialists, who for 40 years have published the *Railway World* yearbook. They have just brought out *Beeching: Champion of the Railway?* by R H M Hardy, a defence of the man who, appointed to make British Railways profitable, adopted the simple device of cutting out the unprofitable lines. It's a book with many insights for those who aren't just buried in the pre-Beeching era.

Beeching's report on *The Reshaping of British Railways* is more than a quarter of a century old. Perhaps even he qualifies as nostalgia. For he did, after all, declare to a union conference: "I see the railways as a national asset, owned by the nation and therefore to be used in the best interests of the nation as a whole, not simply in the best interests of the employees, nor of its users, nor to make a profit for the owners—you and me, the taxpayers."

Today, at a time when there is an intense debate behind the scenes on the future of BR, there is nothing on sale in the bookshops to enable citizens to take part. The Department of Transport issues statements that Richard Hope, editor of *Railway Gazette,* roundly calls "a gross and deliberate deception of the public". In cutting grants to BR, the unspeakable Cecil Parkinson told MPs: "To subsidise a service for which there is excessive demand is a very silly way of using national income." British Rail itself conducts relations with the public through a mendacious thicket of PR professionals. A foreign visitor would assume that we already have three railway systems: InterCity, Provincial and Network SouthEast.

You have to consult outside pressure groups whose publications never reach the shops to learn what is in the air. Several years ago, for example, TEST (Transport and Environmental Studies, of 177 Arlington Road, London NW1 7EY) produced for Transport 2000 a detailed two-volume study called *BR: A European Railway,* to indicate lessons from the rest of the continent. The latest truth, with the Transport Secretary's newest announcement, is that BR will be the highest-priced and least subsidised railway system in Europe.

Since we have learned that government policy is made by right-wing think-tanks like the Adam Smith Institute, the Centre for Policy Studies and the Institute of Economic Affairs, a necessary service has been provided by Paul Salveson in summarising the options that they have put before an eager government. This is in his book (not in your local bookshop either, unfortunately) called *British Rail: the radical alternative to privatisation* (Centre for Local Economic Strategies. Alberton House, St Mary's Parsonage, Manchester M3 2WJ, £3.95).

Mr Salveson's book has many other functions. He knows that the clever young men in the pressure groups can be just as myopic as any ordinary steam buff in idealising the "big four" railway companies (LNER, LMSR, GWR and SR) nationalised under the Transport Act of 1947, or even the host of independent railways that were "grouped" as a result of the Railways Act of 1921. If a free market is the aim, he reminds us that as long ago as 1872 a parliamentary inquiry found that "there is now no active competition between different railways in the matter of rates and fares", and that in 1892 the railway cartel was described as "monopoly in the guise of competition".

In a foreword, Jimmy Knapp warns us against the "pervasive nostalgia for a mythical pre-war heyday of the railways". Paul Salveson too stresses that those who see the railways as a national asset should not be pushed into an automatic defence of the current aggressively commercial BR structure. He reminds us that we don't have to reject the separating of infrastructure from operations just because the Adam Smith Institute recommends it. The notion works well in Sweden and Switzerland. But his over-riding demand is for "a new management culture". How right he is!

82. Colin Ward is invaded by magical realism in the pheasantry

It was an everyday story of country folk in January at 2am. I went to bed at midnight and had drifted into sleep over a vast Latin American novel I was inspired to read after watching Mike Dibb's powerful TV kaleidoscope of that continent. The rest of the family was glued, to John Boorman's *Deliverance,* also on TV, about what happened when a bunch of ordinary guys went shooting.

Vaguely I heard urgent footsteps, the shifting of heavy furniture, muttered curses and the opening and shutting of a window. It became linked in my mind with the day the earthquake hit Tres Marias, just at the time when Esteban Trueba was spending sleepless nights debating whether it was beneath his dignity to breed chinchillas for the fur trade. I dozed off again but then heard the sound of the vacuum cleaner absorbing the detritus of the earthquake.

In the morning I learned that one of the cats had caught a hen pheasant. Incredibly, she had dragged it through the catflap and, in a rare joint venture with the other cat, also female, had harried it up the stairs until the bird found refuge behind the old elm chest. Ben had the task of rescuing the bird and releasing it into the night, with a dreadful loss of feathers. I went in search of the maimed bird but never found it. Somehow it had fluttered away, an easy target. It was a reminder of the way shooting game birds has spread down the rural hierarchy.

A huge slice of "country heritage" revolves around land-owners and their mania for hunting and shooting. The same story's underside tells of poverty-stricken families and their desperate attempts to gather food and income from trapping, snaring or shooting birds and animals. It is a centuries-long saga of ruthless class war between rich and poor, punctuated by executions, transportations and hard labour in prison. John MacGregor should certainly include the death squads employed by the gentry as part of his national curriculum for British history.

Small farmers here were always involved in shooting, and so were their employees. Rabbits, hares and pigeons were a menace to their crops and were also food for the generations who reared cattle, sheep and pigs but could seldom afford to eat them. Shooting as sport . was a hobby for the rich. Shooting for food was confined to tenants and their employees in the agricultural depression that lasted from the 1870s until the second world war.

The new affluence for farmers since then has enabled them to emulate the rich. Even before the current ironies of "set-aside" payments, some of them had begun to rear partridges and pheasants for organised shoots, and to salvage or replant little woods and coppices for this purpose. County conservation officers, knowing that the way to the farmer is through his pocket, have actively encouraged this. The same people who got subsidies for grubbing up hedges and eliminating copses, could now pick up more public money for replanting, as well as cheap young labour to do the job.

Our farming neighbours now buy in young stock for shooting from specialised hatcheries. They even conquer their individualism to join forces in employing a game-keeper who feeds and polices the birds on one of those wide-tyred three-wheel motor-bikes.

In the autumn, just before the killing-field season started, Harriet was driving down the lane and found her path obstructed by a platoon of partridges, wandering without any fear across the road. They knew that humans, even in vehicles were friends who lovingly nurtured them, put down poison to eliminate their enemies, and kept a watch for marauders. How could they know that in just a few days men with guns would pay £300 a day to be driven around in Range-Rovers to make war on them?

One night, parked in the lay-by, was a van full of corpses in pairs, just like a rack of coathangers in Marks & Spencer. It isn't done for food. You can buy the birds retail at £2.50 a brace, but it costs about £12 each to rear them.

It depends on the eagerness of an incredible number of people to pay for the privilege of killing tame birds, once they have been scared into taking to the air.

But the worst aspect of the business, apart from losses of crops and produce, is its effect on human relations. A new kind of barking relationship evolved when the new game rearers met *anyone,* whether footpath users or employees, wandering around on *their* land.

Everyone is suspect. In the new paranoia of the shooting business, the humblest walker must be chased off. What are they doing on our patch? If they aren't poachers in disguise, they must be irresponsibly disturbing the breeding grounds. Why should they think they have a right to gather blackberries?

Those damn birds are so innocently friendly. So the magical realism of the South American *hacienda,* where you warn off on sight any roving stranger, has been imported into cosy, welcoming East Anglia.

83. Colin Ward monitors the Swiss debate on arms

Everyone knows that there are more guns in American homes than in all the armies of the US, the USSR and NATO, and that the gun lobby can't be defeated because the second amendment to the Constitution says: "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to bear arms shall not be infringed."

We blame the US murder rate on those 200 million weapons. But we also know that Switzerland, with its very low murder rate, has weapons in every home. Every male between the ages of 20 and 50 *must* keep a rifle and ammunition in the downstairs cupboard. As Machiavelli explained, "The Swiss have no army. They *are* an army."

There are attractions about this. History tells us everywhere of the dreadful dangers posed by an elite army separate from the citizens. Look at Latin America or Africa today. It's a live issue in the current debate in Spain about conscription. "Who are we

defending?" ask the ill-trained 18-year-olds. "Us", reply the socialist politicians, looking nervously over their shoulders at the phalanx of right-wing generals.

In the big powers, the sinister alliance of service chiefs and defence contractors has ensured a permanent war economy with ever more sophisticated and expensive weaponry, and consequently the professionals to use it.

This puts neutral Switzerland out on an antiquated limb. As Jonathan Steinberg says, in his absorbing answer to the question *Why Switzerland?,* "The modern Swiss army still has a vestigial atmosphere which goes back to the unruly crowd of armed, free peasants who slaughtered the flower of Burgundian chivalry by flailing at them with five-foot pikes." But "to attack the army is to assail the very identity and self-image of the Swiss people."

There's an ugly side. Not only are military and civilian life intolerably linked so that big businessmen are officers while small traders are privates, but there exists a macho gun culture and what Steinberg mildly calls Alpine bellicosity and ponderous camaraderie. Above all, there is the unwillingness to admit the rights of the political, moral or religious objector.

Constitutional changes are made by popular vote on the "initiative", needing 100,000 signatures, and the "referendum", needing 50,000. The first requires a majority of both citizens and cantons, the second a simple majority. In 1973, an attempt to win an amnesty for imprisoned conscientious objectors failed. In 1984, a very moderate initiative calling for a community service alternative to the army was defeated.

The dramatist Max Frisch is one of his country's gadflies and has written three times about the army in a mood changing from idealism to deep disillusion. In 1940 he wrote *Blatter aus dem Brotsack* (Knapsack Papers), about the experience of being a soldier maintaining a neutral haven while surrounded by Nazi expansionism. But, in 1974, came *Dienstbiichlein* (Service Record), a book which brought him intense dislike from fellow-citizens as it recorded unmentionable truths. Other soldiers, he recalled, couldn't understand what a clever chap like him was doing in the ranks. "From the workers' point of view, officers were genuinely educated or at least well off, hence entitled to lead troops and sleep in beds." Worse than that, he dared to mention that Switzerland had made some unpleasant compromises with the Nazi regime and that some officers openly sympathised with Hitler.

Last year, Frisch brought out another little book, *Schweiz ohne Armee?* (Switzerland without an Army?). It takes the form of an unwilling dialogue between the old man apd his grandson, who wants to know whether he should jeopardise his civil career by remaining a corporal, or whether he should play along with mythology and seek promotion.

His oblique little book sold 60,000 copies in a few months and is now in its fifth printing. My Swiss friends complain that Frisch didn't push the argument far enough. In November the Swiss voted again, on the radical proposal to abolish the army. The measure was, of course, defeated. But my Swiss friends are jubilant, first because more

than 36 per cent of citizens voted Yes, and secondly because 68 per cent recorded a vote. This is seen as a high turn-out. The issue was at last on the national agenda.

Swiss radicals have always complained that their political system ensures that nothing ever changes. On the other hand, they point out that such a referendum would be unthinkable in Britain, and that even if it were, far fewer of Her Majesty's loyal citizens would ever conceive of life without an army. They also gently remind me that a central government elected by a minority which proceeded to sell public assets, dictate what schools should teach, abolish those local authorities it disliked, and change the revenue basis for all the rest, would be totally inconceivable in Swizerland. Their complacent armed citizens would start rattling their rifles.

84. Colin Ward cherishes the culture of the backyard

Of all life's fringe benefits, the urban backyard is by far the most significant, touching the lives of all the family. The Victorian housing reformer Octavia Hill, who was wrong about a variety of things, was certainly right in her opposition to the provision of blocks of flats rather than individual dwelling houses.

In a marvellous passage she observed how "The creepers in the back yard, the rabbits the boys feed, the canary the sickly child listens to, the shed for the man's tools, the washing arrangements, or the arbour, are all arranged to suit individual tastes, and for all these the separate house, or the small house, gives scope."

This was in her contribution, in 1892, to the third volume of Charles Booth's monumental *Life and Labour of the People of London.* And we're all familiar with the individual tastes this patch of ground liberates: the back yard stuffed with tubs and pots and hanging baskets full of flowers, or decked out like a country station full of railway memorabilia. John Raynor remembered his father's ambition to turn the narrow walled garden at the back of number 3 Little Dean's Yard in the shadow of Westminster Abbey into a little wood of country trees. After summer holidays it was slowly filled with two oaks, an ash, two mountain ashes, a beech, an elm and a birch. He doesn't record what neighbours said, but for the family it was "a place of great magic, adored by each child in turn".

Most backyards are less romantic but have the same incalculable value: a playpen, a playground, another room for the overcrowded house, and finally a workshop.

It's bad luck if your neighbour is a panel beater, but backyard industry was there long before the factory system and survives into the allegedly post-industrial age. Take Spitalfields, for example. When Dickens observed the silk-weaving trade 150 years ago, he found no traces of London there: "It is as if the Huguenots had brought their streets along with them, and dropped them down here." And 50 years later outside observers

described how the same streets had turned into the *shtetlach* of Lithuania, Galicia or Bessarabia: peasant villages in the backyards of the rag trade.

Today both inhabitants and their detractors think it should be called Bangla Town. After all, Manchester and the City of Westminster regard their Chinatowns as a tourist feature. Brick Lane too, has its smart exotic restaurants. Tenacity and mutual aid have triumphed against racism and municipal neglect. The enemy today is the phalanx of city property developers, bulldozing the backyard culture.

A century ago, Beatrice Webb, again surveying the area for Charles Booth's survey, and in spite of her criticism of the sweatshop system, wrote that "Between factories proper and home work lie a class of home workshops: they are usually built in the yard or garden behind the dwelling house, sometimes connected with and sometimes detached from the house... It is applicable to industries where no power machinery is needed and it is a great improvement on employment in city houses."

Her view is echoed in the latest study of the same streets: *Spitalfields: a battle for land* (Hilary Shipman, £7,95). The author, Charlie Forman, who has worked in the area since 1973, notes with dismay how the former Labour council sought to drive the workshops out, and remarks that "The Spitalfields Small Business Association has tried to keep the mixed use of houses and workshops in Hanbury Street and Princelet Street. In this way, men can use their sewing machines in the workshops at the back of their gardens. They can take the children to and from school, do the shopping, pop home for lunch and generally keep in touch with their family in the way that they are used to. The planning department has tried, and fortunately failed, to get the Association to move its workshops elsewhere. Given what's happened to land prices, the workshops must stay where they are or cease to exist."

The backyard economy has been the mainstay of the Banglandeshi people, just as it was for the Jewish immigrants and just as it was for the Huguenots. The planners' objection to it is frivolous: it doesn't fit their cartographic technique. Charlie Forman remarks, correctly, that "Spitalfields doesn't fit neatly onto a map where each land use is coloured separately—shops, houses, workshops don't divide up in the way planners are taught they should."

The speculators' objection is far more sinister. Here is cheap, run-down land with occupants with no political clout. Any deal with the local authority providing some alleged "planning gain", like a handful of low-rent flats or flatted workshops, will make it ripe for new offices. Sure, we'll throw in a shopping galleria. Just pass over the planning permission.

It's a sordid tale of the entrepreneurial culture and its contempt for the back yard, and for the way people have scraped a living for centuries.

85. Colin Ward sees a pearl in the grit of Edinburgh's oyster

For me, Edinburgh doesn't mean David Hume or Adam Smith, nor Stevenson, Deacon Brodie or Jekyll and Hyde. It's not even the city of the Anglo-ascendency, high-life, the Festival, heroin, homelessness or gay judges.

It is the city of a 19th century marine biologist from Aberdeenshire, Patrick Geddes. He was one of those people who buttonhole you in the street, walking, talking and waving his arms around: an erratic, disorganised and overbearing genius who anticipated every one of our late 20th century preoccupations, from the energy crisis to women's liberation.

In 1886 he settled in one of the tenement slums of the Old Town with his wife, Anna, organised the installation of bathrooms and hectored the city councillors on the folly of demolition when the poor had nowhere to go. He then bought a slum and turned it into the first self-governing student hostel in Britain. After that he bought the Outlook Tower with its *camera obscura* at the western end of the Royal Mile to create a "sociological museum and laboratory" through which the citizens could comprehend their city. All this with borrowed money.

Shunned as a charlatan by the academic establishment, Geddes left behind at least three dumps of indecipherable papers, beyond those which were simply put out for the refuse collector. One is at the National Library in Edinburgh, another in the University there, and yet another at Strathclyde.

Maybe his best legacy to Edinburgh was in an oration at the end of the first world war: "The central government says 'Homes for heroes? We are prepared to supply all these things from Whitehall; at any rate to supervise them; to our minds much the same thing.' But are they? Can they? With what results, what achievements? At present we have the provinces all bowing to Westminster, where they are granted doles; so the best people leave for London. They send their money to Westminster, which (after ample expenses have been deducted) is returned to some of them in the alluring form of a grant. But why not use this money themselves in the first place? Why not keep your money, your artists and your scientists, your orators and your planners—and do up your city yourselves?"

Geddes stuck together a town planning exhibition which toured the world and was sunk by the German cruiser *Emden* during the first war. But the book that it coaxed out of him, *Cities in Evolution,* was read in 1915 by a 20-year-old New York student, Lewis Mumford, who died last month aged 94. It was a revelation. It introduced him to thinkers totally outside the academic pale: to Ebenezer Howard the garden city pioneer, and to Elisee Reclus and Peter Krokpotkin, anarchist geographers.

In the 1920s Mumford met Geddes and later described how the old man saw him as, and almost confused him with, the cherished son lost in the first world war. The

poignancy of the situation was brought back to him by his own similar loss in the second.

But Mumford was the vehicle through which a range of ideas outside any student's syllabus were brought back into circulation. He began in 1934 with *Technics and Civilisation,* elaborating the way Geddes had adapted the vocabulary of archaeology to categorise the phases of technology. *Eotechnic* covered water power and the use of timber and stone, *Paleotechnic* the age of coal and iron, and *Neotechnic* our own world of light alloys, plastic and electricity. This remarkably relevant book was partially reprinted by Freedom Press in 1986.

He followed it with *The Culture of Cities* in 1938, a book which changed many readers' assumptions about the city states of the Middle Ages, and was later completely rewritten as *The City in History,* still around as a Penguin. Later came a third volume, *The Condition of Man,* but Mumford's post-war legacy is best found in a dozen books analysing trends in architecture and planning.

By the time he thought he had retired, the horrors of American foreign policy led Mumford back to commitment and denunciation. Later books like *The Myth of the Machine* and *The Pentagon of Power* put into its context of centralised and irresponsible authority—United States military involvement in south-east Asia.

Geddes once lectured the Co-operative Wholesale Society on socialism which, he implied, meant that "until everything and everybody is ready for the millennium, nothing can be really got ready at all." On the other hand, "co-operation does the daily duties which lie nearest, refuses no bird in the hand today for the sake of two in the bush tomorrow, and thus not only lives and grows, but daily strengthens toward larger tasks; since, in fact, getting a bird in the hand today is the best practice for getting two out of the bush tomorrow."

Unexpected disciples like Mumford spent a lifetime trying to resolve this issue. But the rest of us haven't coped with it either.

86. Colin Ward salutes girl scouts, eighty years on

If I said I always had a soft spot for the scout movement you would fall about in derisive laughter. So I ought to confess my support for the venerable co-operative alternative, the Woodcraft Folk, which never had those sexist, monarchist and militarist hang-ups.

But the news that the Scout Association had decided to allow girls to join (to the discomfiture of the larger Girl Guides Association) coincided with the death of Lord Maclean, who as Chief Scout made the devastating decision to replace wide-brimmed hats with berets and shorts with long trousers. This led me to think, yet again, about the sociological distinction between structure and function.

As everyone knows, the Founder was Robert Baden-Powell, subject of endless biographies revealing unpalatable truths. The worst was about the siege of Mafeking in

the South African War. It was what we now call a media event, stage-managed for his own advancement. There never was a siege. Even the mail got through, including proofs of B-P's book about his own heroic role in it. The soldiers in the relief column were better fed once they had got *inside* the unbesieged town. Meanwhile the "natives" starved. B-P had one of them executed for stealing a goat.

Back home, the self-created hero, with the press king C Arthur Pearson, carefully planned a serial publication, *Scouting for Boys,* using material borrowed from American woodcraft enthusiasts like Ernest Thompson Seton. Some of them sued. But the weekly issues found an eager audience. Leslie Paul related how: "With an astonishing perception they leapt at Scouting as at something for which they had been waiting, divining that this was a movement which took the side of the natural, inquisitive, adventuring boy against the repressive schoolmaster, the moralising parson and the coddling parent. Before the leaders knew what was happening, groups were springing up spontaneously, and everywhere bands of boys, with bare knees and broomsticks, began foraging through the countryside."

The function preceded the structure, and of course the Association was soon founded, under royal patronage, to take control. But by 1909 at least 6,000 girls had become Boy Scouts, and at a rally at the Crystal Palace that year plenty of them turned up in their scout hats and scarves, carrying their staves.

The eagle eye of The Chief discerned that they weren't actually boys, and deputed his poor sister Agnes to hive them off at once into the body that became the Girl Guides. The new organisation was slow to grow, particularly as the girl equivalent of Cubs were to be Rosebuds, only later redesignated as Brownies.

The Scout movement, like later youth organisations in both east and west, has always been subverted by the actual interests of its members, or simply used by them for the facilities it gave access to. When Paul Neuburg was a boy in Budapest and like the city's other schoolchildren joined the Red Flag Club, actually run by the State Security Corps, the ideology washed over him. "In fact it occured to me to remember my socialist club with gratitude only when I emigrated to the west and found that there one had to pay for tickets to the swimming pool and everything else."

When Louis Heren, later foreign editor of the *Times,* was a poor boy in Wapping in the 1930s, he belonged to the 2nd City of London Sea Scouts just because there was no other way of getting near a boat. He recalls his troop as an extraordinary self-governing, self-motivating and self-perpetuating group". Even when their meeting-place was moved to Captain Scott's *Discovery* moored on the Victoria Embankment in the heart of London, "amazingly, the independence and internal anarchy of the troop remained unimpaired".

Organisational structures always limp after local realities. The three rejected girls in Northumberland who, after a year of campaigning, are to be allowed to join the 1st Wark and District Scout Group, have many forerunners. It is 14 years since Janice and Marie successfully enrolled in the 31st Battersea Scout Group, and there were heroines behind them, quietly challenging the official reality.

It calls for some kind of salute to those Edwardian girls, shoved off the parade ground by Baden-Powell. So it's sad that the Girl Guide Association, in the words of its Chief Commissioner, is "angry, surprised and disappointed" by the Chief Scout's announcement. Perhaps both organisations have reached the point when they can regain the spirit of those happy early days, when they didn't need chiefs.

People who rejoice that their children enjoy a regular activity on Thursday evenings or weekend shouldn't be totally indifferent or jokey about the way the machinery lumbers into the 1990s. The adult world has similar maladjustments between reality from below and the official structure. Have we coped any better?

87. Blashpemers all

Building the bypass around our nearest town brought into public view a stone obelisk formerly hidden in a field. Heritage-hunters get out of their cars to find a 19th century monument enclosing a 16th century stone with the puzzling message: R TAYLOR IN DEFENDING THAT WAS GOOD AT THIS PLAS LEFT HIS BLODE.

Decoded, it commemorates Dr Rowland Taylor, rector of Hadleigh, appointed by Thomas Cranmer in 1554. (Cranmer's own history is a stern lesson for those who imagine that if only those charged with blasphemy would be sensible and apologise, their persecutors will relent. He was found guilty of heresy, signed six recantations, but repudiated them when he learned that he was to die anyway, and was burnt to death.)

Rowland Taylor was a bright lad. He married at 16 in the house of John Tyndale (brother of William who was sentenced to be strangled before being burnt for the blasphemy of translating the Bible into English). Taylor, "a man of dominating personality, earthy humour and a shrewd brain", had a doctorate in law and nine children.

As rector, he sold off the church plate and vestments for the relief of the poor. In 1555 he was arrested for using Cranmer's Prayer Book (basis of the one used by the Church of England to this day) and for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. He was burnt on Aidham Common.

He wasn't the first, or last, Hadleigh citizen to be executed or starved to death in jail simply because of their deviations from currently approved revelations of God. His curate was burnt in Norwich. As were an old weaver John Dale and John Alcock, a sheep-shearer, even though their friends begged for their lives. All in vain of course.

The pitiful history of heresy and blasphemy in Hadleigh can be replicated all over England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. As you go up the City Road in London you pass the old Dissenters' Burying Ground, Bunhill Fields. By the 1950s, decay, neglect and war damage had made it a wilderness of crumbling stone and open tombs. My then boss was the landscape architect Peter Shepheard, and he was commissioned to prepare a scheme for rehabilitating the graveyard, preserving those of the famous, like George Fox, John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake, and using the other slabs as paving stones.

But Peter is a conscientious man and he borrowed old books about the lives of *all* the people buried there. It is a catalogue of the persecution and suffering inflicted by the state and the Church of England for not following whatever happened to be the official line in the long struggle for "civil and religious liberty". The words are always coupled together in this way in the histories of non-conformity and in the biographies and epitaphs of its numerous martyrs.

Our national *curriculum vitae* includes an endless history of persecuting people successively seen as blasphemers. Civil and religious liberty was built on their iconoclasm. Now that we have a National Curriculum, ordered by the Education Secretary to be taught in all state schools, it *ought* to include both a recognition of the origins of the freedoms we possess and of the harm done by imposing on other people our own 57 varieties of Christianity.

We all thought that the law of blasphemy was dead though unrepealed. But it was resuscitated, gracefully, by Mrs Mary Whitehouse, in her private prosecution of *Gay News,* its editor and distributors, because of their publication of a poem by James Kirkup. The revelation that we still had such a law led to a demand that it should be *extended* to cover, just out of fairness, religions beyond the Church of England.

This threat obliged Nicolas Walter to instigate a Committee Against Blasphemy Law, simply to avoid new dangers. In an entertaining, highly informative and reasonable book, *Blasphemy, Ancient and Modern* (Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, London N18EW, £3.95), he explains that the argument for extending the law without discrimination is "the official position of the Church of England, the Roman Catholics, the Orthodox Jews, the militant Muslims, and some other religious organisations, of several Labour and other progressive politicians", and (according to surveys) of 36 per cent of the population.

It could happen, just for lack of opposition. Nicolas Walter discerns that such a law "would still discriminate between religion and other forms of belief' and that "it would dramatically increase the power of fanatics to impose their views on the majority and to have them protected from criticism".

Here, and everywhere else, history supports his warning. Britain, like the whole world, is littered with the ashes of those who questioned the one true faith, whatever that happens to be.

88. DESpots

In the mid-seventies, the late John Vaizey (our foremost authority on the economics of education), in one of his provocative contributions to the education press, asked: "Do we really need the DES?" Exactly what function, he asked, has the department, when the local authorities themselves have inspectors and subject advisers, and when we have a theoretically decentralised education system?

Anyone with the slightest attachment to conspiratorial theories of politics would date from that moment a devious plot by the department to establish absolute control over schools, something it had failed to achieve ever since the Board of Education abandoned the "payment by results" system in the last century.

The present government has been putty in the hands of the department, but we deceive ourselves in blaming the demoralisation of the teaching industry solely on Mrs Thatcher. She received an early reputation in the Heath government as "Maggie Thatcher, Milk Snatcher", but it was the Wilson and Callaghan governments that set current trends in motion. They were manipulated into establishing the Assessment of Performance Unit and into implementing the so-called Yellow Paper of 1976, prepared by the DES to brief James Callaghan for his speech at Ruskin College.

The venue was chosen with a nice sense of irony: Ruskin was founded to provide a liberal education to working men. Although Callaghan said that he wanted to open a national debate on education, the guidelines had already been laid down by the civil servants. A week before his speech, in October 1976, the press had announced that "a multimillion pound emergency programme to monitor standards in primary and secondary schools has been started by the DES". This was at the time when schools were being obliged to make multimillion pound cuts in their own spending, in what has turned out to be the first of endless efforts to demand costeffectiveness from schools.

At the same time, using exactly the same language as the Tories of the eighties, the then Welsh secretary, John Morris, gave "clear, uncompromising guidance", saying that "the priority must be tilted towards the engineer, the scientist and the mathematician... our children must be taught in the languages of Europe to such a degree of proficiency that they can sell and service our products in the countries of our trading partners..."

You can applaud or denigrate the attempt to blame the long-term decline of British industry on the school system. But you can't avoid the issue of galloping centralisation by shoving all the responsibility on to our current political bosses. All they deserve is our contempt for making sure that their own children are not subjected to the National Curriculum enforced on other people's by the DES.

I was at a meeting last month addressed by Peter Newsam, director of the Insitute of Education in London and former chief education officer of the ILEA. He remarked that five years ago we spent more on examing at sixteen-plus than on all the text books and library books bought to cover the entire secondary school years. By now, he stressed, that gap in priorities had been increased by enlargement at one end and contraction at the other.

That is only part of the story. The DES trump card of assessment means that by 1992 it will be assessing $2\frac{1}{2}$ million children in ten subjects. The head of a science department explained to me some of the complexities this implies. In science, 17 attainment targets are to be tested at ten levels. Can you imagine the labour involved in all this? It is of course the labour of teachers and students, taken out of the time available for teaching and learning.

It represents the final triumph of the DES in taking over the classroom from the teacher. Newsam sees it as the introduction of "planned turmoil". A few years ago GCSE was introduced at breakneck speed. The aims of the National Curriculum if carried through will imply that GCSE is already obsolete. It was characterised by Peter Newsam as the application of formulae to education, the point being that formulae don't require the intervention of human intelligence. And he pointed out that, despite the sanctimonious genuflections of the government towards parent power, "right through the system, power has been removed from people *doing* things".

We are approaching a crisis in schooling provoked by the DES. Anyone with teaching experience knows that we have a battle against a profoundly anti-educational culture, and everyone with learning experience knows that the influence of a particular teacher was far more important than the subject on the timetable. It's such a pity that their self-respect is obliging those teachers to leave the job in droves. Who's going to pull us out of the crisis?

89. Into the red

Entrepreneur is a word with an endlessly changing meaning. It first meant someone who got up musical entertainments. In Victorian economic textbooks it meant the instigator of a commercial undertaking. Now it means someone who uses other people's money to persuade us to spend beyond the prudent limits of our credit.

When you lose your creditworthiness they write you off as a bad debt and move on to the next sucker. If you take your faint greenness seriously, you should rejoice that the downturn in retailing is making dents in all those posh names like Habitat, Sock Shop, Laura Ashley, Debenham, Next, and so on.

Beyond the entrepreneurs of consumerism are the entrepreneurs of property acquisition and development. They are big, powerful and destructive, and local planning authorities are wary of challenging them. They know that the big battalions of professional expertise will be brought in to win the proposal on appeal to the Department of the Environment. Their speculation depends upon sucking in the major retailers, and they in turn rely on us to provide a return on investment.

In one of our local towns there's a planning application from a firm called Citygrove-in-Town for a £15 million shopping development named, characteristically, Malthouse Court. One Sudbury citizen, Brian Allt, has been pushing for a public exhibition (which will happen) of the plan, and for town meetings to discuss the proposals. The council itself falls back on "experts", Donaldsons and Development Planning Partnership, to assure us that the scheme is viable, and who is Mr Allt by comparison?

Well, he's like me. He watches what actually happens. We have two big towns in our patch, Colchester and Ipswich. In the first of these Tesco used to have a site in the High Street. They then sold it off and built a new store in St John's Street, covered with acres of the kind of handmade roof tiles that you and I can't afford. Before

the paint had flaked they closed it and moved on elsewhere. Sainsbury's had a new hypermarket at Lexden on the fringe of the town, and once it had killed off the local shops, they moved further out. In neither case has anyone else occupied the empty premises. While the property boom lasted, nobody worried, as the buildings continued clocking up capital gains for the investors in Britain's urban regeneration.

In our other big town, Ipswich, the lessons of the shopping revolution stick out like sore thumbs. One minor disaster is the Carr Street precinct where few shoppers go. The other was truly spectacular: the Greyfriars Centre—a vast complex of shops, a multi-storey car park and some office towers. From the moment it was built it became an emptily sinister clockwork orange.

Ironically, this post-war disaster was reflected in the black glass facade of the building opposite,

Norman Foster's Willis Faber Dumas building, visited by architects from all over the world. Eventually that firm took it over, demolished the shops and reclad the office blocks.

But, undeterred by failure, Legal and General have embarked on an even bigger shopping development in the heart of the town, between the Buttermarket and the Old Cattle Market. This is planned to contain two big stores, 40 smaller retail outlets and a 450-space car park. No one has told me how those cars will get there since the council has tried for decades, sensibly, to steer cars out of central Ipswich. Nor has anyone told me how many existing shops in the surrounding streets will die.

The back of this development faces the drab and spartan bus station which can't even provide a covered space for village people shopping in Ipswich. It has already levelled a cheap cafe, a fish-and-chip shop and a low-price, low-rent greengrocers. Unimaginable in the new development.

But current changes in the retail climate have led to the architects writing to the contractors to say that: "Due to our client being unable to authorise the Buttermarket project to proceed, they are instructing us to formally terminate arrangements." The builders have now pulled out their workers and machinery.

The *Guardian* (28 February) tells us that "retailers' costs are rising by far more than inflation just as their sales volumes have stopped growing. Result: misery." But misery for whom?

Why, the property speculators who lured the footloose multiples in on low rents (currently subject to huge increases) in the first place, because every advisor told everyone else that property was a better investment than industry. But now the developers are desperate to maintain confidence: they have invested so much already. So they encourage retailers to get into debt, retailers encourage you to get into debt. It's the entrepreneurial spirit, isn't it?

90. Too many chiefs

Going to County Hall last week I realised that it must be just like this in East Germany: people drifting off every Friday and not coming back. As I walked through just a few of the 11 miles of corridor I saw hand-written notices on doors with messages like "Alan Balmer has left. All post and enquiries re Strategic Policy to Room 219."

I spent half a lifetime getting used to that building. I was endlessly there in the fifties, trying to cope with the planners and the administrators of the London Building Acts and Byelaws. In those days we called the place The Morgue or The Kremlin. This wasn't a political jibe. It just referred to the vast hierarchical bureaucracy exercising every last inch of power at all levels. Sometimes I would find myself on the Members' floor with its oak panelling, and come across worthy people on the housing committee struggling with the procedural machine. In the late sixties, as a technical college teacher, I was actually on the payroll.

Like every other ex-Londoner I grew up with equivocal feelings about the London County Council, later transformed into the Greater London Council. I could draw a graph to show how, just in the field of architecture, the history of the LCC/GLC consisted of bright moments of innovation followed by formalistic troughs, from the 1980s on. The same was true in planning. I was there in the TV studio when the one-time chief strategic planner. Dr David Eversley, resigned. "What have you achieved?" the interviewer asked him. "Nothing", he replied. "And what have you learned?". He answered: "Humility."

As to housing, Tony Judge, a life-long socialist, summed up his experience as chair of the GLC Housing Management Committee with the words: "The impression, often confirmed as accurate on deeper examination, is of a vast bureaucracy concerned more with selfperpetuation than with either efficiency or humanity."

Rather than blame anyone it is more sensible to recognise that in our kind of centralised state, a national government cannot tolerate the existence of a city government, with a population bigger than that of many nation states, just across the river from Westminster.

A century ago, no sooner had the central government tidied up London by setting up the LCC than it took fright and established the metropolitan boroughs as countervailing powers, thus ensuring continual rivalry between them. In the 1960s, a Conservative government, hoping to break up the LCC, transformed it into the GLC with the Inner London Education Authority taking over education in the old LCC area. At the same time it forced amalgamations among the old boroughs.

The new bodies in County Hall fulfilled Parkinson's Law to the letter. As the GLC's responsibilities declined so its establishment increased. As the schools and the school population of inner London fell, so the ILEA staff multiplied. Given the protagonists and given the life-and-death powers of centra! government over local authorities which we take for granted but which is unthinkable in many parts of the world, we were moving into some kind of *Gotterdammerung.* Even 1, as an irresponsible outsider,

published an article in February 1974 which ended with the question "Can the GLC survive to 1984?"

If the future was obvious to me it should have been clear to the clever folk running London. The reason why I took a trip down Memory Lane to County Hall last week was for a meeting set up by Bob Caterall of the Centre for Urban Educational Studies under the title *London 2000: Education Strategies for the Whole Community.* He says that "the abolition of the ILEA is a symbolic defeat for the cross-London struggle for quality and equality in education", but he sees the transfer of education to the boroughs as "an opportunity for radical improvement in accessibility and delivery".

Apart from the question of who is going to finance non-school education, he wants a federation of interest groups for an Inner London Education *Alliance.* I would like the boroughs to federate under such a title just to make facilities available to all. Some of the impressive new chief education officers were there to assure me that the crossing of borough boundaries by children and students was not an issue. They already had reciprocal agreements. Committee members already have ILEAC, a joint committee of politicans, and out of self-interest the CEOs will join forces.

Boundaries aren't the issue. Nor is the future of the bureaucracy. The key question is to make it worthwhile for teachers, some of whom are not sure who is going to give them a paycheck at the end of April, to be in inner London classrooms. The tragedy of that vast neo-Baroque pile on the South Bank is that it was always full of Chiefs confident that the Indians would be around forever, down at the chalk face.

91. The Sunday Pulp

As a writer and propagandist, my method of reading the papers is to pile them up on a chair in the kitchen until the heap gets knocked down whenever the cat leaps onto it. I then, with a watching brief for other family members, cut out the interesting bits.

The acid test is my pair of scissors. This is why we gave up buying a Sunday paper ten years ago. There was too little to cut out. I wouldn't recommend any newspaper. They all fall short of my ideal. We buy the *Guardian* and the local regional daily, but long experience told me that for some kinds of information it was useful to go out and get a copy of the *Times.* This is no longer true. It *is* true that for the most detailed summary of some official report it is sensible to get a *Daily Telegraph.*

But the Sunday saga is a tale of Gresham's Law. Once upon a time the two big rivals each contained something unique. When they began their magazine supplements in the 1960s, they contained photo-journalism so good that we took the trouble to find the channels by which piles of back numbers could be got free, so teachers could fillet them to use in class. Those days are long past. The few nuggets are buried in a spoil-heap of dross, so the whole enterprise is like a worked-out goldmine. Or a dead forest.

In America last year I watched a young boy on a traffic island selling the monster Sunday edition of the *New York Times* to passing motorists. By the next intersection

a hundred yards further on, they had sifted out the half dozen sections they didn't want and had thrown them at the overflowing rubbish bin. If I had followed them I would, no doubt, have seen further disposals.

"How like the throwaway culture!" we say in our superior way, without noticing that we are travelling along the same road. Down the lane from us, my friend Richards does the Sunday paper round, delivering down the bumpy, byways and gravel driveways. He has the usual horror stories of the way the rich are the most reluctant payers and of the appallingly fierce dogs that make the Englishman's home his castle.

But last Sunday he weighed the papers, relating their bulk to their circulation. Like me he is so old that he thinks in imperial rather than metric measures, but the result is the same in both tons and tonnes.

His first group consisted of the *News of the World,* the *Sunday Mirror* and the *People,* weighing together 1½lbs, which multiplied by a 3 million circulation gives 4½ million pounds. His second group was the *Observer,* the *Sunday Telegraph,* the *Express* and the *Mail on Sunday,* together weighing 41b 13oz, which multiplied by 700,000 purchasers weigh 3,370,000 pounds. Then came the newcomers, the *Sunday Correspondent* and the *Independent on Sunday,* adding up to 2½lbs. A multiplier of 300,000 circulation gives a weight of 750,000 pounds. Finally, in a class of its own, as they say, comes the *Sunday Times,* weighing 2lb 3oz. A circulation of over a million makes it up to *2½* million pounds.

Richards is looking for flaws in his arithmetic, but whichever way he examines his sums they come to around 11 million pounds. In other words 4,900 tons or tonnes of paper are used every week to bring you the Sunday paper of your choice. Unsold copies must add another 10 per cent.

I'm hoping that Friends of the Earth will tell us how many acres or hectares of Scandinavian or Canadian forests this automatic consumption represents. I'm yearning to be reassured that X per cent of it consists of recycled paper.

But where I live, first the Scouts and then the Hadleigh Youth Club tried waste paper collection. The latter organisation installed a huge container in George Street, Hadleigh. The populace thankfully filled it with paper but the club found that fluctuation in the international market made their contribution hardly worth collecting. Meanwhile, Britain actually imports *American* waste paper.

Market forces are an appalling guide to right conduct. They ensure that you and I are faced with 4,900 tonnes of paper every Sunday just to make sure the advertisements we don't read end up on our breakfast table. To fill the spaces in between they all have the same variations on holidays, the same features on properties in the hinterland of Toulouse or Berkshire, the virtues of houseplants or garlic or Philip Larkin's sex-life. Most cynical of all are their guides to being a green consumer.

It wasn't until this year that I ever got asked to join this Sunday space-filling. They tell me it's well-paid and you never know who might be out there, waiting for the message. I'll try hard like I always do, but I can't help thinking that the best thing you or I could do for the Sunday press is the simple act of not buying it.

92. The build-up boys

I missed out on Sunday School hymns, but I learned one long ago from a fellow soldier who would sing it endlessly while working on the causeways which now link the islands around Scapa Flow. It went: "We are building day by day/ In our work and in our play,/Not with hammer, blow by blow/Not with chisel, sawing so/'Little builders all are we/Building for eternity."

It surfaces in my mind every few years for good reason. I lately read the diploma dissertation of an architect, Geoffrey Haslam, who had an intuition that exceptionally creative adults had a childhood history of building dens, hide-outs and camps from whatever materials came to hand. So he collected a sample of people he considered to be outstandingly creative. When he probed their past with a taperecorder, they all responded with vivid accounts of their den-building activities between the ages of seven and 14.

Haslam comments that "considering that they can achieve so much at such an age with no assistance or guidance it seems odd that so few adults ever set about building even the simplest structure. Some time during their development they lose ability, confidence and motivation to build."

Then I read one of the half-dozen biographies of the overwhelmingly creative American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. They all stress that his mother was a Froebel-trained teacher. All modern theories about play and its place in education can be traced back to Friedrich Froebel who started the first kindergarten in 1840. He developed a series of gifts, occupations, games and songs which he thought appropriate to different stages of a child's growth. The "gifts" began with a woollen ball, to be given to a child at three months. Next was a wooden sphere, a cube and a cylinder, followed by a series of subdivisions of the cube. Further gifts—you could call them birthday presents—followed: wooden rings, sticks and building blocks. Some of Wright's biographers trace these gifts' direct influence on his early houses at Oak Park, Illinois.

So we can't dismiss the experience of being a little builder just because it won't be recognised in the National Curriculum. Nor can we fail to relate the differing scores of boys and girls in tests of spatial ability to the gifts we choose to give them.

This is why, with that Sunday School reminder in my head, I went off to Gloucester. It wasn't to see Robert Opie's Museum of Advertising and Packaging at the docks there, but to catch the current show of *Building Toys* (at the Gloucester Folk Museum in Westgate Street until 21 April).

Significantly, it has been put together, not by an old buffer reliving his childhood, but by a maths teacher from Bristol, Malcolm Hanson, who organised a Meccano exhibition a couple of years ago. Children have been building with offcuts from the joinery shop or with houses of cards for a very long time, and more than a century ago "Dr Richter's Art Department" in Leipzig was making bricks of resin-bonded stone dust, later known here as Lott's Bricks.

But all such products depended on nothing but gravity to hold them together. So some manufacturers produced cement. This however had the disadvantage that the chosen model became permanent: the object was lost. Others then supplied a water-soluble bond: dip your tower in the sink and it becomes available for everything else.

The most far-sighted devised ways of making the systems interlocking, in a dozen different ways that press, clip or bolt together. Endless products are on show: Minibrix, Bayko, Dinky Builders, Arkirecto, Wenebrix, Samlo, Arkitex, Matador, Mobaco and Pennybrix. Every available material was used in the effort to catch the market.

They were the toy equivalent of the motor industry. If only the market was big enough, they could conquer it. In the end it was won by a pacific Danish father-and-son firm, Lego, carefully exploiting all the efforts of their predecessors to hold the whole thing together.

It's an unintentional parable of course, of society itself. The one-off models of Tower Bridge or Buckingham Palace were doomed, as they left nothing for us to do tomorrow. If you elected for one particular aspiring system, all you could hope for on birthdays was an additional set to add to your chance to do the same thing. In both closed and open systems, the kind that will win is adaptable to any kind of creativity.

We are in a bout of the Individualism kit, adopted just because the Collectivism pack seemed so expensive. What we kids need is a creative and interchangeable range of parts that lets us build what we like. So long as it's interlocking and compatible, none of us can fail.

93. Unofficial people

A few days ago the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa won the first round of the Peruvian presidential elections. Latin Americans I know brush him aside as a right-wing adventurer in a country that has had to suffer plenty of left-wing adventurers, but I just want to introduce some striking statistics he mentioned recently:

"In Lima alone, the black market (excluding manufacture) employs 439,000 people. Of the 331 markets in the city, 274 have been built by the black-marketeers (83 per cent). It is no exaggeration to say that it is thanks to them the citizens of Lima are able to get around, because 95 per cent of public transportation belongs to them. The black-marketeers have invested more than a million dollars in vehicles and vehicle maintenance. As to housing, the figures are equally impressive. Half the population of Lima lives in housing built by black-marketeers. Between 1960 and 1984 the state constructed low-income housing at a cost of $173.6 million. During that same period, the black-marketeers managed to construct housing valued at the incredible figure of $8,319.8 million (47 times what the state spent). Economic freedom existed only on paper before the poor of our nation began to put it into practice independently."

This is Vargas Llosa's introduction to a new book: *The Other Path: the invisible revolution in the Third World* by Hernando de Soto (I B Tauris, £14.95). The choice

of the world *black market,* which the author nowhere uses in describing the informal, unmeasured economy that actually keeps society going in any city in South America, Africa or Asia, is Llosa's. Most such nations have a ruling elite (the recipients of all those loans that the rich world's banks are agonising about—much of which the elites reinvest in the west, not in their own countries), an incredible bureaucracy busy ensuring that no one can actually do anything, and a sinister military caste togged out in Jermyn Street, and from other posh British supplies of gold braid and horsehair, lording it over peasant lads for whom the army is better than starvation.

Everyone, especially Vargas Llosa, knows that this is the truth, and to bring the issue a little closer to home, it is also true of the last 40 years of the Soviet Union and its satellites. There, jokers have observed an infinitely graded hierarchy of the black, grey purple and brown economies, as ordinary people struggle to get by in spite of the system.

What the third world poor assert is the right to exist, in the fringes or the margins of the approved way of getting by in life. Every ruling elite everywhere hates it and them. This is why in Britain's history the most savagely punished offenders were smugglers and poachers, each of them defying the ever-widening scope of the law.

For a century the growing power of the state has been squeezing out the poor and unofficial people: the gypsies and travellers were harried for not sending their children to school or for not registering their young men for conscription in 1916. Lloyd George's introduction of National Insurance meant that they could only be employed in casual work.

Before the second world war even skilled craftsmen were below the income tax threshold. The great triumph of the civil service in that war not only meant National Registration but the (said to be temporary) introduction of PAYE, which turned every employer into a tax collector, and of Purchase Tax (forerunner of VAT) which made every retailer a revenue gatherer too.

Unofficial people shrank farther back into illegality. It's important to stress that those who claimed nothing more than the right to exist weren't only backwoods folk in the depth of the country. They could be people escaping from a past, pregnant girls and no-good boys, poets and musicians starving in garrets, secular monks and nuns wanting holy poverty, nutters heroically surviving in their private worlds.

Ever since my upright friend Philip Sanson want sent to prison at the end of the war for "stealing by finding an identity card", I have pondered over the philosophical question of a government's power to determine any individual's right to exist.

The worst thing of all about the Poll Tax is not its manifest injustice. I am relying on *that* to ensure that the Thatcher period ends in ignominy. Far more terrible is the way it turns every temporary clerk in every district council's finance department into a detective, hunting down the last fly-by-night transitory person in the district. Merit will be won through each ingenious cross-checking of identities. What deformations will this bring to the 1991 consensus?

In colonial Nyasaland the Poll Tax was introduced to drive the "natives" into the money economy of the Europeans. *Our* government, elected with rhetoric about setting the people free, has consciously decided that those who have "gone native" may no longer exist.

94. Follow the van

It was only because the old Bedford with its faded red livery was part of the landscape, meandering round the lanes as regular as clockwork every Thursday, that we noticed the sudden absence of the Co-op Meat Van.

Of course it carried groceries too, but in any case we'd been bullied into a vegetarian diet years ago by our children, and for lapses or guests there are plenty of neighbours keeping every kind of fowl, happy to replenish the freezer if they have a pig or sheep slaughtered. So it's a long time since we bought anything from the Co-op Meat Van. We have played our own part in its disappearance, so why on earth should we feel a sense of loss because it won't be coming round any more?

It is partly the manner of its going. John, the driver and travelling salesman fell ill, after 38 years on the rural routes, so the service has stopped for good. Customers had no chance to say goodbye, and a notice in our parish newsletter explains that "all his grateful customers may contribute towards a farewell present for him" by donating to a collection box in the post office (when open).

A second loss is our local manager who retires next month, a symbol of Co-op history, having worked for it for 49 years. This was long enough for him to have met in his youth veteran members carrying on the folklore of how hard it was to establish the consumer co-operative movement in East Anglia, as opposed to the north west where it originally grew and flourished. In the pioneering days they went out through the byways of the district with horse-drawn vans, soliciting, picking up and delivering orders.

There was not only the butcher's van and the baker's van, but the dairy van too, as well as those of the rival private traders. Now only the milk float remains, every other day. Your caring, sharing Co-op no longer feels able to care that much. "The meat van kept going as long as John could, but you can't justify a round for old ladies buying half a pound of sausages, a small loaf, a tin of beans and a bottle of Camp Coffee, can you?"

Two revolutions have transformed rural life for the relatively affluent and worsened it for the relatively poor. The second of these is the arrival of the freezer. This never registered with me when I was a town dweller until about 15 years ago when, after talking to a group of teachers near Morpeth, I was the unexpected guest of one of them as her village became snowed up in the course of the evening. I asked how people managed in winter in those isolated settlements. "Oh, we could last out for weeks," I was told. "After all, *everyone* has a freezer."

Since those days we've joined the freezer revolution with its know-how about which fruit and veg freeze well or badly and when or where to buy in bulk. But of course plenty of people *don't* belong to the freezer culture for half a dozen reasons: they couldn't contemplate the initial cost, even second-hand like ours; their "unmodernised" cottages have no place to put it; their electricity bills are already worried over for weeks before the meter-reader comes and they would dread the endless extra charge; they never have enough spare cash to buy anything in bulk, and in any case lack the transport to bring the goods home.

In a one- or two-person household, daily demands are too small for them to see the sense in it. On the other hand, if they have children to feed, all the other reasons are multiplied. The poor pay more, however they manage their shopping.

But of course the primary change in rural life has been the universalisation of car ownership. The snag is that this prime assumption of both government and retailing policy just isn't true. Rural public transport has dwindled, and when there *is* actually a bi-weekly bus to the nearest town, the superstores and hypermarkets have moved out to the fringe. Poor rural families often make painful sacrifices in other areas of their budgets to run a car just because they have no choice.

Malcolm Moseley, the authority in this field, stresses that even in a car-owning household the car used by one adult for work is not available to anyone else, that only 64 per cent of men and 21 per cent of women hold a driving licence and that, apart from the 26 per cent of the population who are too young, this percentage is far smaller among unskilled manual workers and among the old. "Collectively these people comprise the *majority* of the rural population. The view that the rural accessibility problem affects only a 'residual minority' is a myth."

The same market forces that ensure that the surviving buses are half empty and are thus proved to be uneconomic similarly determine that John and the Co-op Meat Van must become a memory.

95. Digging in

The aspect of the Thatcher period that the future will find hardest to forgive is the degradation of public life. Under the guise of costeffectiveness and of making a leaner and fitter economy, it has sedulously encouraged irresponsible and parasitical land speculation. We used to condemn assetstripping when it was a matter of property sharks buying firms not for their output but for the potential of their sites. But no one imagined then that the government would seduce public bodies into the same anti-social conspiracy.

This is what has happened. When British Aerospace bought the Royal Ordnance factory sites, it wasn't for the weapons factories and gunpowder works, but for the land they sat on. The Oxford University study of Rover's Cowley car factory similarly

suggests that the site could be worth "up to £400m: almost three times what British Aerospace paid for the entire Rover Group".

The complicity of the citizen is ensured in deals like the sale of the water supply, not because shareholders wish to rise to the task of bringing our water up to European standards (that's a bill for you to pay) but because the water boards own vast areas of land. It's the same with British Rail, squeezed into every kind of deal with property developers so that the balance sheet will make the enterprise worth selling and, as the market slumps, obliged to resort to fares trickery on the traveller which makes railwaymen blush with shame.

This corrosion eats into every public body. "Council finances hit by property market collapse," says the local headline, explaining that only £3m is expected from sales of Suffolk County Council land, compared with "more than £llm raked in by the council from sales in 1988–89". It's the same with health authorities. Last month the South West Thames Regional Health Authority froze the building of three hospital projects because land sales raised only £15m instead of the expected £55m. Indeed a survey by the National Association of Health Authorities found that one in five report building plans threatened by falling prices for land sales. The government has deliberately induced all publicly funded bodies to become profiteers.

At the bottom of the pile are the poor old allotment holders, pursuing their uneconomic hobby on prime building land. At Witney in Oxfordshire the town council proposed to increase the rent of the Witney Allotments Association by 5,000 per cent: from £25 to £1,315. The association refused to sign the new lease so the council took over management of the site and is now faced with a rent strike. Association chairman Ron Hathaway explains that only last year they were moved to a new site with the promise that the new facilities would be provided at no extra cost. "The council sold the old site to developers for £1.4m. It's due to us that they made such an enormous profit. They just see our allotments as a gold mine".

In Northampton, where there has been the usual cyclical decline in demand for allotments, the borough council commissioned from its parks department a report on the future of its sites. The report reveals, without accepting any responsibility, that the council has for years neglected urgently needed work on fencing and road surfacing. It chooses to blame the victims. One site "gives the appearance of a shanty town which you would expect to find in a ghetto in some under deprived area" [sic] inhabited by people the writer describes as "Roumanians". The report suggests that some sites should be sold or turned to more lucrative uses to pay for the improvement of the others.

The report, written in a kind of parody of market language, using the word *price* where it means *rent,* and *customer* where it means *gardener.* It says that: "In this time of economic revolution and high-tech finance, it has become essential that anything must fight for its place within a given market. Allotments are no exception to this principal." [sic]

But allotments *are* an exception. If the market rules, why doesn't the borough sell off its parks? Allotments are the last vestige of the ancient belief that every citizen has a right of access to land for food production. They result from endless struggles in the 19th century. They are a service guaranteed by law, and if they are underused at the moment they should be improved and publicised. Land once sold is never recovered.

Protestors are fobbed off with hints that the 1979 Local Government and Housing Act overrules the Allotments Acts which say the sale of any statutory allotment land *must* be treated as income for the Allotment Revenue Account, not as a windfall to help a hard-pressed council meet its ordinary needs. The issue will be tested in the courts. But there is still time for Northampton Council to think again.

96. Vandal-proofed

Our impressions of place are built up of accidental, disconnected fragments. Mention Doncaster and racing people think of the St Leger, travellers of changing trains. I think of old 78 rpm records of Elizabethan madrigals, made long before the revival of interest in that kind of music, by the Danensian Singers under an inspired teacher William Appleby.

Or I think of the sweater, made of some polyester mix, that I still wear in winter, made by a miner's wife on her knitting machine and bought on a market stall. Or I remember my first impressions of the Arndale Centre. I was supposed to hate it, but what I noticed was the easy way that Saturday-morning shoppers simply deposited their children in the carpeted, open-fronted TV shop to sit, cross-legged, watching *Sesame Street,* until it was time to collect them. They were like the spellbound audience of the story-teller in a North African bazaar.

In other words, I have a totally irresponsible consumerist image of Doncaster. The real facts are that its place in our history is as a *producer* town—not only as a market centre for the scattered pit villages, but in casting and forging machinery for the agricultural industry and in the specialist spinning of brass, copper and steel wire. You won't need telling that it is one of those towns grieviously hit by the fact that the industrial centre of gravity has moved elsewhere.

The usual technique of blaming the victims was employed to chide Doncaster for its preoccupation with making things, rather than with selling, advertising or insuring them. And of course by the time the opportunity to improve Doncaster arrived, there was no cash in the till to do it.

A study conducted by Glasgow University's department of geography found that, in a ranking of environmental indicators, Doncaster was 30th out of 34 of "Britain's intermediate cities" assessed in an attempt to measure "Quality of Life". Not surprisingly this finding "caused some not inconsiderable local consternation and dismay", according to yet another investigation, a public attitude survey for Doncaster Borough Council by the departments of economics, public policy and urban planning at Leeds Polytech-

nic. It found that "noise and pollution, waste and spoiled land, poor image and lack of greenery and open space were not the problems to local residents that one might, as a casual outside observer, have expected."

But the public attitude survey did reveal Doncaster people's real worries. They were asked to name the most serious problems that the borough council should tackle. Nearly 40 per cent mentioned youth unemployment, over 60 per cent mentioned all unemployment. But towering among the perceived problems was vandalism, named by over 70 per cent of Doncaster households.

There's an irony here. In current circumstances what can any district council do about unemployment, except employ more people itself, and consequently get "capped" by central government's gauleiters? And what on earth can it do about vandalism? It's "an emotive and not easily defined area" is the rather uneasy comment of the people who conducted the survey.

Years ago I had a spell as a vandal pundit simply because I edited a book on the subject, Stan Cohen and I used to share out the endless requests to address meeting of councillors, community associations and chief constables. Comparing notes we found that they followed a pattern. The chairman would begin by stressing the dreadful social cost of environmental destruction, but later, over coffee, would tell us about the terrible things he used to do as a young tearaway, making no connections between then and now.

We got weary of requests to comment on endless research proposals on vandalism and made a pact one day with others in the business, that in no circumstances would we bless any project which was not built around action. We thought that, whatever else they did about the level of vandalism, plans to involve the young of different ages (with strictly *no* mention of antivandal aims) in adventure play projects, city farms, car workshops and stock car racing or community service schemes would at least benefit *someone.*

It's a social fact that for every ten citizens you can enrol in a short-lived local watch scheme, there is just one with the inventive imagination to engage others in a creative venture. The tragedy is that these precious people are not the ones who know the ropes when it comes to cadging money from funding bodies: their talents are different and much rarer. I've met people whose lives have been transformed by chance involvement in such projects, whether at the initiating or doing ends. But I never met anyone, except the researchers, who got anything out of an anti-vandal project.

97. Los remendados

In Bizet's *Carmen* there's a small part for a local brigand called El Remendado, which I suppose means something like "the patched-up guy". It's usually played by someone from the chorus, pleased to pick up a solo role, but sometimes by an ageing tenor who doesn't bother about keeping up appearances, and brings to his little scene

the air of authority that is natural to him. The rest of the performers have an automatic deference. And he loves it, backstage.

I was irresistibly reminded of this role through watching Sir John Harvey-Jones in the local episode of his BBC2 Tuesday series *Troubleshooter.* He's the former chairman of ICI, and he plays the part of captain-of-industry and robber-baron to perfection, and he brings this air of power as he's driven up the lanes to tell the boards, though not the employees, of smallish businesses, where they have gone wrong.

There's a firm round here called Copella Fruit Juices Ltd, who began as apple-growers and then, because the apple wholesalers demanded that all those Cox's Orange Pippins should be of a uniform size, got into the trade of marketing apple juice. The outfit grew and grew, processing every kind of fruit juice. As the owning family expanded, so did its interests so, apart from general farming, it extended into "Peake's Organic" and the Stoke-by-Nayland Golf Club. As far as the juice was concerned, they displayed a certain pride in the superiority of their product, sold under their own name and under that of some of the multiples.

Sir John examined the balance sheets and with the utmost good humour told the assembled and reverential family that they should get out of this tedious fruit juice business and concentrate on the more lucrative sideshoots of the enterprise. I'd seen enough, but I felt a strong sympathy with Vera Rule's comment in *The Guardian* that "no fictional industrial narrative has come near the simultaneously sad and massively comic quality of this series", with Sir John being so often "cruelly-kind, telling management they have no clue, factories no product and workers no future".

The real tragedy is that governments (not just the Copella directors) always depend on *los remendados* from ICI to patch up the economy. From Lloyd George in the first world war to Winston Churchill in the second, they've been fascinated by the brigand chiefs. Bernard Shaw's Sir Andrew Under shaft in *Major Barbara* was modelled on the founder of the firm, and we can recognise his dynasty in Timothy West's portrayal of Bradley Hardacre of Imperial Munitions in *Brass.*

"You will find out," says Shaw's Undershaft of 80 years ago, "that trade requires certain measures when we have decided on those measures. When I want anything to keep my dividends up, you will discover that my want is a national need. When other people want something to keep my dividends down, you will call out the police and military. And in return you shall have the support and applause of my newspapers, and the delight of imagining that you are a great statesman."

Instead of being affronted, politicians lap up this kind of talk, firmly convinced that what is good for ICI is good for the country. This is why they lured Dr Richard Beeching away from ICI to become, at what was then regarded as a scandalous salary, first chairman of the British Transport Commission and then of the British Railways Board. His task, like that of his successors, was to make the railways pay, and his response had the same breathtaking directness as that of *EIRemendado* to Copella: locate the least profitable lines and then eliminate them.

The fact that the Railway Board's business is running a railway is as irrelevant as the fact that Copella's business is producing high-quality apple juice. Government's belief in *los remendados* brought in from mogul-land has ensured a succession of charismatic chairmen at BR. The most recent, ironically, was a lifelong railwayman, Sir Robert Reid, who retired last month. He is regarded as being the most successful so far, in terms of improved efficiency and finance, within the straitjacket of the government's insistence that BR is, like Copella, an enterprise run for profit.

It was reported that up to 20 captains of industry turned the job down before it was finally accepted, at a phenomenal salary, by another Bob Reid. Who he? Well, of course he's the chairman of Shell UK.

The *Troubleshooters* series ended with a studio confrontation between *El Remendado* and the managements he investigated. Copella had followed his advice and sold half their business to a cider firm. Apricot computers sold out to a Japanese multinational. Only the hospital managers from Shrewsbury were bold enough to say that the man from ICI hadn't the first idea of why they were in business.

98. Thatcher's folly

We had the usual sinking feeling when the fire engine from a town eight miles away came wailing down our lane. Someone was in real trouble. It turned out to be a thatched roof fire in a nearby village, Lindsey, a heartbreak for the people living there. But it could have been worse. Station officer Terry Baker said "We've saved a large proportion of the occupiers' goods, helped by their own efforts and those of neighbours." Farmers used their tractors to take furniture over the fields to a barn for storage and "other neighbours helped collect smaller items".

I was reminded of some famous words from Kropotkin, rejecting the notion that we should simply love our neighbour. He complained that to reduce animal sociability to *love* and *sympathy* means to reduce its generality and its importance, just as human ethics based upon love and personal sympathy have only contributed to narrow the comprehension of the moral feelings as a whole. It is not love of my neighbour—whom I often do not know at all—which induces me to seize a pail of water and to rush towards his house when I see it on fire; it is a far wider, even though more vague, feeling of solidarity and sociability which moves me." *(Mutual Aid: a factor of evolution,* Freedom Press).

There's a key message here, rejecting that two-faced Christian notion of *love* (busily making mischief in societies like Northern Ireland and South Africa) in favour of ordinary solidarity. But there is a more prosaic question. Why do people have thatched roofs in the first place?

Of the half-dozen reasons, we can begin with the last. Grasses in their endless forms are the most widely-used building materials in the world. Secondly, their production relies on nothing more than the natural process of photosynthesis. Thirdly, their use

provides the best possible kind of insulation: thatched houses are warmer in winter and cooler in summer. Fourthly, the renovation of thatched roofs is a truly rural way of providing employment for a few young people who would otherwise be out of work: it is labour-intensive and eco-friendly.

Fifthly and sixthly, it is the roofing that history blesses. Since we have moved into the phase of canonising the past the idea has grown that if you buy or inherit a thatched house, you have an obligation to go on thatching. We are actually surrounded by houses where the pitch of the roof and the height of the chimneys indicate that they used to be thatched. And people have said to me seriously that they couldn't sleep under any other kind of roof.

Getting hold of a thatcher is an endless topic, as is keeping him on one particular job, and the durability of his materials, as some last longer than others. There are Norfolk reeds, grown coastally, but inland too, and long-stalk wheat-straw which nowadays has to be purposely grown and harvested to recover it intact. The materials, in fact, often come not from East Anglia but from eastern Europe, by way of Ipswich.

There's a queue of customers and a legendry of horror stories. The results are often sensationally beautiful: exquisite roofs with elaborate decoration held in place by *broches* of hazel twigs, and with chicken-wire to stop the birds making havoc of the eaves. But there are ceaseless dilemmas in trying to do the right thing. The dry, hot spring has coincided with 15 thatched roof fires in Suffolk this year and our local fire chief says that the commonest causes are sparks from garden bonfires or from chimneys. He urges dwellers to have a hosepipe ready, connected to the domestic water supply.

We should have learned from Ernest Trowbridge. He was an architect active in Kingsbury, in the northern suburbs of London, in the years after the first world war. There he sought to use what he described as "scientific old English construction" with houses built and clad in elm and covered with thatch.

You can see them today, surviving in Stag Lane, Buck Lane and Slough Lane, Kingsbury. Writing to the Minister of Health in 1919 about the new legislation for the "Housing of the Working Classes", Trowbridge explained that in the "irreducible minimum house", the ancient ways were best, if tenants could be induced to do much for themselves.

Thatch could be rendered fire-resistant, he said, by liming or chemical spraying, but the Sage of Kingsbury had a trump card up his sleeve: "In addition to an air-tight fire-resisting timber roof, there is embedded in the ridge of the roof a water sprinkler, which is controlled from the exterior at ground level. By this means, in case of alarm, the entire surface of the roof can be flooded in less than half a minute." I wonder why the new generation of country folk took no notice. Maybe they just relied on solidarity, without this elementary technical back-up?

99. Close harmony

Unwordly old Martin Buber used to enjoy quoting the worldly American sociologist Robert Maclver on our bad habit of identifying the social with the political, which Maclver said made us "guilty of the grossest of all confusions, which completely bars any understanding of either society or the state." Buber saw the political principle wherever there was power, authority, hierarchy, dominion, and the social principle wherever people link themselves in an association based on a common need or a common interest.

What is it, he asked, that gives the political principle its ascendancy? And he gave a sharp answer: "The fact that every people feels itself threatened by the others gives the state its definitive unifying power; it depends upon the instinct of self-preservation of society itself; the latent external crisis enables it to get the upper hand in internal crises... All forms of government have this in common: each possesses more power than is required by the given conditions; in fact this excess in the capacity for making dispositions is actually what we understand by political power. The measure of this excess which cannot, of course, be computed precisely, represents the exact difference between administration and government."

Buber called this excess the "political surplus", and this insight is worth more than you can learn from half-a-dozen professors of politics or from the memoirs of cabinet ministers. He observed that "the political principle is always stronger in relation to the social principle than the given conditions require. The result is a continous diminution in social spontaneity."

This is just the observation that shocked western visitors bring back from Romania. All totalitarian regimes try to destroy every social institution they cannot themselves dominate. From Hitler and Stalin to the latest local tyrant anywhere, they all insist that the community should express itself through the Leader or the Party or not at all. The real measure of the health of a society could be expressed as its *community quotient,* which I would define in words borrowed from Kropotkin as "the highest development of voluntary association in all its aspects, in all possible degrees, for all imaginable aims; ever changing, ever modified associations which carry in themselves the elements of their durability and constantly assume new forms which answer best to the multiple aspirations of all."

His words came to life for me, unexpectedly, in two new books, neither likely to make headlines. The first is *Enterprising Neighbours: the development of the Community Association movement in Britain* (ed. Raymond Clarke and published at £8 by NFCO, 8/9 Upper Street, London N1 OPQ). This traces 60 years of effort to establish community associations as voluntary, democratic all-embracing bodies able to be unifying influences in every locality. David Donnison's foreword stresses that this topic is on all political agendas with Conservatives "bent on giving schools and housing to community groups, partly as a way of breaking up the opposition's power base" and Labour councils seeking to decentralise power to neighbourhoods.

The second, absorbing book is *The Hidden Musicians: music-making in an English town* by Ruth Finnegan (Cambridge). She's an anthropologist from the Open University, so the place she describes is Milton Keynes, but could be anywhere. The immense advantage of her ethnographic approach is that she refrains from value classifications of music. Salvation Army bands, the Sherwood Sinfonia, the Morris men, families dressing up for the Country and Western night, church choirs and a hundred rock and pop groups are all music, and when you think of the people hiring venues, drawing up programmes, ferrying their children to rehearsals and carting equipment around, let alone packing the audiences, you realise that anywhere a hitherto unrecorded proportion of the population is directly involved in the activity of music-making.

Professor Finnegan manages to sweep aside endless assumptions: the sociologists' preoccupation with class, the distinctions between amateur and professional and, above all, ideas about musical exclusiveness. The same busy performers can find themselves in a brass band one night, in a symphony orchestra another, and in an ad hoc jazz group on Fridays. This is the fluidity of involvement in changing communities that attracted Buber and Kropotkin. It's great to think that an element of the community quotient of any society, east or west, can be measured by the crowd of young people, endlessly practising for their big performance in a local pub under the self-deprecating group names they choose like *Typical Shit.* Ruth Finnegan lists hundreds. This is the backhanded way in which shared enthusiasms hold communities together.

100. Jumbo landscapes

No train traveller forgets the first sight of Durham: the cathedral on its magnificent site, towering over the city. It's the same in the opposite kind of landscape. In the flatlands of East Anglia you know you're reaching Ely from miles away as the line circumnavigates the cathedral on its island in the Fens.

Reaching Colchester there's the same sensation. The first thing you see is this great monument on the horizon. But it's not a church: it's the water tower. And it's the town's most important landmark. The purpose of such towers of course is to store enough water high enough to give adequate pressure in the locality without resorting to pumps. Everyone remembers at least one with affection, even the modest modern precast concrete kind, but people relish most those dressed up to look like something else: castles, church towers, a Big Ben look-alike, an Italian campanile. The last two types were particularly suitable because of the bulge at the top of the tower.

My own favourites are the pair at Thorpeness on the Suffolk coast. One is dressed as a Norman gateway with two cottages beneath the concealed tank. The other is more spectacular. It consists of a neat cottage standing 100 feet in the air. Beneath it, the supporting structure is clad in the local weatherboarding to form a house whose first occupant gave it the name which has stuck, the House in the Clouds.

The one in Colchester was christened Jumbo by the Rev John Irvine, even before it was built. (The name was that of the huge elephant which the London Zoo had sold, to a chorus of protests, to the American circus-owner P T Barnum.) Mr Irvine had learned to his alarm that the second largest water tower in England was to be built 16 feet from the back of his rectory and that it would carry, 85 feet above his head, a cast-iron tank designed to hold 230,000 gallons of water. Out of deference to him the site was moved to 60 feet away, though he still complained that there would be "painful reverberations" from the church bells.

Jumbo turned out to be one of those great monuments to the last century's civic pride and local enterprise which are a standing rebuke to modern centralising politicians. As the nickname implies, it stands at the top of Balkerne Hill on four vast legs of brickwork culminating in huge round arches, topped with Italianate arcading, with the tank itself visible and surmounted by a pyramidical copper roof. It closes the vista of the High Street, and if you stand beneath it in the nice complex of buildings and spaces on the hilltop, you get a Piranesi experience of monumental grandeur.

People have said to me that I ought to write a book about water towers, and I have always replied that to be worthy of the subject you should be a photographer and note every one you see in the travels of a lifetime. I was relieved to learn last year that it has, in fact, been done. Bernd and Hilda Becher's *Water Towers* (Harvard) presents 200 of them, photographed over 25 years. As their book costs £40, I haven't seen it and can't tell you if it includes the House in the Clouds or Jumbo. But the idea is great, and indeed topical, as we think back to the great 19th century struggle of unsung engineers to provide their citizens, as a matter of ordinary social morality, with a plentiful supply of water which was pure and cheap at the turn of a tap.

The need for a tank on the top of the hill had been mooted since 1859, but the structure finally authorised in 1880 was designed by the young borough engineer, Charles Clegg. He proposed a circular tank of wrought iron, but the great sanitary reformer Sir Robert Rawlinson, chief engineer to the Local Government Board, urged him to change to a square tank of cast iron. This made it too complex for Arthur Mumford of the local Culver Street Ironworks (it was taken for granted that local labour would be used) so he subcontracted the manufacture to a Newcastle firm who delivered it by sea to Colchester's dock at Hythe.

Finally, in 1883, Sir Robert Robertson told his audience at the opening ceremony that the tower had been a wise investment by the citizens and would surely stand a hundred years. He was right. A century later the tank was pumped full of water in the small hours every morning, using off-peak electricity.

Soon afterwards, changes in the distribution system made the tower superfluous. It was put up for sale. One firm proposed to install a lift and put a restaurant in the great tank. What a panorama of the town the diners would have! But this was rejected for fire escape reasons. At last a religious group has taken it over as a centre for meditation. There's plenty to meditate about.

101. Ben's bike

One of the fringe benefits of living in a small place is that, if you value your reputation, you cannot behave dishonourably to neighbours. Some people resent the tyranny of village opinion, fearing that it is in fact a stifling kind of moral censorship. Others feel strong enough to ignore the disapproval of those they meet every week. But there does exist a code of behaviour, based on simple notions of fairness, that people transgress at the price of having it held against them for a lifetime.

We have one neighbour who has declined to have any dealings with a local garage because he felt unfairly treated in 1956. Forgotten by everyone else, that was the year of the Suez invasion when petrol was temporarily rationed, and he is convinced that he was discriminated against in the share-out. One year another neighbour had his ewes impregnated by a local farmer's tup, and fell into dispute over the ownership of a particularly desirable ram lamb. Farmer and ram are both now long dead, but the sense of outrage lives on.

People do have soundly based ideas of how we should behave to each other, and one of the differences between living in a big place and a small village is that you would be foolish to ignore the moral disapprobation that follows actions that contradict ordinary notions of what is and what is not fair. This is why the story of Ben's bike is likely to be held against people for a long time.

Ben is a 10 year old in the next village from ours, a second son. His parents' income is low and insecure, but like everyone else, they are determined that he should have every delight that could be provided. For his birthday they got him a racer bike costing about £100. He was riding it around the recreation field in the village when a girl asked him for a ride. She too rode it around and, unfortunately, left it in the gateway to the field.

Then a young man, passing by in his father's car, drove over Ben's bike. It was ruined. Any possible repairs would cost more than the price of a new one. Ben's parents approached both the owner of the car and the parents of the girl who had been riding the bike. The car owner was sympathetic. The last thing he wanted to do was to lose the No Claims bonus on his insurance policy, but he was willing to meet half the cost of a new bike so long as the girl's parents would pay the rest.

But the other parents had a different view. First they claimed that it wasn't their daughter who had left the bike in that vulnerable position. After that they claimed that anyway, as Ben had given her permission to ride his bike, no responsibility fell on them.

Ben's family are in an odious position, faced with the offer of one *ex gratia* payment, dependent upon another, which has been denied. I can remember a faintly similar minor tragedy with our own Ben many years ago.

Our Ben had a bike called Pixie and he even made up songs about her. One day in the park Pixie was abducted by little local bruisers and was never seen again.

Friends stepped in and did an instant paint job on a slightly better bike that had worked its way through several children. But the local Ben has unhappily discovered that the adult world is only too ready to disclaim obvious obligations. The lesson he has learned in the bikeless weeks is that you can't trust anyone.

The episode leaves a nasty taste. Moralists like me are ready to explain that it belongs to an era when politicians are anxious to proclaim that the community doesn't exist, only individuals and families. Was Ben wrong to allow someone else to ride his bike? And if he was wrong, wasn't his an error of generosity to be applauded rather than penalised? Or do we really want to rear a generation of selfish individualists?

It isn't anyone's fault that the ordinary joy of a child's bicycle is now so expensive to provide, least of all the child's. Ben isn't responsible for the fact that what used to be cheap and durable and handed-on is now a costly, fragile and vulnerable consumer product. I do think that in a small place in the past any similar loss would have been contained within an envelope of local solidarity, simply because the other people unwittingly involved would have gritted their teeth and paid up, if only to avoid the disapproval of neighbours.

I'm also sure that if they didn't, the village would have shamed them by subbing up the replacement cash anyway. My own donation is in the cause of social anthropology. I'm interested in the inevitable future encounters among the adults involved. Will they pretend that the episode never happened? Or will they be obliged to learn that the principle that Fair's Fair still applies and that to choose to behave shabbily is to forget that small places have long memories?

102. Ariels, squarials...

If there are readers out there who can remember the late 20s and early 30s, they will confirm that a great environmental debate of those days concerned what were known as wireless aerials. Radio reception depended on a wire running up the wall and extending as far as possible down the backyard or garden, way above the level of the clothes line and anchored to a post or pole.

It was believed that the higher and longer the aerial, the better your radio reception. Whole industries were given a sideline in catering for this need, and in the right kind of installation. Flagpoles left over from the first world war were brought back into use: it saved a lot of risk to life and limb if the aerial could be raised from ground level like a Union Jack.

The pottery trade branched out into making insulators out of a material called "electrical porcelain". These were pretty little objects to protect users from shocks and lightning, smoothly shaped to take the wires in two round holes. They were like maquettes for big works that turned up later from Moore or Hepworth, and you can find them at antique fairs among the old cocoa tins and bedside lamps.

Moralists deplored aerials, seeing them as blots on the skyline, indictators of our growing dependence on outside stimulation, and of vulgar emulation between neighbours. Councils warned their tenants that on no account were wireless aerials to be erected without prior permission. Rail commuters from the suburbs, passing all those back gardens on the estates, saw them as a sign that the undeserving poor were living in luxury at their expense.

By the 1950s they had all disappeared, but were now replaced by the forest of television aerials sprouting from roofs. All the same environmental objections came up again, and the same severe warnings from councils to tenants, as well as the same manifestations of class hatred. A new set of specialist industries arose, providing TV reception from one aerial for blocks of flats, or even for whole areas on estates. Aerials, except in places where geography denied easy reception, began to come indoors. The whole issue died away for a second time. The visual evidence that some of us were soporifically sitting in front of the telly, instead of being up and doing great works like our critics, had disappeared.

Some new evidence of the depravity of others had to arrive, and of course it did so with the advent of satellite broadcasting. We hate the press moguls behind it, so we have to despise the fellow citizens who adorn their houses with the 60cm diameter Sky TV receiving dishes. Counting them is an innocent competition if you have to take children on a train journey, but the environmental guardians are bent on discounting them. The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust has forbidden them. And true to the whole history of restrictions on what council tenants may do, the London Borough of Sutton has declared that they are "unsightly and dangerous" and says it will evict any tenant refusing to comply with the council ban. My advice to a new tenant whose neighbour has exercised the "right to buy" is to do a deal to put up the disc next door.

The new flurry of disapproval is because of the arrival last month of Sky's rival, British Satellite Broadcasting, and its "squarials". Another London planning department told the magazine *Building Design* that "we're waiting for the onslaught", and explained that under current rules, householders are permitted a single receiving dish on their homes—but a second would require planning permission.

I keep watching out for a squarial but haven't see one yet. It's just like the story of the angry lady who complained about the nude bathing. But could she actually see it? Yes, if she stood on a chair and used her binoculars out of the attic window.

But meanwhile the cable TV firms that never quite made it in the early years as carriers of the earthbound variety, and who lost out to the satellite speculators in the battle for new channels, have made a quiet liaison with them. They claim that their cables pass $1\frac{1}{2}$ million homes and a third of a million receive TV that way.

It's a big disappointment for moralists. They won't be able to complain that others are putting up unsightly and dangerous equipment to receive programmes they haven't seen and don't approve of. All that meretricious junk will be creeping in unnoticed, just like all the other things we hear and see.

The real lesson of the whole public debate is that we British have an unerring habit of choosing trivial issues to argue over, most of them constructed around snobbery and taste. We feel happier with them than with the discussion of genuine dilemmas and perils. As Maureen Lipman might have said in a Telecom ad, "Aerials, squarials, who cares, so long as he loves his mother?"

103. Planting peace

Prosperous East Anglia, with an actual increase in its income as a spin-off from the presence of American air force bases, has never been an easy place for nuclear disarmament. Our local CND branch has had to work its way through every style of approach to arouse the interest of fellowcitizens. Leaflets in the streets and on doorsteps and coach trips to national demonstrations brought warm support from the tiny minority of the convinced, and either total indifference or uncomprehending hostility from the overwhelming majority.

"My husband didn't give his life in the second world war, just so that you could invite the Russians in," was the characteristic response of dear old ladies. Could the campaigners find a chink in the automatic armour?

In another rural area, learning that Leominster District Council were building, on government instructions, a nuclear bunker to preserve its administrative machine, the local peace groups produced the handsome and beautifully illustrated *Bunker Book for Leominster* about the district where they lived. Just the thing to appeal to the heritage-lovers, they thought. The message was that it would be such a pity if all this were to be destroyed in other people's military adventures. They planted it in all the shops and sent it to all councillors. One returned his copy, torn up.

Down our way, as one member had a garden full of snowdrops, Hadleigh CND instituted a yearly Snowdrop Fair as an annual ritual celebrating the portents of spring. Wouldn't it disarm that built-in hostility if it could be shown that the disarmers shared the same ordinary enthusiasms as their antagonists?

That was why they took up the idea of the Hiroshima cherries. For forty years in many countries, the Hill Cherry or Yamazukura has been planted as a reminder of the fate of the inhabitants of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So the late Mark Gretton approached the district council for permission to plant one in a public place in Hadleigh. This was refused. There were those who urged that they should simply plant one on a bank holiday and see if anyone noticed, but this was thought provocative while the aim was to win people over.

So Mark turned to the religious denominations who, after all, had graveyards or grassy forecourts, intimations of mortality. Interestingly he was turned down by every nonconformist organisation, but was welcomed by the ancient parish church in the middle of town, and by the modern Catholic church. So we had a treeplanting ceremony at both places and the Hiroshima cherries, with priestly blessing, now flourish.

The notion of planting for peace, regarded with such suspicion down our way, has had a sudden upturn elsewhere. Despite the vast vested interests of politicians and the military lobby in their search for new targets, people realise that the cold war is over, and want to celebrate with something green and useful.

Two London boroughs and several other places in Britain have established peace parks or peace gardens, aiming to provide cases of serenity and repose. An attractive little book has appeared, dedicated to the proposal that "the ethos of peace be fostered and expressed through the language of landscape, and that social opportunities can be suggested by such places". So it's called *Places for Peace.*

It has been written by John McKean for Architects for Peace, a long-established minority of professionals in architecture and landscape who look up from their drawing-boards to contemplate not only the effects of nuclear disaster on the built environment, but also the life-giving potential of public gardens which are commemorative, celebratory and of everyday use. (It costs £5 from Architects for Peace, at 57DJamestown Road, London NW17DB).

Back in Suffolk we are made of sterner stuff. How does the collapse of the cold war affect our pockets? At one stage it was stated that United States service personnel would be exempt from paying the community charge. Then the official line changed overnight because of the obvious comparison between their disposable income and that of their neighbours. Every last general and second-class private will get the same reimbursement from the Pentagon.

Mr Jack Haylock, chairman of the Mildenhall Anglo-American Committee, says that any plans to close the bases "would have a devastating effect" as the personnel there contribute £43 million annually to the local economy.

There is no dismay over the USAF base at Bentwaters, since both the US and UK governments intend that it should house a new generation of nuclear missiles. As our MP explained, "it would be rash for the west to drop its guard too quickly." No, these newly-imported nuclear weapons will not break the INF treaty, as they are long-range weapons designed to strike deep into the Soviet Union itself.

104. Cathy never came

There was something very affecting, both in presentation and content, about Jeremy Sandford's BBC1 feature marking the fact that it's a quarter of a century since he wrote, and Ken Loach directed, *Cathy Come Home.* "Like many a young man's work," he says, "it was written to change the world."

Everyone old enough does remember its impact: the ending of the punitive Poor Law rules in hostels for the homeless; the founding of Shelter and hundreds of local organisations concerned with helping homeless people; the increase in local authority housebuilding. But these gains have been over-whelmed by the losses he unfolds. One is the awfulness of family life in bed-and-breakfast hotels, making fortunes for

their entrepreneurial owners at a huge cost to councils fulfilling their statutory duties. Another, in his view, is the great housing cutback by both Labour and Conservative governments. "Council house building sank from nigh on 200,000 homes a year to fewer than 12,000 in England and Wales last year."

Sandford demonstrates that the most dreadful job in Britain is that of the counter clerk in the council office, face to face with 250,000 applicants, and asking them odious questions in order that they may be officially regarded as homeless. And then being unable to do anything to help them. What makes him unusual among people who talk about housing is that he recognises that the most important factor is not what housing *is,* but what it *does* in people's lives. So he gave us a quick visual history of the squatters' movement since 1946, and a reminder of the fact that for the first 40 years of this century poor people could buy a plot in the country for a few pounds to put up their shack, shanty or bungalow which improved over time: something totally outlawed by post-war planning legislation. And with the enthusiasm of an insider, he explored the advantages of tepees and gypsy benders. He had the nerve to add: "I find something epic and beautiful in many of the vehicles, from the 1950s and 1960s, now being re-utilised as homes. Our society throws them away in large numbers. With house prices starting at £35,000 and council flats hard to obtain, a bus which costs a few hundred pounds is a viable and attractive alternative."

Poor Jeremy had to tumble over backwards to explain that while a "mobile home" on a caravan site might be hell for many, it is heaven for some. He is torn (and who isn't?) between his admiration for self-help solutions and his condemnation of government for abandoning council housing. There wasn't time to mention that some of the local authority "solutions" after *Cathy Come Home* have already been demolished as uninhabitable long before the cash borrowed to build them will be paid off.

His gesture is to share his home. "I'm not being frivolous in saying that if more people invited others into their homes it could have a significant effect—there are 22.5 million homes in Britain and if even a tenth of us opened our doors tonight we'd have licked homelessness... the growing habit of living alone is one of the fundamental causes of the housing famine." It would be wiser to say that a more basic cause is the need to get *away* from other people, like parents or spouses. Free choice demands personal space, as the affluent have always known. But he's right in posing the issue as "either build more houses or make it easier for people to solve their own housing problems." And he is right in his praise for self-build. The obstacles are threefold: speculation in land values, access to finance (taken for granted by all those owner-occupiers) and surmounting the barrage of public regulation.

Self-build doesn't imply that you should learn to lay bricks. It means that you should be in control of your own housing endeavour. The few triumphs since *Cathy Come Home* have been in tenant co-ops in Liverpool, London and Glasgow, including those catering for very poor and homeless people.

Everyone in this field was cheered up last year by the news that the Community Self-Build Agency, set up by the Housing Corporation and the National Federation

of Housing Associations, was going to receive £60 million of finance in the next five years from major building societies: the National Provincial and Nationwide Anglia. At last, they thought, the institutional obstacles to self-build have been removed. But now, because of the down-turn in the property market, Eagle Star, the major insurance company underwriting building society loans, has suspended its guarantees on development finance. This obscure market decision is a death-knell for little local groups.

A winning policy is not the direct provision of housing by councils, but *real* support for selfhelp endeavour, including co-ops, self-build, and the outlawed tent-towns Sandford piloted us around.

105. Master builders

Stand, if you dare, in the middle of Sloane Square in London, and look at the building on the north-east corner (the one with David Mellor's cutlery shop on the ground floor). It's about 20 years old and belongs to the least-liked period of contemporary architecture. But if you use the half-closed-eye test, you find that in its grain, texture and bulk, this totally modern concrete building is a good neighbour to the tall red-brick mansion flats around. It merges into its surroundings.

Go a few miles north to the sad desolation around Westway, near Notting Dale. There, on the Edward Woods Estate, you see another modest self-effacing building, the community hall. The tenants' association had been steered towards sources of finance and were in the unique situation, for poor people, of being able to select their own architect.

The one they chose didn't affect a populist accent. He listened with courtesy to their outline of their aims, took careful note of the fact that the building was to be put up as a training scheme by young, unemployed and unskilled people, and fought endless battles on their behalf with the public authorities, just to get it built.

The architect of both buildings is a man who has been in practice for over 30 years as a true professional, giving a direct, personal service to his clients. A completely private man, he is one of the reasons why I can't simply condemn his profession as a conspiracy against the laity.

Another is that up and down the country there are others like him, with no ambition to enlarge their offices, who never sought publication in the OK journals, never had the time to seek office in the RIBA, and never put up a building of which they are now ashamed. From the clients' point of view, the best architects are totally unknown. But there's plenty to be said about the irrelevance of architects, beyond the fact that many of the buildings we admire most, as well as many we like least, were put up without them.

As with other professions, the training of architects has been continually lengthened, and, like the subsequent publicity machine, is dominated by cults of originality and

of personality. Modestly, the client just wants a building that works and doesn't leak. The bigger the prestige of the practice, the less is the likelihood of this result.

The profession is not entirely to blame. For most of history it would have been thought absurd that people of such genius should use their expensive time on the ordinary individual dwellinghouse. Then came building regulations. These began as simple bylaws under Victorian public health acts. Today they are incredibly complex and use a private language lay people can't understand. They need an architect to steer them through, but most architects sidestep this obligation, putting the onus of compliance on the builder. Unlike my favourite architect, or heroes like the late Walter Segal, they don't antagonise the Building Control department by arguing their clients'case.

There is also the planning legislation. This too began simply, as guidelines for land use, rigidly enforced. It has grown to become a weapon of aesthetic control, too costly to be fought over, totally dependent on fashion. But so are architects. Hence all that deep red brick, steep roofs and brown window-frames you can see in new buildings from Caithness to Cornwall.

Worst of all was the legacy of two legal decisions (*Anns v. London Borough of Merton* and *Eames* v. *North Herts District Council*) which implied that any defect in a building between now and eternity can be blamed on the local authority that approved the plans. Council officers braced themselves for this challenge, and your poor architect must too. It doubled the cost of the humblest of buildings. Architects have to live with this enforced profligacy.

Doctors priced themselves out of the market, so we had the sixpenny doctor and later the NHS. Solicitors and barristers made it impossible for ordinary people to use the law, so we developed the Poor Man's Lawyer and later the Legal Aid Centre (now under threat).

There are two architectural responses. One is the community architecture movement. The other is community technical aid, in which people with different kinds of expertise merge it for clients. The current president of the RIBA admits that "Technical aiders resented the professional imperialism of architects, which, they claimed, clouded the clear objective of cheap practical help for those who could not afford market rates. The insistence of architects on controlling projects also, they claimed, negated the aim of promoting self-help. Technical aid was the real enabling force, because it simply cleared a way through the jungle of red tape as scout rather than as team leader."

This is one of those instances where Max Hutchinson turns out to be accurate.

106. End of term

The school year tends to end not so much with a bang as a quiet drifting away. The fourth-years are on "work experience" while the fifth-years have evaporated after GCSE. So it's nice to record that one of our local comprehensives, Claydon High School, north

of Ipswich (11–16 with 520 pupils) drew everyone in for a combinedarts celebration that contradicts all that narrow subject-bound "back-to-basics" wisdom that comes from successive secretaries of state for education.

My impression, confirmed in a lot of places, is that teachers have been demoralised by the sheer volume of paperwork imposed by our present government, with its intention of setting schools free from any dogma it happens to dislike. At Claydon, the head, Derek Roberts, contradicted my pessimism. "Just look around you," he said, and the head of art, Vai Nelson, made the same point. One of the art teachers. Sue Griffiths, reflected, "When I first came into education we all thought we were involved with everyone's kids, not just the ones in our own particular school, and that we were going to battle together against tremendous odds. Now I think that for most teachers it's a matter of keeping your head above water."

They've kept their heads above water at Claydon, and its end-of-year triumph was the exhibition on which the third-years worked nonstop, and the evening music-drama performance to which everyone in the village came. It was the result of Vai Nelson's application for support to the Living Arts Project, funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation and based at the Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes, to promote a documentary arts initiative in "outlying areas".

The aim of the project, which is spread around places far more outlying than Suffolk, was "to present opportunities to connect schools with their neighbourhoods, young people with old people, arts with life, history with now. There is nothing magical or difficult about getting started. You just have to dig where you stand."

Quite apart from the hope of linking all the arts with English, history and geography, the theme was irresistible for Claydon High School because *Dig Where You Stand* literally encompasses its own history, faithfully shown in the exhibition.

Claydon started in 1937, hiving off the ll-14s from the all-age village schools into a brand-new building, as recommended 11 years earlier in the Hadow Report, with the ambition of preparing them for the world of work. This durable red-brick structure with its horizontal glazing-bars in the metal windows is the core of the present-day school, a monument to endless educational ambitions. In 53 years there have only been three heads.

The current crop of children have interviewed those ancestors who remember the first head, Maurice Britton. He really believed in *Dig Where You Stand,* and his answer to the search for an appropriate rural curriculum was, as the oldies verify, to get everyone digging. They were drawn into a huge programme of garden-making, covering the site now occupied by extensions to the school.

The war came, and the busily executed lawns, flowerbeds and ornamental steps were ruthlessly dug up, at the head's insistence, for vegetable-growing. Not only that, but among the gas-masks and ration-cards, the present pupils have recorded how a swarm of urban evacuees arrived to gawp at the clod-hoppers with their cabbages and carrots and the school piggery, sustained by every parent in Claydon.

After 1947 the site was dug over again to turn the school into a secondary modern with a leaving age of 15. Then came the 1970s, with the age raised to 16, the title changed to comprehensive, the curriculum enlarged once more, and the site dug up once more for new buildings. As in every school round here the subject once called gardening, then rural studies, was first renamed environmental studies and then absorbed into general science. It is fascinating to see how the one subject on the timetable broad enough to encompass the experience of generations of local people is *art,* widened as it always is in practice, to embrace everything that doesn't involve the absorption of ready-made knowledge. Like a sponge, it holds together enthusiasms from textiles and creative writing to drama and music.

I don't think it has much to do with the godsend of Gulbenkian cash, even though that included things like paying for a musician in residence for a week to inspire the songs for the evening performance. It's more the prestige that comes from some outside body pushing in a bit of support and confirming that teachers aren't totally on their own. It confirms what we all (except the minister) know: that the arts are the catalyst that pulls together and justifies everyone's involvement in education.

107. Great Dane

In the mid-1970s I was walking at 6pm down the grand Nash staircase at 17 Carlton House Terrace (paradoxically the home of various non-affluent unofficial bodies like the Town and Country Planning Association and the Civic Trust), when a tiny, crop-headed old man came leaping up the stairs. "Please tell me," he said, "is Mr Colin Ward still here?"

So I took him to the nearest pub, the Coach and Horses, and, as he sipped his tonic water, I learned that he was Steen Eiler Rasmussen. He didn't know, of course, that I had revered him for years just because in 1934 in Denmark, he had written the best-ever book about London. It came from Jonathan Cape in 1937, was a Penguin in the 1960s and is around at the moment, if you know the right bookshops, in a new reprint from MIT Press. The architect Peter Shepheard was nudging me the other day to urge that it was the best book ever written about any city in the world. But there is something to be said for Norma Evenson on Paris, Alan Moorehead on Calcutta or Reyner Banham on Los Angeles.

The only reason why Rasmussen wanted to talk to me (he didn't need to, it was just his automatic politeness) was because I had written for permission to quote his account, in his book *Experiencing Architecture* (MIT Press 1964), of the way children *use* the environment. He explained how, in the morning break at 11 am, the boys from a nearby school learned the physical nature of the curved walls of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome. As Rasmussen saw it, they projected their nerves, their senses, into the seemingly lifeless wall:

"It was apparently a kind of football but they also utilised the wall in their game—as in squash a curved wall—which they played against with great virtuosity. When the ball was *out,* it was most decidedly out, bouncing down all the steps and rolling several hundred feet further on with an eager boy rushing after it, in and out among motor cars and Vespas down near the great obelisk. I do not claim that these Italian youngsters learned more about architecture than the tourist did. But, quite unconsciously, they experienced certain basic elements of architecture: the horizontal planes and the vertical walls above the slopes. And they learned to play on those elements. As I sat in the shade watching them, I sensed the whole three-dimensional composition as never before. At a quarter past eleven the boys dashed off, shouting and laughing."

Rasmussen died last month, aged 92, and his British admirers have been swapping fond recollections. Peter Shepheard, for example, told me how when they were both visiting professors in America the Rasmussens made a trip to Berkeley, California. At 3am Karen woke her husband to say, "Steen Eiler, there's an empty parking space outside." The old gent replied, "Right. You get the car and I'll stand there and pretend to be a fire hydrant."

He had grasped, as only a few others, like Claes Oldenburg or Richard Dattner, had, the significance of the hydrant as a kind of icon of American street life. He also learned, as I have, that if you're an elderly male not very well dressed in old-fashioned clothes, you can go just about anywhere in American cities. Rasmussen poked his nose in everywhere.

But nowhere better than in *London: the unique city.* His old photographs of streets and squares, council houses, Underground stations and Hampstead Heath now have a kind of melancholy antique charm, but his magnificent text endlessly evokes the city that London ought to be. Writing of the atmosphere of Bloomsbury he notes how "on a summer day when the sun is shining you can walk for hours from one square to another under fresh green trees and see thousands of little circular spots cast by the sun on the green lawns."

He celebrates a green city on a domestic scale, with superlative public transport and aspirations to garden city dispersal. "London is to us Continental people the successor of the self-governing townships of the Middle Ages. London is the capital of all capitals which has resisted absolutism and maintained the rights of the citizens within the state."

Back in the 1930s, his last chapter was called "A Most Unhappy Ending" because he, correctly, saw the housing authorities in London copying the worst, not the best, of European practice in replacing slums by multistorey tenements. Rasmussen noticed everything: balconies in Park Lane, paddling pools in Tooting, the backs of houses in Pimlico, coal-hole covers, the lettering that Edward Johnston designed for the Underground in 1916, the passion for growing things.

It always needs someone who is not a native of the place to grasp what anywhere should aspire to become. Rasmussen, with an immense perception of London's past, disclosed the kind of city it could have been.

108. Lost freedom

My cousins Tim and Shirley were for 20 years market gardeners. They were tenants of the Land Settlement Association, set up in the 1930s by the Ministry of Agriculture, and closed down by the same ministry in 1983. It sought to overcome the inherent difficulty of small growers: that they have to buy retail and sell wholesale, and it took on board the whole market ideology of big sales to the multiple retailers. Tenants grew only what they were told, and they packed and graded as they were told.

The tragedy was that it failed. By the 1980s my cousins were working all hours for a diminishing income. They were among the best and most efficient of LSA growers, and they avoided poverty by developing a Sunday sideline: buying and selling old picture postcards. Now they do it as a business and are no worse off with a far less arduous life.

Like me, they see their experience as a kind of parable. You can get poorer and poorer growing food, but can stay solvent catering for the Great British Nostalgia Industry. Personally I'm immune from the collecting bug. I think it's like measles, best got over in childhood, and just an irrelevance in adult life. Did you ever meet an art collector who was admirable as a human being?

But thanks to my cousins I've had a great time poring over old picture postcards by the hundred. They reveal so much. The overwhelming evidence is that our grandparents enjoyed the freedom of the street. Of course city centres had their traffic jams and the old pictures can't convey the overpowering noise of iron-shod hooves and iron-tyred wheels over the cobbles, nor the smell, in a dry summer like this, of the trodden-in layers of dung or the gutters flowing with horse urine.

Everywhere else the streets were swarming, not with vehicles, but with children. It's a reflection of the days of huge families crowded into densely occupied houses rented by the room. But it is also testimony to childhood freedoms snatched away by the idea that personalised transport is a human right for adult males. The great Scots historian T C Smout tells us that, "At Bridge of Earn on the main Edinburgh to Perth road, young children used to stretch their skipping rope right across the main street from one cottage to another. Not until 1914 was it suggested in the school minutes that playing in the road might be dangerous."

The postcards record this skipping, hoop-bowling, leap-frogging and marbles-playing child culture everywhere, quite apart from cricket and football in the street. Then came that marvellous gift to children: the bicycle and its juvenile progeny the fairy-cycle and tricycle. What city parent today dares sanction their use in the street by 1990s children?

The first generation of motorists exacted a heavy toll in child life. In parliament in 1934, Lt-Col Moore-Brabazon, later Lord Brabazon, expressed it with brutal frankness: "Old members will recollect the numbers of chickens we killed. We used to come back with the radiator stuffed with feathers. It was the same with dogs. Dogs get out of the

way of motor cars nowadays and you never kill one. There is education even in the lower animals. These things will right themselves."

Some 55 years later the traffic pundit John Adams provides interesting figures, saying that, "Since 1922 there has been a 24-fold increase in the number of vehicles on our roads. Most people would agree that the roads have become more dangerous. But the accident statistics tell a different story. In 1922 there were 736 children under the age of 15 killed in road accidents in England and Wales. By 1986 the number had fallen to 358." The road death rate for children has halved over 70 years.

People weren't unaware. When I was a child the County Borough of West Ham would rope off some of those teeming streets within certain hours and label them Play Streets. There weren't enough motorists to object, it was a forerunner of the highly effective Traffic Calming measures adopted in some German and Dutch cities. And the postcards show that for big days and festivals, even for dancing round the maypole, it was usual to exclude vehicles from central places.

John Adams has a telling interpretation of his figures: "As the roads have become more dangerous children have been withdrawn from them. And when they are exposed to traffic their levels of vigilance and anxiety are that much higher. Safety through anxiety—if not terror—is the official Department of Transport policy."

The artless world of the old picture postcard reveals what a huge shift has been made in our assumptions in the battle between the powerful and the powerless, who once took it for granted that they had the freedom of the street.

109. Skinny dipping

My assignation with a mountain of old picture postcards (see last week's *Fringe Benefits)* revealed a huge change within a lifetime in our attitude towards the sun. The favourite place for sending cards was the seaside, a cult which grew up when the fashionable aristocracy, as it tired of Bath, Leamington or Harrogate, was persuaded that a better "cure" was not only immersion in, but also drinking of, sea water.

Hence the bathing machine. These were white-painted wooden sheds on wheels, each with an attendant, in which the occupants undressed while a horse towed them out to sea. There the "dipper" held on to them and plunged them under water, like a Pentacostal Baptist minister. They lasted, horseless and beached under the promenade, well into the 1930s.

One survival of the Victorian assumption that the sea was a natural disinfectant was the discharge of untreated sewage into it, which results in today's assumptions that most of our beaches are unsafe and that you shouldn't eat shellfish caught on 200 miles of the east coast. But, of course, in those days the resident population in fishing ports and harbours was small, and none of the locals would dream of going voluntarily into the water.

Except for the boys. The Whitby photographer Frank Meadow Sutcliffe carefully posed them splashing around naked in 1886 and the then Prince of Wales had a big enlargement made to hang at Marlborough House. Local postcard makers followed this precedent to catch boys (never girls) in the river or pond, painting on swimming trunks if their genitals were exposed. In London, a favourite theme was of boys being chased by a policeman (or preferably a policewoman) out of the Serpentine lake in Hyde Park. No one drew the conclusion that swimming should be allowed there until 1930, when George Lansbury found that, as President of the Board of Works, he was in charge of the royal parks. Douglas Goldring recalled that "so mean was the attitude of the governing class that Lansbury had to fight tooth and nail against Tory obstruction to obtain for Londoners the right to bathe in their own Serpentine in their own park."

Back at the seaside the old postcards reveal that no one would consider the notion of undressing on the beach, and that in any case it was not thought healthy to expose your body to the sun. Nor was it thought that you would be any cooler through wearing fewer clothes. Hats were essential, if only to protect against sunstroke. The later fashion for sun-bathing would have been seen as not only perverse, but dangerous. At the most, fathers and sons would take off their shoes and socks, and roll up their trousers. Mothers and daughters would tuck their frocks and petticoats into their drawers and, with many a scream of excitement, would paddle in the advancing tide.

The cult of semi-nudity was, until the 1930s, an affectation of the intelligentsia, and of "progressive" groups, clubs and camps. The postcard evidence suggests that the arrival of the commercial holiday camp in the 1930s spread new assumptions down the social pyramid. Not women, but men, could be seen in topless bathing suits.

Most of us learn, in childhood or through experience, that our skin, our waterproof overcoat, is susceptible in different ways. Some of us tolerate exposure to the sun, for others it is a nightmare. The postcards from Edwardian days show that our great-grandparents protected all their children from the sun. A later generation ruthlessly exposed them all.

Now, perhaps fortunately, we have a new scare. Could a lifetime of sun-worship bring its toll in skin cancer? Fashionable people who spent enormously on suntan lotions in the past now buy preparations which give the same browning effect on white people, without the business of lying under the sun. Ordinary old postcards from far-away places show how, for example, the Bedouins wrapped themselves up to avoid the sun, or the slaves in the paddyfields of Asia had broad hats of rice-straw to give a little shade from its pitiless rays. It was natural for them all to keep out of the sun.

It was normal to avoid it. Look at the photos of a Victorian building site. The tradesmen are wearing flannel vests, woollen shirts, waistcoats, jackets and bowler hats. If you examine a country picture of the harvest, exactly the same is true. Clothes were an insulation against unwanted heat, except in the mines where the opposite applied. There, as the old Blue Books remind us, semi-naked men and women, boys and girls, worked together in the pit without any fear of the sun.

Just suppose that, as new fears about global warming arise, we were all induced, for the sake of our health, to stay away from exposure to the sun. We would only be repeating the wisdom of a whole generation of old picture postcards.

110. Core curriculum

My only contact with the world of higher education has been, late in life, as an occasional lecturer or external examiner. In consequence, I have a slightly rosy view of the whole scene. Quite apart from the cut-throat interdepartmental politics we all read about, there must, for the staff, be the endless slog of coaxing the work out of students whose real interests in life lie elsewhere.

Their problems are at their worst when it comes to the thesis or dissertation on which the final degree or diploma depends. There are students who gather a mountain of information which the old hands on the staff fear, often rightly, will never be boiled down into an acceptable document. Or there are students who choose a title that embraces the whole past or future of human civilisation. In vain their teachers suggest that an exploration of one tiny aspect of one small facet might provide not only a valuable thesis, but also a real contribution to knowledge.

This is the best possible advice. And it sometimes results in a piece of work that delights examiners as well as that particular student. I can remember dazzling dissertations in my own narrow range of interests, about children's play, or about the dens they build, or about holiday shacks and shanties or allotment huts, which have made firm friends for me among their authors. They were treading in terrain that nobody had thought worth exploring.

I was cutting the hedge one day when along came this planner and his family. He had been a student at what is now the Anglia Institute and had written a dissertation, which it had been my pleasure to read, on the theme of Horsiculture, meaning the new cult of riding. This entails driving out to the livery stables somewhere in the home counties, for the pleasure of riding around the local byways and bridleways before putting the horse back in storage for another week. It's a phenomenon with interesting environmental and social implications, but only this particular student found it a topic for analysis.

Just the other day, friends at Middlesex Polytechnic who wanted me to share their delight in a dissertation bubbling over with ideas sent me the work of Chris Wilbert, an undergraduate there. Etiquette requires me to record that I don't know him, nor was his examiner and am mentioning it without his knowledge. But I can understand how, amid endless meetings about how to spin out the budget, a piece of work like his must make his teachers feel the enterprise is worthwhile.

For a start he didn't choose a title like "Some considerations of the impact of industrial capitalism on tree-fruit growing." He called his piece, "The apple falls from grace." It traces the role of the fruit through mythology and religion, and the gardens

and orchards that were all over 13th-century London, down to the present day. Now, although over 6,000 varieties of apple are known, commercial orchards are dominated by nine varieties, which most people claim have no taste.

Thirty years of research have produced a compact, columnar, branchless "tree", requiring no pruning and little space. Wilbert feels it bears little relation to a tree at all. As for the picking, this is done by an invisible workforce of part-time, mainly female and low-paid pickers, whose conditions of employment do not receive the degree of public sympathy given to agricultural workers. However, the Agricultural Development and Advisory Services Fruit Group advises employers on how to run a production line on "time and motion" principles.

He tells us that in Nanking, a sixth of the trees planted in the city are fruit-bearing, including lychees and mangoes. And that in Chandigarh, capital of the Punjab, the roads are lined with peaches and plums. He doesn't object to the London plane, but how much better, he suggests, to have the apple growing all over London *again.* He reminds us that apples symbolise health, immortality, love and fertility.

I'm reminded of American legends of Johnny Appleseed, and of William Godwin's comment 200 years ago on Milton's *Paradise Lost.* "Milton has written a sublime poem upon a ridiculous story of eating an apple, and of the eternal vengeance decreed by the Almighty against the whole human race, because their progenitor was guilty of this black and detestable offence."

The apple is the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and we can't have too much of that, can we? I hope that the coming year's crop of final-year students comes with imaginative explorations of topics which are so commonplace and close to hand that they are seldom thought of as thesis fodder.

Except by their examiners. They've seen every kind of recycling of received opinion on big issues, and yearn for work that reflects personal conviction, research and scholarship. Anyway, modern scholars of the Old Testament tell us that it was actually a pomegranate that Adam and Eve tasted in Eden.

111. Back pages

The TV character with whom I identify totally is the old gent in the Yellow Pages ad. He rings around the secondhand bookshops for a work on fly-fishing by J R Hartley. Finally he locates a copy. Yes, he'll call and collect it instantly. And his name? Well, of course, it's J R Hartley.

You can laugh, but the second most common embarrassment for authors is to run out of copies of their own books. Everyone assumes that when all else fails, the writer of this elusive out-of-print book must have a secret hoard of copies. The other embarrassment is the opposite: to have the floorboards sagging under the weight of parcels of your own unsold works. There's nothing new about this. Henry David Thoreau was obliged by the terms of his contract to buy the unsold copies of the first of his books,

and wrote in his journal, "I have a library of 900 volumes, over 700 of which I wrote myself."

It has happened to me twice. When Pearsons bought Penguin and closed its education section in 1974 there were some books which had gone too far through the printery to be stopped. As an alternative to pulping they gave the authors the chance to acquire as many copies as they wanted just for the carriage costs. "I'll have them all," I said, full of wounded pride. "There are rather a lot," warned Tony Lacey of Penguin. "So much the better," I replied, and I gave them in parcels of 44 to every school I visited. Today I only have two copies, but I actually see that book still in use, and I blush for the out-of-date illustrations.

The second time demonstrates the sheer perfidy of publishers. In breach of contract, a publisher remaindered a book of mine without giving me the chance to buy up the stock. A friend in the book trade bought the lot from the remainder house and I've slowly sold them ever since. The irony is that I'm now overtaken by a new reprint.

But the J R Hartley syndrome is much more familiar. Authors get six free copies and instantly give them away to the people who have helped them. When a book goes out of print, as mine usually do, every scholar from Syracuse to Sydney reckons that the author is the last resort for a loan of his or her copy. Never mind the airmail costs, if they're interested in what you've written about, how can you be churlish enough to resist?

This is why I know Mr Hartley's dilemma inside out. I was once talking at a meeting in Toynbee Hall, along with the poet and propagandist for the Yiddish language, Avram Stencl, editor of *Loshen un Leben,* which he used to thrust on people with a missionary glint in his eye. He read one of his poems and, sitting next to him on the platform, I couldn't help noticing the stamp on the back (or front in Yiddish) of his own book. It said Tower Hamlets Public Libraries. "Do you mean to say," I whispered, "that you don't have a copy of your own poems?" He smiled seraphically and replied, "No. Naturally, I gave them all away."

Unlike J R Hartley, Avram Stencl was innocent of the Yellow Pages, and would, I imagine, have felt affronted rather than pleased if a book of his turned up in the secondhand trade. How could the owner bear to dispose of it? All the same, the very week that someone wrote to me wanting the loan of an out-of-print and out-of-date book of mine of which I only possess one battered copy, I chanced to be in Carlisle. The new public library, which is sited, as they all ought to be, right in the middle of the city's new shopping centre, had a shelf of ex-library books for sale.

We all know that it's a pathetic gesture of public libraries these days to raise a little cash by selling off books which aren't borrowed very often. That's why I own a copy of the *Municipal Yearbook* for 1984. Sometimes they sell off standard works which should have been kept in the basement for posterity. It's a short-term asset-stripping policy of which no one who believes in libraries can approve. All the same, I bought there for 20p a copy this book of mine which my enquirer had been vainly seeking. She was delighted and I was flattered.

But the lessons of the Hartley ad for authors are to hang on relentlessly to just two copies of your own hard-won output. Forget about the Yellow Pages and refer all enquirers to the Inter-Library Loans service to which every public and educational library in the country belongs. Give it time and it will serve you marvellously.

Many years ago I saw a small ad in the personal column that said: "Good prices paid for any novels by Gerald Kersh in any condition." I chanced to have seen half a dozen in the sixpenny box outside our local junk shop. So I bought them and sent them off to the box number. Back came a generous cheque and a letter of thanks. You'll have guessed who signed it. Yes, of course, it was Gerald Kersh.

112. Fine art of the shipwright's trade

The proper domain of economics, wrote Kropotkin a century ago, is the satisfaction of human needs with the least possible waste of energy. In his day it could be exemplified in the beautifully balanced transport economy of the flat-bottomed spritsail barges, peculiar to the Thames estuary and the Kent and Essex coasts.

The barges, which carried straw and fodder to the city's horses, would return with dung and stable litter for the farms and market gardens. The barges carrying the yellow stock bricks that built

Victorian London returned loaded with refuse and ashes from the city rubbish dumps, to use, along with local clay, chalk and river mud, for burning the bricks.

This "rough stuff' lay on the marshes behind the creeks and estuaries for 12 years before being incorporated in the brick slurry. The purple or green bubbles you can see on old yellow bricks are from glass in the ashes. The bricks were fired in clamps in the open air, carefully designed to use the wind. A little pile of ashes was ignited at the bottom and the stack burned from one to two million bricks for a couple of months, using no extra fuel at all.

The barges were also incredibly energyefficient. I once went on the *Westmoreland,* tied up at Halstow. It could carry 40,000 bricks with 5,000 square feet of sail, handled by one man and a boy. There was a winch to pull the sail up and the sprit itself was used as a derrick for unloading. By the 1950s it was only used in the Thames Barge Race, started 125 years ago by William Dodd, known as the Golden Dustman as he made a fortune collecting and selling rubbish.

He has a near namesake, James Dodds, whose life has been similarly entangled with Thames barges and boat-building. At school an "under-achiever", happiest working on a Baltic trader at weekends, he left at 15 to become a four-year apprentice in the Maldon shipyard of Walter Cook and Son, a firm specialising in rebuilding and repairing Thames sailing barges and Colchester smacks.

The sheer excitement of the ancient art of boat-building has pushed him ever since. Dodds went to art school and ended up a graduate of the RCA. He now lives in a village near ours, with a formidable expertise about the way wooden ships have been put

together ever since Noah built the ark. He has done some of those exquisite axonometric drawings to show how a boat is put together, which we dismiss as technical illustration, as though it were easy. He turns out a stream of paintings, woodcuts, linocuts, vinyl engravings, and mixtures of several of these, just to celebrate the ancient arts.

When he added a printing press to his workshop at Stoke-by-Nayland his mind turned to books. There has been a stream of ready-made themes. He did, for example, a little book of George Crabbe's poem *Peter Grimes,* which rightly went down big at Aldeburgh. It pushed home the grim truths of the fisherman's life that underlie Benjamin Britten's opera.

He is attracted by the similar arts of the builders of windmills and watermills. They succeeded in combining the skills of carpenter, blacksmith and foundryman to produce machinery that lasted for centuries, harnessing the power of wind and water.

His latest is a lovely book of the text of Kipling's poem *The Shipwright's Trade* (Jardine Press, Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk CO6 4SD, £9.95). It was well chosen, for Kipling stresses the experience of Dodds himself, "How very little since things was made/Things have altered in the shipwright's trade." Unlike almost every other English poet, Kipling had a reverence for craft skills, and knew that if you were going to build a boat, or a house, or a chair, out of wood, there were, at the most, three ways of going about it.

For James Dodds, "the poem brings back feelings of my own youth spent in and around a labyrinth of lean-to boat-sheds, barges, blocks and spars, learning a trade." We face a future with an endless supply of humans and a diminishing supply of resources. The work of people like Dodds tells how our ancestors perfected the art of using renewable resources, an immense amount of human labour and an even greater budget of skill, just to be able to move anyone or anything, even the heaviest of loads, anywhere.

113. Lead soldiers

There's this old gent called Roy Lewis who, after 20 years in the *Times's* foreign department and a further spell as African reporter for the *Economist,* retired and bought a Columbian press, a composing stick and several hundredweight of type. He called himself the Keepsake Press and began printing at least two dozen volumes of poetry and an endless series of "poem cards". All poets yearn for such a publisher.

But he also wrote a comic novel about prehistoric times called *What We Did to Father* (Hutchinson, 1960). It was seized upon by the science-fiction world as, in Brian Aldiss's words, "the most astute and funniest prehistorical fantasy ever written" and was given a new name by Penguin as *The Evolution Man.* A cult book in the sci-fi subculture, it has just re-emerged under that title from Corgi, and in French, with the title *Why We Ate Father.*

Anyone reading this history would find Mr Lewis an unusual character and would wonder about his relationship with Dad. I found the answer in a little book, from another private press in Cornwall, called *A Father's Imprint.*

Here he tells how he was, as a boy in Edgbaston, a real disappointment to his parents, never sticking at anything. Father was a schoolmaster turned business executive, whose high standards in everything ruined his aspirations, and made Mrs Lewis shake her head sadly over his intransigence. (Exactly like the prehistoric mother in *The E volution Man.)*

But when Roy was 14, another boy brought an Adana printing press into the art class. "I experienced that blinding revelation known as religious conversion, totally and irrevocably, my soul enthralled, my eyes, ears and nose enslaved. I must print." He sold all his toys and sent his 45 shillings to Adana and found, like every amateur printer, that you need an awful lot of type to set up the smallest page. To do Father justice, he was impressed by this sudden passion and persuaded someone with a Monotype machine to punch out founts of Caslon Old Face.

What could he print of his own? "In truth, nothing. My thoughts, my ideas, my opinions were my father's. Inevitably, to me, poetry was something you studied at school. To write it was unthinkable... It meant exploring one's feelings, which was avoided in our house."

In the end, he sold his printshop for £5, worked for a university place, and spent a lifetime in journalism only to return to printing. And to writing novels. (The next to appear will be *The Reign of the Extraordinary KingLudd.*) He was co-author of *The English Middle Classes* and *Professional People,* and even had a new play at the Edinburgh Fringe last month.

His is the classic history of the boy who fell in love with printing, from Benjamin Franklin down to me, and consequently was *obliged* to become a writer. So I was delighted to meet his publisher at the bottom end of Cornwall. For Roy's childhood memoir is one of a series (and costs £5.95 from the Patten Press, Old Post Office, Newmill TR20 4XN). Others include Mervyn Levy's *Reflections in a Broken Mirror* at £10, and Frances Partridge's *The Pasque Flower, or the History of an Obsession* at £7.95, published to coincide with her third volume of diaries.

The publisher is Melissa Hardie and she has a range of other topics like Cornish memoirs and severely practical monographs on health management and research, aimed at professionals in health care. She presents an interesting merging of the traditional private-press limited edition and the newest computer-set desktop publishing.

But there is more to her than that. Down the garden at "The Hive", there is the Jamieson Library of Women's History, a collection of about 10,000 books, second only to the Fawcett Library in London, to which it is affiliated, and available to all. It covers women in relation to literature and the arts, the home, health care, the sciences, education and general biography.

For non-metropolitan scholars, and thanks to the Great Western Railway, Penzance has good links with the Midlands and the North. I rejoiced to find, in this Cornish

idyll, not only a challenge to the urban bias in publishing, but a reminder that if we must pore over books, it can perfectly well be done in a garden full of doves.

They are there because one day her husband, Phil, was waiting for his train at Paddington and bought a copy of the *Amateur Woodworker,* caught by the headline "Build your own dovecote". He did, and they flourish, a tribute to the power of the printed word. A 17th-century amateur printer wrote triumphantly: "With twenty-six soldiers of lead I shall conquer the world." Well, they didn't quite, but in November Patten Press brings out Roy Lewis's *King Ludd,* which he describes as "an historical tease". Nice to find a publisher Luddite enough not to be owned by either Maxwell or Murdoch. Melissa is much more mellifluous.

114. Paper people

Maureen Richardson is one of those people who must always be making something. When I first knew her in the fifties she was into rag-rug making, rush weaving, straw-work and hedgerow basketry: all the gypsy crafts that involved materials ready to hand. She kept her bees in straw hives just like the ones in Bewick's engravings from the 18th century. When the children were off her hands, she attended a short course in papermaking at Camberwell School of Art.

She learned that most amateur papermakers were content to buy slabs of ready-made pulp and produce very beautiful writing paper from them. But this was not what made her want to explore this craft. The author of a recent book on her work explains that Maureen had "a concern for the vast consumption of wood pulp by the paper industry and the excessive demand made on the world's trees. So much cheaply produced paper was used thoughtlessly and so much went to waste."

It was axiomatic for her that paper should be made of local materials that would otherwise go to waste. So she went foraging for plant fibres and by now has accumulated over a hundred useful species and dozens of creative combinations. They can be farm wastes like the straw of rye, flax or maize; tree products like willow; vegetables like scarlet runner beanstalks or onions; flowers like marigold or poppy; or weeds like dandelion, thistle, or giant hogweed. People buy her papers as pictures, and publishers use them as decorative endpapers or for fine bindings. But she *does* also make papers you can write on—somehow I feel too inhibited to type on them.

Just because they get exhibited all over the world, she has been obliged to run summer courses on Plant Papers, demystifying the art of papermaking, at the home-made house her husband Brian built at Brilley in Herefordshire. At other times, he runs two-week building courses at the Centre for Alternative Technology at Machynlleth in Wales.

Obviously they both hope that something more brushes off than the technology of making paper. Visitors notice the turf-covered roofs and the solar panels providing hot water as well as the magnificent view over the Wye Valley with the Black Mountains

beyond. The Richardsons cherish the integration of workspace and living space, and when the time came to build a papermaking studio, they flouted all the accepted ideas about building. Brian explains that there are "no foundations, in the sense of ravishing the site by digging holes and filling them back up with messy, expensive concrete; no damp-proof course. Everyone knows you must have this, but our building is off the ground and has the air flowing freely around and I under it, so it needs none. No 'wet trades'—concrete, brick or plaster. These are difficult materials to handle; heavy, and requiring strength and special skill to get good results. No roofing tiles. A butyl rubber sheet sheds the water and is prevented . from blowing off by a layer of turf sods, which also deaden the sound of rain beating down, and provide a soft sort of handknitted appearance to help the building tuck itself into the rural landscape." Nor are there plastic gutters: the roof tilts to one corner to collect the rain into a storage tank for watering the vegetables. There aren't any paints or timber preservatives either, since "noxious chemicals are wickedly expensive and harmful to humans and bats alike."

I got the feeling that going on a course about making Plant Papers is really a lesson in changing habits and attitudes to life. So I asked Maureen what kind of people went. She told me about one: an "old Africa hand" who had seen in Malawi how schoolchildren had just one exercise book to cover all subjects for a year. She knew there was plenty of paper in the city so, on learning that anyone can make paper if they learn how, she was inspired to take her new knowledge to teachers there, in order that they might teach the children in turn. (Anyone can improvise the equipment from anything.) She reckoned that there were enough serviceable materials around to make a paper capable of taking pen or pencil, and which anyway only had to last a year.

Anyone can launch an appeal for half-used exercise books to be shipped out, like old spectacles or jumble-sale dresses, to central Africa. How much better, thought this student, to export a skill which could last a lifetime with every child who learned it. So I realised that learning to make paper from plant materials isn't confined to wall decorations and lampshades. After all, the Japanese have built paper houses for centuries. It's a skill anyone can acquire using no energy beyond the human kind, and no materials beyond those that the rest of us bum, bury or put in the dustbin.

That's the good news shining out of Herefordshire.

115. Outsiders

Round our way, where every other shop in the local high streets seems to be an estate agency, we have dozens of houses for sale. And just as we used to tut-tut a few years ago about the astronomical prices being asked for houses, so today we tut-tut about how little they have gone down, in spite of the alleged collapse of the property boom.

Everyone on the inside, willingly or not, is part of a conspiracy to make it impossible for those on the outside to burst the bubble, and get a roof over *their* heads. These

outsiders paradoxically tend to belong to families local for generations, who simply aren't rich enough to buy their way into the housing market. They figure in two reports just out. The first gives the findings of a survey by Action with Communities in Rural England on *Tackling Deprivation in Rural Areas; Effective Use of Charity Funding* (£6 from ACRE, Stroud Road, Cirencester GL7 6JR), which lists 14 kinds of deprivation that are a feature of some people's lives in most country areas, not just in remote places.

Apart from the lack of affordable housing, there is the lack of access to public transport, of local services and facilities (and the high cost of those that do exist), coupled with low incomes and lack of job opportunities and of control over resources. A similar list comes from the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Rural Areas, *Faith in the Countryside* (Churchman Publishing, £12.50). Its 48 recommendations to government include the removal of restrictions on the use of local authorities' income from house sales for new social housing, and an increase in the Housing Corporation's investment in rural housing associations. Its 100 recommendations to the Church include making its own land available for low-cost housing rather than selling it to the highest bidder.

People may start housing associations and then learn that the Housing Corporation has run out of funds and the building societies have lost interest. At Haverhill in Suffolk, a group chose the sensible option of self-build on a council-owned site, only to learn that the self-build management company involved had gone into liquidation. It explained to the council that, "we were unable to meet our immediate commitments due to one of our funding building societies defaulting."

One category of rural people who make no demands for special treatment ought to be the lucky ones—those whom family history has given access to a patch of land. Only planning policy stands in their way. Policy is based on a few propositions that may not be queried. One is that the rural landscape should remain as it was in 1948—apart from large-scale destruction by farmers and the building of roads. Another is that those "precious agricultural acres" are holy, even if the bottom has fallen out of the market. A third is that any new housing should be extension or infill of existing villages. A fourth is that any proposed new house elsewhere has to be lied about so that it appears to be the home of one of that dying breed, the agricultural worker. A fifth, unspoken, policy is that if you are rich enough, you can get away with anything.

Where I live, there are several families whose names go back in local records for 200 years. Peter is a farmer's son in Ruth Rendell's village who is getting married and wants to build a house on the farm, as property round here is far beyond their means. The house "would not be obtrusive, but a bungalow set near his parents' home and the ancient farm". Despite the united suppport of the parish council, his application was turned down.

Tom (a distant relation of Peter) has lived all his life in our parish. He and his wife have raised seven children in the family house and wanted to have a smaller retirement home on their own adjacent land so that one of their children's families could move into their house. The parish council observed that it "warmly supports

this application". Planning permission was refused, "in that the site is situated in the countryside", and because the proposed dwelling "represents the undesirable addition to the sporadic residential development in the countryside which, if permitted, would be to the detriment of the character of the area".

Now this hamlet has always been a nucleus of settlement, reinforced in the 1960s, '70s and '80s by completely new or rebuilt and extended houses. No precedents would be set. So an appeal was made to the secretary of state. It failed, as the inspector was "satisfied that notwithstanding a scatter of dwellings in the vicinity, the appeal site lies within predominantly rural surroundings".

So neither young Peter nor old Tom can build a house, even though they don't have to face the cost of acquiring the land. Meanwhile, in both these local parishes, there are half a dozen houses offered for sale at six times the price it would cost *them* to build.

116. Product-minded

It's not only the Bogeywoman who is guilty of that dreadful reductionism that turns every relationship and service into the delivery of a *product* from a supplier to a consumer. Higher education long ago realised that having a business school and courses in marketing was a winning way of gaining a reputation ("we're no ivory tower"), an income ("we send all our middle management there") and the favour of government ("we're rising to the challenge of 1992").

Countless *curricula vitae* certify that the job applicant is a trained absorber of market wisdom, and it shows everywhere. You will have noticed how British Rail's management has renamed passengers as customers and your journey as a product to be sold in the most lucrative market, i.e. business trips paid for by the firm. I've mentioned before the classic statement by Northampton Council's parks department that "anything must fight for its place within a given market. Allotments are no exception to this principal [sic]."

Nor is education. Half the current tragic demoralisation of the production-line operatives in this market (teachers) results from the attempt by our market-wise ministers to impose quality-control principles on their hapless output. The legislators themselves, of course, buy in the bespoke market, paying over the odds for all those imponderables that can't be measured, just as they do in personal transport, housing, medicine, cuisine and culture.

The market ideology brings with it an incredible arrogance towards low-grade recipients of public policy. Citizens who don't fit the consumer image, for one reason or another, are a dead loss to be written off or contained out of sight. Hence the government's intolerable attitude to the Probation Service, which, in case you've forgotten, began as a voluntary initiative to keep people out of jail. Hence its refusal to recognise in its aproach to general practitioners that the doctor in Hackney has quite a different

task from that of his/her counterpart in Herst-monceux, that the task of collecting a tax on residents is simple in the latter and incredibly hard in the former, or that the teaching of English in Pimlico School, where the children on the roll have nearly 50 different home languages, is quite different from the task that faced the teachers of the Secretary of State for Education.

A new report that has found it inevitable, *en route,* to underline the incompatibility of our different approaches to the user of services is *From Paternalism to Participation: Involvement in Social Services,* by Suzy Croft and Peter Beresford. Funded by Rowntree, it comes for £4.95 from Open Services Project, 15 Falcon Road, London SW11 2PJ, and is a forerunner of these researchers' findings, which will come from Macmillan with the title *Citizen-Involvement: a practical guide for change.*

This is about those agencies, statutory or "voluntary", which cater for people the market would like to shed as minimal consumers. The authors stress that there are two conflicting social philosophies. "It's one thing to talk of bringing social services in line with Marks & Spencer by increasing customer input and safeguards. It's quite another for people to have more say in the business and its impact on their lives. Mixing them up is likely to raise expectations unrealistically and can end in bitterness and disillusionment."

The first philosophy is that of *consumerism,* in which agencies seek information from users to improve their efficiency, economy and effectiveness. The second is *self-advocacy.* "Here the aim is empowerment. People want to speak for themselves. Service users seek a *direct say* in agencies and services to gain greater control over their lives. They don't just want to get involved in the administration of services." The authors find that "Consumer approaches tend to be service-provider-led; those for selfadvocacy, user-led."

This is an important distinction, and we can extrapolate from it the insight that the government's public relations job on matters like health, education or selling off the electricity industry uses the language of the *self-advocacy* approach to conceal its belief in the *consumerist* approach. You can have a national curriculum or a national health service, or you can buy your way out of both.

Ideological fashions have a limited life-span. But when the Bogeywoman retires *to Dunrulin,* Dulwich, all the other politicians will be obliged to come out from behind her skirts and confess that they too have been seduced by the market model. They've all been won over to the leaner, trimmer economy. They're all product-minded, and my fear is that the glib, market language will survive a change of rulers, along with all that prattle about a trimmer economy. The fact that it fails to meet ordinary human needs and distorts human relationships is just seen as an inevitable side-effect.

117. Come back Dr B

Even though British Rail conducts its dealings with the rest of us through an obfuscating cloud of expensive "public relations", every bit of railway news is bad news. First, there's the growing disquiet about safety following cuts in labour costs. Bizzarely, it was the *Post Office* that had to write to BR this month to condemn its "costcutting initiative, regardless of the needs and fears of your customers". Secondly, there is the fares horror. In May, ticket prices went up by an average of 9 per cent. This month in my region, they were increased by between 15 and 20 per cent, and there is the certainty of an increase on InterCity and Network South East of 9.5 per cent in January.

Finally, as the winter timetable came into effect, travellers discovered that there were over 100 fewer services, while yet more are to be chopped next May, according to leaked documents. Patrick Donovan of the *Guardian* explained that, "BR has tried to mask the impact of route reductions nationally by dripfeeding information on a local basis."

It's tragic, because, if only the railway bosses could bring themselves to be honest with us, they would find us queuing up to join the BR Supporters' Club. This has nothing to do with Channel 4's wallow in .steam nostalgia. It is because of two incontrovertible facts. The first is that, in terms of death and injury, rail travel is infinitely safer than road travel. Rail disasters make news, particularly when related to costcutting. Road accidents, with a far greater toll of injuries and fatalities, aren't news at all—just a fact of life.

The second is that rail transport is far more energy-efficient than all those cars on all those choked-up roads. This has been obvious for half a century; it isn't a conclusion from our sudden discovery of global warming. But quite different criteria are used for road and rail investment. No one expects roads to show the same return on capital.

Our folk-devil in the train-users world is the late Dr Richard Beeching, appointed 30 years ago to make the railways pay commercially. He was hired from ICI at what was then an outrageous fee, and his solution was simple: cut out the lines that don't pay. We all criticised him for not seeing that the most important thing about a railway network is precisely that it is a network.

But Beeching knew perfectly well the dilemma that government, as well as citizens, avoid today. In 1964, addressing a conference of railwaymen and union officers, he set it out in words worth quoting at length: "If it were to be decided that the railways should operate as a social service, without necessarily being obliged to pay their way, it would still be necessary to decide how much service should be provided and at what cost, and to limit the cost by confining railway services to those spheres where they are capable of giving better value for true cost than other means of transport... In major respects, therefore, the problems and tasks confronting us would be the same as at present. *But* there would be one difference of potential importance. If we were to operate as a social service, the sensible outcome would be a limitation of our services to those fields in which rail gives us the best value for true cost, whereas, if we operate

on a strictly commercial basis, we should confine our services to those fields in which rail seem capable of giving best value for actual costs incurred..."

Beeching went on, "Although we are obligated to make the railways self-supporting, we, the British Railways Board, regard our obligation to run the railways in the best interests of the whole community as being the overriding one."

Thus, even Beeching, whom most see as the butcher of the branch lines, felt a responsibility which the current bosses of BR deny in the face of government determination to whittle away the "public service obligation" payments.

The government's white paper on environmental strategy, *This Common Inheritance,* while admitting that "transport contributes 20 per cent of our total carbon-dioxide emissions, most of which come from road transport", is as vague on railways as on everything else. It promises support for high levels of investment by BR without saying where the investment is to come from.

But every step in current BR policy is calculated to drive ordinary travellers, as opposed to expense-account business passengers, *off* the trains. If only the BR board could feel able to be honest with us and with its employees, it could force a showdown with the government's advisers. We need a rail strike, not of NUR and ASLEF but of the BR board-members, appointed from above to harden up the industry for selling off. They ought, having learned the complexities of railway operation and its role in the future economy, to win their place in history as champions of the railway.

118. Middlesex man

All that stuff about Essex Man, like Carshalton Man 15 years ago, is part of the patrician fantasy that pervades English life. In the dream world of snobbery, anybody who is anybody lives either in the Georgian streets of the city centre or the remote countryside, like the eighteenth-century aristocracy with a rural estate and a town house, paid for by slaves in the West Indies.

The truth, known to us all, is that a majority of the British people, like a majority of Europeans and North Americans, live in suburbs. It is the characteristic settlement pattern of this century. Yet suburbs have been the target of such a barrage of criticism—social, fiscal, aesthetic, political, but overwhelmingly snobbish—that the very word *suburban* became a term of abuse in the folklore of the intelligentsia on both the right and the left.

It was not until the post-war years that a school of sociologists, architects and historians emerged (like H.J. Dyos, J.M. Richards, or Nicholas Taylor whose *The Village in the City* is absurdly out of print) who became connoisseurs of the suburban environment and its advantages as a habitat for most of our fellow creatures. I put it this way since the suburb is also the safest place for many other species, such as foxes and badgers, since farmers were subsidised to make "the countryside" uninhabitable by them.

I've a working knowledge of big swathes of London's suburban hinterland and complete ignorance of the rest. So I had that nice exploratory feeling when visiting a son in a patch of the lost county of Middlesex, mentally ticking off all those aspects that made it a good suburb. In fact, it was that most desirable of places, a suburb of a suburb. So there was no High Street: no branches of the usual multiples you see in every main street in the land, not even any building society or estate agents' offices.

But there was the station, key link to everywhere else, even though it had been carefully minimalised so that it could be unmanned from 7pm onwards. Around it was the usual handful of small shops. Then I saw how, in the road from the station, the houses, from the 1890s to 1920s period, had been altered beyond recognition by generations of home improvers. The latest was one of those nightmares for planning officers that we all love to see. Not only had the owner covered the walls with vertical crazy-paving, but he had then concealed them by adding on a full-width porch or veranda supported by Etruscan columns: a mini-version of the South Fork ranch in *Dallas.*

The room in the next street for which our youngest pays £45 a week is only 10ft by 7ft, so he took me for a tour. Round the corner was a primary school, a park with football pitches, formal gardens with seats and a playground, as well as an avenue of trees remaining from the past, allotments and a whole series of back alleys for garages and small businesses. There was a branch library and the once usual workaday shops: plumber, electrician, car and cycle spares.

Our destination was the Chinese Chippie. The elderly owners had sized up local demands and adapted to them. So they sold fish and chips and the usual variants, eat here or take-away, as well as the basic range of Cantonese dishes. We settled for cheese omelettes, chips and beans. Wipe away your gourmet smile, for this was the first place I've been to for a decade where a cup of tea costs 18p. We stayed for about an hour and a half at our Formica table.

When we came in, the clientele was an elderly mother and harassed daughter, meeting to explore some problem, while, several tables away, grandpa was entertaining a one year old in a pushchair. Then in came a very old man without his teeth, but with an orthopaedic sprung walking stick, which he used to amuse the baby. Then a customer came in with a black Labrador dog. This attracted the old man who stroked the dog, rewarded by a lick.

After that came the schoolchildren, sprawling around with their fizzy drinks, and then a different generation of kids, skateboards under their arms, and the local builders knocking off work. If we'd been there in the morning we would have seen the bacon-and-eggs breakfast mob or the lunchtime rush.

The point is that in most places I know, whether country towns or old suburbs, there is just *nowhere* providing a warm space, with a cup of tea to sit over for hours, for a cross-generational selection of low-spending customers. Not only that. I remember Nicholas Taylor noting how, "It is one of the most important features of the social life of our suburbs that back alleyways and back gardens should give sanctuary to the

specialised craftsman. who has very often operated there for generations." Many are now doomed, not just by the uniform business rate, but by the landlord's assumption that it's OK to squeeze the last pound of rent.

119. Sleepless nights

For 150 years we have had commissions and committees discussing the parlous state of British technical education which, for all that time, has been blamed for the declining share in world markets of our manufacturing industries. Current debates are actually very old indeed.

One inquiry in the late 1950s concluded that the problem was that technical education was too narrow, producing engineers, technicians and craftsmen who knew all about their speciality, but little of anything else. Technical education must be "liberalised".

But instead of urging the liberalisation of technical teaching, it recommended a new, obligatory, subject: Liberal Studies. This became a new industry in itself, with conflicting ideologies and the usual horror stories. Heads of departments of electrical and mechanical engineering would declare, like old clubmen, that any topic was fine, as long as sex, politics and religion were barred, to which newly appointed Liberal Studies teachers would respond that these were the only things worth serious discussion.

The whole scene got watered down into general studies, complementary studies, communications skills and so on, but the 1960s Liberal Studies boom left permanent effects on one generation. Some colleges economised by using technical teachers to impart their hobbies rather than their expertise. They became transformed when passing on their love of photography or dinghy-sailing to the same part-time students.

I now think that the lasting achievements of Liberal Studies were in the arts, where lives were changed. We used to hear of triumphs at the then Yeovil College where everyone was writing poetry. I watched a great double-act by a potter and a painter at Brixton College, convincing a job-lot of conscripts that they, too, were artists.

Part of the unspoken agenda was that every college had its "low-level" students among the craft apprentices, assigned, just like the bottom streams in schools, to the newest teachers. At the then Harlow Tech, they were the bricklayers, who would gleefully march into the classroom chanting, "We're the brickies, we're the thickies."

In 1965, at the then Croydon Tech, the one group kept out of sight in the basement was the gas-fitters. Their Liberal Studies hour was late in the afternoon, run by me and an unrelated namesake, Philip Ward, a brilliant performer on the 12-string blues guitar. Our inquiry into student preoccupations revealed that getting to sleep at night was a major problem. Studies show that insomnia is a constant cause of concern for the young.

So we did six weeks' work on sleep. We read all the literature. We knew all about dreams and REMs (rapid eye movements), and we listened to the class's ribald views

on the soporific effects of masturbation. We learned about total relaxation. Empty your mind! Consider every last toe and finger of your body! Are they truly in repose?

Phil Ward achieved the impossible. He induced the class into sleep through selfhypnosis at 4.30 in the afternoon.

Sorting out problems totally different from the ones that actually occupy our minds is a guaranteed sleep-inducer. Take Paul Theroux's *The Mosquito Coast*, the narrator's father has dreams of turning the swamp into an earthly paradise. "I see a hatchery over here and a water-tower over there, and a boiler. Lack of ice isn't a problem in the tropics, but lack of hot water is—who would have guessed that?"

I would have recommended that kind of reverie, except that it wasn't published until 1980. That year, a man came from the Gas Board to repair something or other. He said: "We've met before. Didn't you and another fellow called Ward teach at Croydon Tech?" I admitted it and he said, "Well, I've never lost a night's sleep since then."

120. Subverting MK

Back in the 1930s, when the Soviet government was inviting big names from the west to come and see, Andre Gide was asked by his hosts what he most liked about Leningrad. The old chap replied, "St Petersburg." When the new city of Milton Keynes was conceived, no one knew that there was going to be a huge shift in the English psyche from *neophilia* to *antiquarianism.*

Ask visitors what they like best about the place and they tend to name one of the old towns and villages it incorporates. They tell you about the two ancient inns of Stony Stratford, from which the saying "a cock-and-bull story" originated. If antiquity grabs them, they mention Bradwell Abbey, while the old railway town of Wolverton is a mecca for industrial archaeologists. They don't mention the vast, gleaming and unvandalised shopping centre in Milton Keynes.

Now I've known Milton Keynes ever since it was a mere twinkle in the eye of Fred Pooley, the then Bucks county architect. He realised that, superbly placed on road and rail traffic routes, it was the ideal site for an adventure in city-building. The endless sneers about the place that I've heard from people who take for granted an absolute freedom of choice about where *they* should live, drove me to keep my misgivings to myself. So I was delighted when, a few years ago, Jeff Bishop, architect and environmental psychologist, and a team from the School of Advanced Urban Studies in Bristol were hired by the ever-introspective development corporation to investigate what residents of MK thought about the place.

Hilariously, Bishop tells us that: "At the outset, the research team was told that people find MK confusing, and they get lost. This was patently not true of the residents, so what was the source of this rumour? A chance encounter provided the answer: that those who get lost seem to be predominantly visiting architects and planners who come

with a preconceived idea of what clues and landmarks a 'city' should offer... and are then confused when such clues are not apparent."

Bishop's team found that: "MK *is* a success—to the extent that one might also add: *despite* the planners." Their findings "did not just cast doubt on the specific approaches used thus far in MK, but on the whole ethos of the planning and architectural professions".

In the 1970s, I interviewed dozens of MK citizens, and Bishop's survey confirms my impression that the work of the most prestige-laden architects in housing at MK—with the significant exception of Ralph Erskine—is liked least. The houses that most resemble our traditional picture of house and home are liked best.

Residents see themselves not as living in the new city, but in Linford or Heelands, for example, which are perceived as a series of "villages". They see MK "as somewhere only a little better than usual, a normal landscape dotted with villages". Shrewdly, Bishop notes the way that professional ideologies contain a set of perceptions of what is urban and what is rural, and that these are *threatened* by suburban and garden-city environments precisely because they are "symbols of individual aspirations rather than corporate ones".

Unlike almost any other MK voyeur, I find the new city overwhelmingly interesting. Why are there green avenues in the middle of its boulevards? Because 20 years ago, Walter Bor, the dear old planner, recognised that in the twenty-first century MK will need trams.

But I'm like Andre Gide. I chanced to be there on the right day for the MK Thursday market. Avenues of traders and hucksters were buying and selling everything. Slap in the middle of those boring old multinationals was the market scene you can see everywhere from Baghdad to Buenos Aires.

121. Dutch treat

This cartoon was published by the Department of Transport to indicate its priorities. Not, needless to say, in Marsham Street, but in The Hague. It's impressive to see how much further on the way to a viable transport policy for the twenty-first century the Dutch have travelled.

First, there are the railways. History favoured the Netherlands. Instead of a centralised autocracy, where everything happened in London or Paris and all routes converged on a single centre, they inherited a linear network of the autonomous free cities of the Middle Ages, each with a different national function. Randstad Holland, the densely populated ring of towns and cities is, in the jargon of geographers, the world's model of a polynucleated city region.

Like ours, its railway network is more than 50 years old; but, unlike ours, is the subject of continuous public investment. Fares are the second lowest in Europe, and it is taken for granted that half the cost of running the system is a public responsibility. It

shows. When we arrived at Hook-of-Holland, there were waiting trains to everywhere. When we got back to Harwich on Sunday morning, BR was running coaches for ticket-holding London passengers. But we wanted to go in the other direction, to Ipswich, first stop on the cross-country boat train. Although shown on current timetables, this had been withdrawn as part of provincial cost-cutting. Wait 90 minutes and change at Manningtree. I don't blame BR. I blame its financial straitjacket.

Then there are the trams. We were the only people to pay the driver. Everyone else had strips of tickets that they folded and punched into a machine. We were told that they are cheap and can be used on trams, buses or underground trains anywhere in the country. The Netherlands has achieved something unknown in Britain: a nationally cooperating transport system. Back home, outside Blackpool and the Beamish museum, it's only the elderly who remember trams. Those noisy clanking monsters are history. Nothing to do with the smooth, quiet and quick three-car version in the rest of Europe.

As for those cyclists, it is well known that the Netherlands has a bigger proportion of bikes per head of population than anywhere else in Europe, although Sweden and Denmark are catching up. Public policy favours the bike, and there are well over 6,000 miles of cycle lanes, while bikes can be hired at more than 100 railway stations.

It was in Amsterdam in 1966 that Roel van Duyn and the Kabouters started their White Bikes idea. Pick it up where you are, and leave it at your destination. It failed, as the bikes were continually nicked by out-of-town people, but van Duyn is now a Green city councillor. Last week, it seemed to me that the biggest hazard for cyclists was not the motorists, as in Britain, but pedestrians who insist on walking in the cycle lanes.

In the 1970s, Dutch cities developed the concept of the *woonerf,* an area where deliberate narrowing of entrances, with humps and twists in the road, reduced car speeds to a walking pace, and gave absolute priority to children and pedestrians. It began in residential roads and, by 1988, *woonerfs* were replaced by *erfs,* applying the same principle to whole districts of cities.

These traffic-calming measures have been followed in every Dutch town and in West Germany, Denmark and Switzerland, with a predictable effect on road-accident statistics. Their extension depends on the degree of public support. Every motorist grumbles. But in the beautiful city of Delft, I learned that a zero rate of growth in car traffic had been achieved there. The next step, I was told, is to reduce it. The Dutch and their politicians, whether conservative, socialist or green, are agreed on making the attempt. How is it that we in Britain can't mobilise opinion to drag us into the post-motor age?

122. Dane lore

Remember Christiania? In 1971 we all learned how, as the army moved out of its 50-acre barracks site in Copenhagen, the squatters moved in to set up an alternative

community. Since then, every few years, our press reports that the police have moved in to re-establish law and order.

"Don't believe a word of it," Kai Lemberg urged me. "Christiania is alive and well, after 19 years." He is director of planning for Greater Copenhagen and, like his great predecessor Steen Eiler Rasmussen, has braved fierce opposition in support of the unofficial city. In 1976, Rasmussen, as grand old man, wrote *Omkring Christiania,* a book that explained to fellow citizens how important it was for a rich complacent city to embrace, at its very heart, a community of 900 people whose values were different.

Lemberg has followed the same line, defending it not only against the city councillors, but at the Council of Europe, the OECD, and even at a congress of American mayors. Cross-examined by them, he declared: "I would recommend that you should have a Christiania in Washington, and every other city." His origins are not in architecture or geography: he is an economist. But his urban ideology derives, as he says, from the polarisation of security and freedom, suggested by the psychologist Abraham Maslow. Security is automatically the priority of planners, administrators, property developers and speculators. Freedom is our under-represented personal desire: the informal, unmanageable, spontaneous life we actually cherish, from street-markets to jazz nights in the pub.

It was music to my ears when Lemberg declared: "Every city desperately needs its anarchists." He has a dozen other paradoxes to offer. One is that the military are the best conservationists, just because they are sacred cows, beyond the free-market in land, and consequently have no interest in environmental destruction. Another is that the bigger and more comprehensive the plan, the less likely it is to be translated into reality. Of proposals for his own city, he explained that: "Luckily enough, they were so big that they never got done." Wealthier Stockholm had, unfortunately, to take on the whole plan.

We were sitting around a canteen table when Lemberg declared that, far from complicating everything with computerised surveys, it was the duty of planners to simplify and make things comprehensible, not only to politicians, but to the citizens themselves.

In the dark days of Nazi occupation, Rasmussen and his colleagues had planned for post-war Copenhagen. It was natural to embark on uneconomic land-drainage schemes, just to prove to the Germans that no one could be spared for their war effort. It was also natural to evolve the famous *Finger Plan,* to explain how the city should expand along five fingers of development, served by electric trains, between wedges of forests and fields.

"But suppose," asks a planner, "that the natural pattern of growth demanded six fingers instead of five?" Lemberg replied, "In that case we should just have to ignore the sixth finger. It is more important that citizens should have a simple analogy, from the heart or from the hand, and consequently support an obviously sensible planning policy, than that they should be buried in incomprehensible detail."

Underneath all this is a very serious challenge to our accepted ideas about the place of planners or developers in determining the future of the city. Kai Lemberg is probably a lone voice back home, just as he would be in any British assembly of planners. But what a delight it was to meet a planner who recognises that the city is only valuable because its inhabitants have made it so, and that, consequently, the city *belongs* to its citizens.

123. Morris Message

Is there anything that remains to be said in praise of William Morris? The most fascinating thing about Paul Thompson's Kelmscott Lecture last month was the way he brought his experience as a pioneer of oral history to support Morris's claim that the rigidities of the factory system destroyed personal relations and independent initiative.

In the 1960s, Thompson conducted life-history interviews with 440 people born between 1870 and 1906, and reported in *The Edwardians* the finding that there was one community in Britain where child-rearing was more gentle, generous and civilised than in the ordinary British family of any class. This was among the crofter-fisher-folk of Shetland.

Intrigued by this, he was able, years later, to write a comparative study, *Living the Fishing.* Who would have guessed. 50 years ago, he asked, that the modern capitalist trawler fleets of ports such as Fleetwood, Hull and Aberdeen would by now be dead, while "backward" fishing communities would be flourishing? How is it that the prosperous crew from a remote island who "by the normal logic of 'progress' ought to have been driven out of business decades ago, could afford to lay up their half-million-pound ship for a week in order to take in the hay-harvest on their crofts?"

The answer, he was convinced, lies in the beliefs, values and attitudes of communities that retain "traditional" attitudes, such as work organisation around the family boat, rather than wage labour for a boss. "It is not," said Thompson, "the egalitarianism of the wider society which has stifled creativity and forced innovators into social isolation, but its demand for the social conformity and quiescence necessary to maintain inequality. The importance of the fishing communities is that they show the viability of an alternative way: for it is only such socially isolated groups which have been able to sustain up to the present the truer form of egalitarianism which fosters real social independence and individuality."

Ponder this thought, if you have been tempted to dismiss Morris as a sentimental medievalist. But Paul Thompson's work has brought the argument closer to home. He is involved in a comparative study of car workers in Britain and Italy and, more specifically, in Coventry and Turin.

At one time, the gang system of working in Coventry factories created what Thompson calls "a type of egalitarian co-operation that at least some workers believed to be

the dawn of a new social world". It was killed off, first by the bosses proudly reasserting "management's right to manage", and then by the industry's collapse.

In Turin, too, vast numbers of jobs were lost, but with different results. Communist shop stewards, earmarked as the first to be sacked in 60,000 jobs lost at Fiat, set up their own workshops on the fringe of the city. Vittorio Rieser talked eloquently to me about those factors in working life that nurture resourcefulness and adaptability. He has seen that the wasted creativity in assembly-line production can find an outlet when people are working for themselves.

Another historian told me that, in Coventry, a third generation of workers had been "moulded in resistance to industrial capitalism", whereas, in Turin, the artisans and peasants who moved north were not "crushed by factory capitalism". It was easy for them to shift into self-employment, or to work for friends in high-tech workshops, or to pick up a living from close-to-the-market horticulture.

This became even more obvious to me when the people I wanted to talk to in a workshop at Trebbo di Reno outside Bologna turned out to have taken time off to gather the maize harvest. There in Reggio-nell'Emilia, I was already in the world of Morris's *News from Nowhere.*

124. Bad tidings

In the last century, in order to protect citizens from open sewers, polluted vater, overcrowding, damp, adulterated food, and having nowhere to wash, medical officers of health battled against the notion that it was a sin to interfere with nature and market forces. They were fighting epidemics of typhus, cholera, diphtheria and tuberculosis.

So we had Public Health Acts and the sanitary inspector, replaced in time by Housing Acts and the environmental health officer. Their powers were used devastatingly in the 1950s and 1960s to pull down acres of Coronation Streets and decant the residents into new council blocks. But, by the 1970s, large-scale clearance was abandoned, as it was socially destructive, politically unacceptable and cost too much.

New Housing Acts promoted programmes of aid for improvement of pre-1919 houses. This was cheaper and more popular. But that, too, is now history. Clearance is back, as I learn from a new and shocking report by Frances Heywood and Mohammed Rashid Naz, *Clearance: the view from the street* (Community Forum, Birmingham, £10.95).

This is a study accumulated from detailed interviews with residents, councillors and council officers. It finds that: "The slum clearance legislation we have was designed to rescue poor tenants from bad landlords but is now being used to force owner-occupiers out of homes in which they are perfectly or reasonably content, telling them that they are 'unfit for human habitation'."

Worse: "Besides the threat of clearance for a particular development, residents of Britain's old industrial cities face a new hazard, and that is clearance for *potential* development, to allow local authorities to bid for multinational investment in their area...

Thus we are presented with the unwholesome spectacle of (main Labour-controlled) local authorities rushing to clear homes... so as to have a package of clear sites to offer any large company that expresses a passing interest."

The authors try not to put the blame on council officers. But they did find a general resentment of the private sector "pervading the housing department from the committee chairs downwards". Above all, there remain "old style environmental health officers who have never really shed the belief that the only way to deal with old housing is to knock it all down, and the sooner the better".

The report challenges the assumption that clearance is cheaper than rehabilitation. That belief results from the accident that different funds come from different public budgets, and from central government's myopia.

As to the health aspect, the authors cite the 1987 annual report by the department of community medicine of the Central Birmingham Health Authority. It contrasts two poor areas with the same age distribution: Sparkhill, an area of inner-city terraced housing, with only 7 per cent council properties, and Netchells, where 87 per cent of the housing is post-war, council-owned, and only 4 per cent private. Almost all Netchells housing is of the kind built for the purpose of improving people's health by moving them out of slums.

The health authority reported that Netchells has more than twice as many hospital admissions for self-injury. It has the city's worst record at nearly every age, ranging from accidental poisoning in children to deliberate suicide attempts in adults.

The authors comment that "there is enough evidence here that, if environmental health officers were less prejudiced and more objective about ill health, they might stop worrying about perished brickwork and cracks in Sparkhill, and start taking action on the housing and environmental factors that perhaps cause so many people in Netchells to take their own lives.".

1991

125. Workers' playtime

No place is sadder than a seaside town in winter. But we resolved to make the most of our trip to Felixstowe for the Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk Federation of the Workers' Educational Association. The mere mention of this body brings automatic sneers in the graduate classes about old ladies learning flower-arranging.

Those who know better have a slightly different view, and our tutor-organisers had set up a busy day to draw us in. The morning was spent at the Landguard Fort right next to the vast container port. Our volunteer guide presented it to us as part of our English Heritage (the government department that now owns it). But we amateur historians knew that it was a grotesque monument to the way the military elite got their way all through history, and treated their underlings as slaves. We learned how, in the seventeenth century, when the starving, ill-clad and unpaid foot soldiers mutinied, the commanding officer had lots drawn to decide which man should be hanged for the sins of all. The man chosen, Benjamin Damont, was sent under armed escort to Trimley, the nearest village, but the constable there "most contemptiously" returned the warrant and discharged the soldier, provoking outraged protests to the government from the commander.

One member is going to search the records to find out what happened to Ben. We learned how the governors of the fort looted the stores in the eighteenth century, and about the riotous life led by the officers; and we saw the squalor in which the soldiers lived, incredibly, until 1954. Our history turned out to be very much like that of Russia or Latin America: the guns in the batteries were never actually fired, as the only time the east coast was invaded was by the Dutch (led by an English colonel) in 1667, and the intruders landed out of reach of the cannon.

However, the deterrent theory was used to justify an unbelievable new fortress in 1875 to protect us from the French Third Republic. Digesting this absurdity and our fish lunch, we converged on a church hall for the real business of the day: the annual Harry Clements Memorial Lecture.

For our tutor-organiser had achieved a minor coup in securing Andrei Pionkowsky, a supporter of the Democratic Russian Movement and visiting lecturer at Cambridge, who was able to discuss Soviet politics with us at much greater length that he was given on Channel 4 that evening. He confessed that events had moved so quickly since

he came in September that he had to rely on the BBC World Service to keep him in touch with home.

His point of view was rather different from that of our local Sovietophiles, who have been inching back for years from old gospels. He reminded us that the most dangerous time for any regime was when it tried, too late, to reform itself. "Gorbachev," he said, "is the last tsar of the Soviet empire, as well as the last survivor of Brezhnev's Politburo. He has now reached the limit of his democratic potential." He went on to say that he shared the view that the ferment in eastern Europe had been set up by the KGB in an attempt to retain Communist Party control. But it had been too late to shut the gates.

Suffolk's WEA members, formidably well informed, got interesting answers. On the issue of the "destructive and separatist forces" that Gorbachev accused of "breaking up the USSR", Pionkowksy's reply was that, by now, the Soviet Union had 15 legitimate governments "and one illegitimate one—in the Kremlin". It was for the republics to decide "what functions to delegate to an all-union authority" in a genuine federation. Those who had previously absorbed Soviet history reflected that his programme was remarkably like the left opposition, brutally eliminated 70 years ago.

126. Gentle liberator

John Hewetson died just before Christmas. He belonged to that 6lite of medical practitioners from posh family backgrounds who, by choice, spent their working lives in poor districts and were rewarded by the devotion of their patients.

In 1945, when he was casualty officer at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, he was sentenced with other editors from the anarchist Freedom Press, Vernon Richards and Philip Sansom, to nine months in jail for seducing members of the forces from their duty. Wormwood Scrubs was just over the road from his regular job, and he was in great demand for consultation, not only from fellow inmates, but from prison officers, for advice on their family problems.

For John spent a lifetime in quiet propaganda for what he, in his cordial way, called a sexually affirmative outlook. There must be many elderly women readers who remember the liberation provided by a trip to his first shabby little surgery for the contraceptive help that was hard to find in the early post-war years.

In 1951, a wave of child murders with sexual overtones led to his writing, between surgeries, a pamphlet on *Sexual Freedom for the Young,* drawing on the work of Malinowski and Reich, and recently reprinted (in *The Raven* no 4 from Freedom Press). He remarked two years ago that: "I did a lot of work on birth control from my earliest days because anxiety about getting pregnant was tremendously common when I was first in practice. It was an enormous factor in preventing working-class women from enjoying their love-making, and this was especially true in those who most believed

that they were more likely to 'fall pregnant' if they had an orgasm, and who used to try and inhibit their orgasms."

My memories of his practice in those days are of him doing his rounds in a white 1922 Rolls-Royce tourer, greeted by everyone in the street, and of a journey to an anarchist summer school in Liverpool in a 1937 Austin 7 with the door falling off.

After that, he settled down as the doyen of a very remarkable practice at the Elephant & Castle. One of his partners was Robert Ollendorff, the brother-in-law of Wilhelm Reich, another was John MacEwan, advocate of holistic medicine, and, later on, the husband-and-wife Petrioni team. I was on their list for decades, and the important thing, for me, was not the validity of the various claims of alternative medicine, but the fact that a range of alternatives to the orthodox views was *available* to every patient.

He and his partners were, for more than 30 years, the visiting medical officers for the Camberwell Reception Centre, the "resettlement unit" for homeless single people in south London, known as the Spike. He knew the accidental horrors of ordinary life that finally dumped men there, and he fought a long rearguard campaign against the civil servants of the DHSS who successfully achieved its closure. No one was interested in publishing his detailed statistical report on the Spike in 1983.

John knew more about the seamy side of life than anyone I ever met. The last time I heard from him, he was pouring scorn on John Selwyn Gummer's going on about "any form of fornication" and reflecting (in connection with Aids) about Schubert's picking up s/philis from the pretty chambermaid of the Esterhazy household, while dedicating his Fantasia in F Minor to her mistress. But who passed the contagion to the chambermaid? Naturally, the Count

John Hewetson spent a lifetime as a doctor, patiently pushing down the class barriers in medicine that divide the sophisticated from the inhibited. There are people like him around today. But who has time for them when the emphasis is on making general practice cost-effective?

127. Cities of spectacle

Among the merry pranksters of the sixties were the International Situationists and the Kabouters. Guy Debord, a leading exponent of the first, wrote his analysis *Le Societe du Spectacle* (Paris, 1967), and Constant Nieuwenhuys, of the second, produced *New Babylon* (Amsterdam, 1966). This proclaimed the world city of leisure, the *ambiance totale* for *homo ludens,* which he explained as, "the world man evokes while at play".

Everything begins as a fantasy and ends as an industry. A few weeks ago, in Sheffield, I was talking at the annual conference of the Institute of British Geographers. Among the endless simultaneous sessions was a whole day with nine specialists on Cities of Spectacle.

We learned how smart guys, imagemanipulators, con men and boosters have joined in persuading British cities that their fortunes can be revived through presenting themselves as major locations for "spectacular" events. "These may be seen as engendering economic development, as enhancing or promoting a new image for the city, as stimulating investment in infrastructure, or as part of a policy of area rehabilitation; while certain cities are also experiencing the manipulation of an older built environment to create 'spectacular' heritage sites."

The venue was right. A councillor, a businessman and a planner discussed the merits of Sheffield's decision to host the 1991 World Student Games on the assumption of sponsorship from commerce and TV that never came. The citizens' bill is expected to be £200 million. The debt bequeathed to Glasgow by a year as City of Culture was also debated.

But the New Babylon was on our doorstep in the form of the Meadowhall Centre outside Sheffield, opened last September with 1.25 million square feet of "retail and related leisure functions". A guided tour was laid on for the geographers, who were well-placed to test the validity of the comments made last month by the editors of *The Architects' Journal.*

"Meadowhill has streets with proper names, like High Street and Park Lane; it has a public square in which tourists can sit in pavement cafes; it has an equivalent of a local newspaper in the shape of a video wall; it even has its own police force. But don't get too excited, because it's all a sham... the districts are just different stage sets, the video wall is sponsored by Coca-Cola, and the police force is just a band of security men whose presence is meant to deter any deviance from narrow social norms. And, of course, nobody lives there. It denies everything that a town is for. It has no creative mix of functions—just a great slab of retailing, plus fast food. It has no government, aside from the autocracy of corporate centrism. It allows no expression of community or of individuality. It does not enhance freedom, it diminishes it, by sapping the economic lifeblood of real towns."

Then there's the sad saga of garden festivals. When Heseltine brought the message to Liverpool in 1981, the outside contractors provided not a single job for local people. Stoke-on-Trent added Waterworld, a ski slope and tenpin bowling to its festival in 1986. Next year, Ebbw Vale shifts the scene to prettying up the dead pits and foundries out in the country.

Over a century ago, a poet urged that the great city was not the place of "deposits of produce merely", nor "the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops selling goods from the rest of the earth". It was the place "where the populace rises at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons", "where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority".

There, declaimed Walt Whitman, is where the great city stands.

128. Mondragon unvisited

In the seventies, foreseeing the coming devastation of the steel, tin-plate and mining industries of the valleys, the Welsh TUC sent a delegation to the Basque town of Mondragon in Spain to see if there were clues for survival in the remarkable network of cooperatives founded there since the war—providing schools, forges, foundries, factories, horticultural and building establishments, retail stores, and, most important of all, a bank and finance house, the Caja Laboral Popular.

They came back with mixed impressions, according to their preconceptions, summed up by the sad conclusion that "It couldn't happen here." A very thorough study came out in 1977 from the Anglo-German Foundation, entitled *The Mondragon Achievement.*

I've never been there, but I know several people who have. In the eighties, Italian economist Sebastiano Brusco told me: "Someone with your assumptions would see the whole set of enterprises as the work of a bunch of enlightened, but paternalistic, employers with a social conscience." And I felt thoroughly chastened when Mike Bower, of the Sheffield Co

operative Development Group, argued that "Naive and unrealistic expectations are causing significant opportunities to make real progress in improving the quality of working life to be squandered, because attention and energy is being diverted away from the major advantages which cooperative working can offer."

New news of Mondragon is hard to find in our press, so I was delighted to get the "Fall 1990" issue of the *Bulletin of the International Communal Studies Association* (PO Box Ramat-Efal 52960, Israel), in which Sol Encer describes what he learned on a trip last August Sol thinks, as I do, that any attempt to run modern industrial production on a non-capitalist basis is important for you and me.

In case you never heard, the enterprises there were started by Jose Maria Arizmendi, who, after years in gaol for being on the losing side in the civil war, became a priest and cunningly exploited the interstices in the Franco straitjacket starting a technical school, a savings bank, and workshops to rehabilitate a devastated Basque community. The founders of FAGOR, set up in 1956, and now the largest manufacturer of domestic appliances in Spain, were products of his Escuela Politecnica.

When Sol moved on to FAGOR itself—slightly ahead of its competitors, Electrolux and Siemens—he was cheered to reflect that: "This is big-league stuff and indicates that a cooperative system can be at least as efficient and forward-looking as its capitalist rivals."

But Sol spent three hours with one of the surviving founders, Jesus Larranga, who said that, if he was setting it up today, he would not have chosen a co-op structure. Encel concluded that what had happened was the familiar phenomenon of "goal displacement", meaning that any organisation that survives for any length of time "will acquire new *raisons d'etre,* which were not there at the beginning". The quest for efficiency and competitiveness, "stressed by all the people who spoke to us", clearly

overrode the original goals of a cooperative ideology, "such as an egalitarian wage structure".

If you bothered to trace the history of the Cooperative Permanent Building Society and its modern apotheosis as Nationwide, you could witness the same goal displacement Do we judge that success is the kiss of death for any cooperative enterprise, and that failure is glorious, or do we need an entirely new set of criteria?

129. On your bike

My praise for Dutch transport policy (23 November 1990) brought an interesting response from a British couple living in The Hague. They share my enthusiasm for the Dutch approach, but add: "Where they sadly fall short is on attitudes to safety. Did *you* see a single cyclist wearing a safety helmet? We've never seen anyone, and it seems an especially serious hazard for small children and soft-skulled babies, who are transported by bike, pillion-fashion from nine months of age. Bike shops do not stock such things and, what's more, many riders carry neither lights nor protective clothing."

Dutch friends respond to their alarm with derision. Now I certainly did notice the habits they mention. But there is another point of view.

We've a nephew in London who, having twice been knocked off his bike by motorists, invariably wears a helmet. He reports that Christopher Chope, minister for roads and traffic, was taken aback by the uproar that followed his address to the "Bike for a Breath of Fresh Air" rally held in Trafalgar Square, when his one word of encouragement to cyclists was that they should wear helmets.

The reason why members of the London Cycling Campaign were outraged by this ministerial advice was explained by another speaker, Mark McCarthy, professor of community medicine at University College, London: "We pointed out that cyclists and pedestrians are called 'vulnerable road users' because they are *not* protected by steel boxes. Helmets are an individual solution to a collective problem; if cyclists wear helmets they will never force government to find a solution to the real problems."

At a personal level (if my son Ben is reading this, I'll eagerly pay for his helmet), I'm in favour of self-defence. But at a social level, I'm outraged at the way owners of lethal machines blame the victims, and I'm forced to notice cultural differences. Even the American Express guide says: "Don't even *think* of driving in Amsterdam." It explains that: "People of all ages use their bicycles in all weathers to commute to work, to go shopping, to transport their children and exercise their dogs." When this becomes true of London you can abandon your helmet.

John Adams, also from University College, who has made himself unpopular through his insistence on providing statistical evidence for unpalatable truths, argues in his books *Transport Planning* (1981) and *Risk and Freedom* (1985) about worthy safety measures like seat-belts in cars or helmets for motorcyclists, that "People do not want accidents, but they do want the freedom to take risks." And that "The principal achieve-

ment of road safety regulations has been a redistribution of the burden of risk from vehicle occupants to pedestrians and cyclists."

It's a mistake to think that the campaign for safe cycling in London is flying in the face of history. The London Accident Analysis Unit reports a 43 per cent increase in pedal cycling traffic crossing central London between 1987 and 1989. At the same time, the increase in traffic snarl-ups is attributed to the mere 13 per cent of commuters who have the arrogance to bring their cars into the city centre. Even the Department of Transport has recognised the London Cycling Campaign's proposed 1,000-mile cycle network in London as a viable future.

Slowly the phlegmatic British are getting more like those wildly irresponsible anarchic Dutch.

The London Cycling Campaign is at 3 Stamford Street, London SEI 9NT.

130. Zest for living

The right phrase is *elan vital.* We just don't have the right kind of word for that engagement with living that enables some people to endure appalling misfortunes in their personal lives, and bounce back with a new approach in public.

Malcolm MacEwan is that kind of character. But underlying his involvement is an endless sense of fun. In the 1970s, I remember him challenging our lads to race him to the cairn on top of a hill on Exmoor. He got there first not to make the point that it was possible for an old chap with a tin leg, but for the pleasure of seeing them discover the chocolate bars he had inserted there.

Now he's coming up to 80 and it's typical that he begins his autobiography, out next week *(The Greening of a Red,* Pluto paperbacks, £8.95), with the statement that one of the best things that ever happened to him was the motorbike crash that lost him his right leg when he was 21.

The reason was that months spent in an Inverness nursing home made him a reader, which he never was at the narrow and philistine English public school (Rossall) to which his otherwise intelligent parents sent him. And becoming a reader in the 1930s made him a Marxist, anxious to put his law degree at the service of the pre-war Glasgow edition of the *Daily Worker,* as well as becoming a county councillor in Ross and Cromarty.

Ignazio Silone used to say that he belonged to the biggest party in the world, the ex-communists, and, like many others, MacEwan joined their ranks in 1956, after 13 years on the *Daily Worker* as foreign editor and parliamentary correspondent. He's proud of having been the holder of a silver cup as parliamentary press gallery golf champion. He believes that the Labour Party dug its own grave after its 1945 triumph—partly through the disgraces of its foreign policy in Greece and Korea—and he has a melancholy satisfaction in finding his opinions from those days amply confirmed by the subsequent publication of official documents.

His departure from *The Daily Worker,* "which seemed like a second amputation at the time", was a blessing in disguise. "We had been living in a self-created party ghetto," he explains. While his communist record ruled him out of jobs on the *News Chronicle* and the *Manchester Guardian,* he found a niche in *The Architects' Journal.*

It may seem strange that a trade weekly should be the right place for someone like MacEwan, but I've known it even longer than him and can see perfectly well why he found it "one of the happiest and most stimulating places to work", and how it led him "almost by accident, to take the first step towards an ecological approach to politics". He moved on to edit the journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and once again was the gadfly, desperately trying to push his readers beyond their self-satisfaction.

A few years later, living on Exmoor, he found himself a government-nominated member of the National Park Committee there and found that his task was to rubber-stamp the decisions of the land-owning mafia who were in control. He rebelled, and he and his wife Ann became *the* authorities on conservation in national parks.

It's hard to draw conclusions from this lifetime of zestful participation. But, once a Conservative government had drawn him into the charmed circle of the Great and the Good who run the National Parks, he used his battling style to deadly effect: "Consensus often had to be fought for by confrontation" is the way he puts it, and a lifetime of involvement in everyday issues explains how this particular red turned green.

131. Madam chairperson

We've all been conscious of the efforts to rewrite the accepted history of the arts, with a new stress on the uncelebrated achievements of women as composers, as artists or as architects, often with men taking the credit. This new interest is spreading to other fields. For example, one of the subthemes of Anne Power's *Property Before People* (published by Allen & Unwin), a book on the management of twentieth-century council housing, is the gradual and deliberate exclusion of women from the housing management world, and its consequences.

But there's a related area on the other side of the fence: the emergence of women as tenant organisers on the kind of estate or project where people stay at home with the power cut off, leaving public areas to roving packs of dogs or teenagers. Both in Britain and the US, they have braved not just hostility, but frightening physical danger.

Plenty of us remember Mrs Crummie, who started the Craigmillar Festival Society in the 1970s to throw a little light on the forgotten fringe of Edinburgh. When the housing department was closed from Friday to Monday, homeless families were automatically diverted to her to find them somewhere to stay for the night. And in the 1980s, Frances McCall, who had lived in Calvay Road, Glasgow, for 20 years and reared her family

there, rose to the challenge of the council's sudden conversion to co-op rehabilitation, and steered the Calvay Co-op to success, declaring that:

"When your area becomes a hard-to-let area, then you get a stigma attached to you. If you want to rent a television, or something, and you give your address, they go: 'Oh, no, no, I'm sorry you can't have that. That's a bad area you stay in.' So I'm glad to say that there are groups of initiatives in Glasgow where people say 'I live in a bad area but I am going to do something about it'"

She did, and so did Dora Boatemah from Brixton. Interviewed in Joy Hatwood's *Tough Cookies* series on Radio 4, she explained her belief that: "The only way any area gets cleaned up is when the people clean it up for themselves." There is, in fact, a stereotype among the professionals of housing, both in Britain and America, that things get moving when a Big Black Momma-figure takes control, re-establishing a matriarchy over those improvident young men. This is both patronising and inaccurate.

Dora Boatemah was at pains to explain that she is 4 foot 9 inches tall. Her equivalents in the United States, with even harder battles to fight—like Marion Stamps of the Chicago Tenants' Organisation—rely on an absolute determination not to be put down or fobbed off, either by the administrative bureaucracy or by the local racketeers. Mary Benns of Baltimore Neighbourhood Inc told me that her endless struggle was to cajole the city administration into enforcing its own legislation. "It's not an issue of bravery," she said, "just persistence in hammering on the door until it opens."

Then there's Bertha Gilkey, chairwoman of a tenants' co-operative in St Louis. When she came to Glasgow, positively glittering, she explained to Rob Cowan: "When the ghettos were burning, I had an Afro hairstyle and looked like a revolutionary. That was the way to get grants—they thought it would stop us burning the city. When Jimmy Carter became US president, I wore my hair up in a bun and dressed conservatively, and more federal money came our way. And these [indicating her current style] are my Reaganomics clothes."

Male members of tenant organisations are expected to adhere to certain routines learned from trade union branches and Citrine's *ABC of Chairmanship.* It is both an additional burden, and an extra triumph for women in this role, that both friends and adversaries rely on them to use their own personal characteristics to advance a social goal, and to carry other people with them.

This is more than is ever demanded of men, and I hope that someone is busy recording this particular feminine achievement.

132. Facts about farms

Who, in their right minds, would take on the job of bringing a little sense to the Common Agricultural Policy? Ireland's former finance minister, Ray MacSharry, was bold enough to become EC Commissioner, and presents his plans this month to member governments. Our Agriculture Minister, John Gummer, responding to leaks, condemned

them in advance. He told the Commons on 24 January that the proposals "enshrine for ever an entirely out-of-date small-farm system". He told the annual conference of the National Farmers' Union on 12 February that they would "turn our proud industry into a Europe of allotment holders", and the delegates cheered him. Back in the Commons on 14 February he said: "We opppose them, we hate them, we condemn them."

My experience of the dreadful Mr Gum mer is that, whenever he is so vehement on *anything,* there must be something good to be said for what he hates. Sure enough, it *was* said in *Farmers Weekly* on 15 February by John H Smith, who farms 523 acres but agrees with the MacSharry plan. He observed that the small farmer "is not responsible for the present-day problems of over-production. Let all larger farmers be honest with themselves and admit we have brought this about through greed. If we do not help the small farmer soon it will be too late and the problems will still be here."

We all know the background. In the depression decades, farmers were almost as poor as their employees. After the war, guaranteed prices made them rich, farms got bigger and bigger, employing fewer and fewer people. Joining the EC accelerated the trend. Two thirds of subsidies went to the biggest farms. For sensible political and social reasons, other countries applied the rules differently. The *average* size in Britain is 163 acres. In Germany, it is 42, and in France 71. In Britain, the part-time farmer tends to be a businessman accumulating tax losses. In other countries, it is a family tradition to hold on to a patch of land, even though Johann or Giovanni has a job running the post office or driving a Eurolorry.

Faced with the usual food mountain in an overstuffed Europe, Commissioner MacSharry has a ten-point plan to reshape European policy. You and I perceive that nothing he can do will stop the distortion of the poor world's agriculture that fills your beefburger with Paraguayan cow-meat or *our* cattle with the crops that should have fed villages in Africa. MacSharry simply wants to cut prices, reduce quotas for produce that qualifies for subsidy, and offset the consequences for *small* farmers by direct income support.

We're all familiar with Major Major's father in Joseph Heller's novel *Catch 22,* who found that the more alfalfa he didn't grow, the bigger the payout from the federal government. In spite of the Reagan years, American farmers were just as much subsidised last year as European ones. MacSharry's sin is that he proposes to pass the cash to the small grower and producer instead of, as automatically in Britain, to the big businessman.

Britain has the biggest farms in Europe. Sir Simon Gourlay, the retiring NFU president, told the union's conference that ours were six times bigger than the average farm elsewhere in the EC. Mr Gummer, despite his faith in market forces, is prepared to tolerate the featherbedding of the rich and powerful. What drives him to extravagant denunciation is the idea that anyone else should share in the automatic payout.

Yet everyone's mental image of the future of agriculture, from old-style Conservatives to the Green movement, as well as that of academic speculators on the future of work (Pahl, Gershuny, Handy and Pym) is that of the small, mixed, family farm,

where food production is one of several alternating ways of earning a living in postindustrial Britain, along with driving the school bus, building jobs, catering and cleaning in sheltered housing, and delivering fuel, veg and papers.

Maybe the list should include lighting the boiler in the parish church, too, so that the Minister of Agriculture can worship in comfort.

133. Gambling on futures

It's a commonplace of pop sociology that some of us defer gratification, carefully planning for our own or our family's future, while at the opposite extreme, others spend from the moment the cash comes in.

In my parents' generation, the insurance man would come round with his book, still wearing his cycle clips, to pick up a shilling a week.

Eventually the payout came, and the sum was quietly spent on a new coat with a knowing smile, ignoring the children's derision at the small gains that resulted from all that foresight. Inflation eroded providence.

Several other factors influence the generational shift. One, undoubtedly, is the fact we never mention nowadays: that after 1946 the British thought they had, through compulsory payments, insured themselves to cover such contingencies as sickness, unemployment, maternity, industrial injuries, family allowances, widowhood, retirement and even the cost of a funeral. This faith has been whittled away, even though you pay every week for the illusion of security.

Another is that the future is so unpredictable that none of us can take it on trust.

If you think back a few years, you will agree that the issues that preoccupy you today were never dreamed of 20 years ago. Push the past back further and you find that even the papers you once read have either died or changed beyond recognition. Worse: it is quite likely to be *you* who has changed.

The famous final paragraph of Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* evoked the deep, deep sleep of England where the milk was on the doorstep and the *New Statesman* came out every Friday: and no doubt the idea of using current cash as a guarantee of immortality was behind the intriguing offer in these pages on 18 January of subscriptions "under which *New Statesman & Society* will be mailed to your home for the duration of your life". But, alas, this was followed by the rueful parenthesis "(or that of the magazine, whichever is the shorter!)".

My sympathy is with the 78-year-old reader who asked whether he could transfer his life subscription. No one in the office will tell me what discreet reply was given, but I was told that there is a steady trickle of applicants for lifetime subs.

But by far the boldest attempt to use current cash to guarantee future viability comes from the Trollope Society. This is a registered charity with the aim of republishing all of Anthony Trollope's novels at the rate of four a year between 1989 and the year 2000. Amazingly, this has never been done before. Literary enthusiasms cut

across political allegiances, and for those affluent enough, the Trollope Society offers the most thought-provoking money-back guarantee ever.

If you send £975 you get four books annually for 12 years, post free, as well as an annual free book, a quarterly magazine, and so on. But the absorbingly interesting thing is that in October 2000, on despatch of the 48th book, the Trollope Society guarantees to pay back to you or your heirs, the entire amount of the original deposit.

I never think beyond next year, and I'm astounded by the faith in the continuity of everything that theTrollopians display. So I enquired about the rate of acceptances. They told me that they have more than 300, including two recent cabinet ministers and several QCs.

The Governor of the Bank of England, Robert Leigh-Pemberton, is due to propose the health of the society at its dinner on 25 March. I asked if he was among the 300. "He's a keen supporter," I was told "but buys the books on an annual basis. Perhaps he knows something about inflation that we don't!"

There is a hidden snag, purely a matter of psychology. A now dead friend once confided to me that he just had to live long enough to see the final volume of H C Robbins Landon's monumental study of Haydn. I foresee a high death rate among British worthies at the end of the year 2000. They will expire, like Anthony Trollope's Warden, with a peaceful smile on their lips, content with that handsome library and a little nest egg for a favourite grandchild.

134. Chunnel vision

My father used to keep pound notes in the pages of a novel by Scott called *Peveril of the Peaks.* Asked why, he replied that it was the book anyone would be least likely to take off the shelf. But next to it was its runner-up, Sir Joseph Stamp's *Principles of Taxation.*

I rose to the implied challenge and read it as a child, believe it or not. And while I got nowhere with Scott, I retain a basic lesson from Stamp. A bad tax is *regressive* (it hits the poor hardest) and is expensive to collect. A good tax is *progressive* and cheap to collect.

Now I've steadily resisted the temptation to become a Poll Tax Bore. In the first place, everyone knows what I know, and in the second, it isn't for a committed anarchist to offer advice to politicians. You don't have to be a defender of the rating system to see that the community charge was simply a by-product of central government's vendetta against local authorities. The aim was to ensure that the Treasury is in absolute control of all public spending. The fact that it flouts all principles of taxation was, to the government, unimportant.

The Liberal Democrats' rejoinder was a local income tax, adopted in many other countries, which could be a cheap and simple local precept on the Inland Revenue. Personal mobility creates problems in American local taxes, easily solved in several of

the Swiss cantons with formulae like "75 per cent to the commune where you live, 25 per cent to the one where you work". This proposal meets another vital principle of taxation: comprehensibility. But because the Liberal Democrats got there first, Labour has had to propose a series of bodged jobs, which neither its members nor the electorate understands. The Conservative response to the poll tax disaster is the eyewash of suggesting the removal of the most expensive council service, education, directly to Treasury funding.

There's an incredible short-term temporising about the whole debate. Our politicians act as though they are not merely ignorant of the principles of taxation, but they are ignorant of political philosophy too. It is already ten years since a leading article in the *Economist* remarked that British local government "has been swatted by Margaret Thatcher's cabinet like an irritating fly", and, in a comment that could have been made yesterday, that Mr Heseltine "like all his predecessors, entered office pledged to increase local freedom and has spent his time curtailing it".

Burke, Bagehot, and all the worthies trotted out for ideological respectability, would have been horrified. And so would our neighbours on the other side of the Chunnel. The Council of Europe has issued a study of *The impact of the completion of the internal market on local and regional autonomy,* which calls for the adoption in European Community law of its "Charter for Local Self-Government", to "formalise commitment to the principle that government functions should be carried out at the lowest level possible and only transferred to higher government by consent".

Now British governments will cheerfully implement EC regulations on vegetable seeds or ice-cream, the silly trivia of bureaucracy, but they will all choose to ignore this elementary principle. Some things are really sacred, like our grotesque British centralisation of everything.

Two years ago, the crime-writer Ruth Rendell and I wrote a polemical pamphlet in which we argued that, contrary to English myths, "the most centralised state in Europe, with a few obvious exceptions such as Romania and Albania, is the United Kingdom."

People nudged us at Christmas parties to say that we never anticipated what would happen in Romania, did we? But, however little that country has changed, what nobody takes on board is the fact that we were right about Britain. People form their world-view at the age when I read the *Principles of Taxation,* without noticing that Germany, Italy and even France, have changed beyond recognition in devolutionist measures. Here, the very last the Treasury will grant to any local body, whether regional or local, is the right to raise its own revenue, and run itself.

135. Price of history

The blow fell in 1986, when Suffolk Fire Authority refused to issue a public entertainment licence on the ground that Hadleigh Guildhall failed to meet safety standards.

Our local town was one of the centres of the wool and cloth trade in mediaeval England. So just behind the High Street it left a spectacular group of buildings, like a cathedral close. It has one of those vast 14th-century churches, the extravagant deanery tower, and the Guildhall—begun in 1250 and extended every century since.

The middle bit is the Market House of the 1430s, and, a few decades later, the five Hadleigh guilds added a magnificently roofed hall at the back. Then a west wing was tacked on, which became first a grammar school and then almshouses, as well as an east wing, later converted into an assembly room with a musicians' gallery.

Part of the building was set aside in 1574 to be a workhouse and house of correction for the "restreynt of ydle and evil disposed persons and roges". The Hadleigh Amateur Dramatic Society, who staged its shows there until the fire authority's ban, relishes the fact that, in the 16th century, its predecessors needed the consent of six of the "Chief Inhabitants" to put on anything and that, in 1594, "The Privy Council forbade the Whitsun plays and ordered the town officers to pluck down the stage".

In that century, ownership of this incremental accumulation of active citizenship has been vested in a trust called the Hadleigh Market Feoffment which also owned the Ram Inn opposite, and, as the Guildhall was slowly falling down, built a corn exchange next door in 1813 on the site of the old bull run. By 1850, feeling that a decent public hall was needed, they decided not to get rid of all that dereliction, but to add on a new town hall with a fire station on the ground floor. It was a redbrick Italianate building, making no concessions to antiquity, and they borrowed £840 to build it.

Then Hadleigh fell asleep, economically, for a century. The cloth trade was long forgotten, the silk industry collapsed in 1868, milling, rope-making and brewing, as well as the agricultural market, moved elsewhere. Population was static at about 3,000 for a hundred years. As late as 1960, it was called "a dying town". This is the only reason why its ancient buildings still survive. The current boom-town and tourist image that has more than doubled the population is very recent.

The old local council was subsumed into Babergh District Council, leaving Hadleigh's town council, which has a mayor but little cash, to take over the buildings from the Market Feoffment Trust (unable to renovate its property when faced by the fire authority's ruling over safety).

Advice and criticism showered in. Babergh council agreed to meet half the cost of the original estimates, but these were overturned as structural defects were uncovered. English Heritage, advising the Department of the Environment, disapproved of the insertion of a lift in a Grade I listed building, while the mayor said that he couldn't support the plan if it did *not* include a lift for the elderly and disabled. To make the project viable, the town council resolved to move out of the old gas works into the more awkward rooms, only to find that this disqualified that part of the building from grand aid. Babergh council imposed 25 conditions on its promised support, and, meanwhile, the Hadleigh Community Association claimed that the town's needs would be more simply met by a new building somewhere else.

As the county fire officer goes to bed, knowing he has done his duty, the civic leaders have steered through endless stalemates and spent more than £600,000 on the first phase, opened on 1 March with a "glittering civic reception". The licensee of the Ram has acquired the franchise for the bar, and the owner of the restaurant, Upper Crust, has become resident caterer. A complex manager has been installed, and he explains that: "Our biggest problem was finding suitable furnishings for the function rooms to keep within the style."

The only lesson is that if a slice of history falls into your lap, you just have to accept that becoming the custodian of Our Heritage is not only time-consuming, but pricey.

136. Too good to last

A reader took the trouble to write to me saying that my sympathy for the small farmer ("Facts about farms", 1 March) is misplaced. The problem with small farmers, he says, is that they all wish they were big farmers, doing the same things without the advantages of scale. If they want to survive, he goes on, they should move into the area where the businessman cannot compete: organic growing. Here demand exceeds supply, and the retailers have to import certified organic produce.

I think he is both right and wrong. Right to think that a demand exists, thanks to a general climate of opinion, and thanks to the fact that the commercial market—whether we think of potatoes, tomatoes, beans or apples—has substituted bulk and ease of production for flavour and delight in eating. But wrong to think that you can make a living as a grower. This is not the image that the optimistic green journals project.

The people I know who actually committed themselves to this kind of marketgardening are not unskilled enthusiasts. They are very experienced and serious people. Down the road from us is a veteran who supported two people on a 2-acre plot, and kept careful records of success, failure and income over 20 years. He did everything right. One of the first things he did was to plant an orchard and a grove of nut trees—even Christmas trees for a bit of seasonal cash. He kept free-range chickens, guinea-fowl and a few breeding ewes.

And he took care not to compete with the bulk market, growing what were then seen as exotic vegetables. On Fridays, he would take carefully packed cartons to the station 12 miles away, for a long-suffering London friend to deliver to a retail wholefood shop and to a network of bespoke customers, collecting in their orders for the next week.

From the recipients' point of view, it was too good to last. What killed it was a dramatic increase in carriage charges by BR. wanting to be rid of uneconomic small trade. He kept a round of local healthfood shops, and joined a group of growers sending produce to the London outlet by van. But, of course, a glut of sweetcorn or Mar-monde tomatoes for one was a glut for all—priced accordingly. In vain, I urge him to put his

experience on paper. He's too busy, and simply claims that organic growing *is* viable, provided that you have a source of *real* money from elsewhere.

Clive and Fiona have had a similar experience. They, too, are experienced growers, and finally got hold of two acres and brought it into the approved condition. They think that their peak year for success was two years ago. Clive has since reverted to furniture-making, just to earn some money, and Fiona has started a teacher-training course in order to have a saleable skill. They aren't dismayed, and are trying to get the use of part of another field.

But *we* are dismayed by the tale of Pete and Sarah. They live round the corner and have the huge advantage that their house and four acres belong to his family's farm. They gained the Soil Association symbol for their produce four years ago, and sell a big range of fruit and veg from a stall down the lane, drawing customers from far afield. Interviewed in *Organic Gardening* last November, Pete said: "If we had to pay a mortgage, it would be impossible to make ends meet. As it is, we make a reasonable living from the holding because virtually the only energy input is ours and we don't put a cost on that. I don't think any organic smallholding can make enough money to pay a mortgage *and* provide a living."

It was a great grief to read a notice on the stall last month to say that it was closing. He's reverting to doing building work, and she's going to train for something that actually brings in an income. It's a nuisance for us, as eager consumers. But it's a tragedy for all these people who invested their energy and experience in the hope that the output would enable us to be not just fed, but well fed, and also give them a livelihood. Meanwhile, in the Co-op and the Gateway Superstore, as well as at the market in our nearest town, we can buy carrots packed in Florida and spring onions packed in Mexico.

137. God-wottery

A favourite Victorian poem, much anthologised, included the unfortunately unforgettable line: "A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!" The landscape architect Peter Shepheard has a variant on this phrase. Looking at the fussy street-furniture, geraniums in raised "planters" and multicoloured rustic concrete dwarf walls that accompanied municipal improvements, he would exclaim: "God-wottery, what pottery!"

The issue has suddenly arisen in Sudbury, in Suffolk. It used to be a tough little manufacturing town where everything radiated from the wide Market Hill, with its ancient churches, modest town hall and a statue of its most famous son, Thomas Gainsborough. A century ago, the "generous disposed public" could buy penny tickets to enable "the little hungry ones" to have a basin of soup and a slice of bread, to be eaten on Wednesdays and Saturdays at the kitchen in Market Hill. Today, they can buy barbecued chicken, samosas and anything else at the market stalls. The homeless

young are out of town, camped by the riverside, but driven back into the centre by February's snow.

The district council has resolved, like half the towns of Europe, to pedestrianise Market Hill, and is trying to overcome the objections about delivery problems. Its consultation document explains that: "The traffic order for phase I of the pedestrian priority will have to provide for the access of service vehicles to the fronts of the properties. It would be preferable to avoid this by achieving good rear service. This can be done by..." And so on.

I automatically support measures to keep cars out of towns, but the issue has been clouded by God-wottery. The efforts to sell the proposal to the citizens through landscaping have rebounded. One of them argues that: "Sudbury is, or was, a typical old market town with its centre alive and bustling with activity. Now we are to have a 'pretty' paved area, totally out of keeping with the general environment." Another complains that: "I think it is rubbing the noses of the hard-up taxpayers in the tinted brick paving to recommend such a scheme, which will cost over £1 million in total, subject to inflation."

Conscious of the God Wot Factor, he observes that: "The dainty pink and beige paving bricks, zigzag hedging and general appearance make 'twee' seem an understatement Sudbury is an old, bare, Suffolk town, not a pretty seaside resort prostituting itself to entice tourists to pause." I'm certain that he's right There are fashions in hard landscape, as in everything else, and I went in search of this Mr Grouser in our local Toytown, who perceives that there is a whole industry selling the stuff. "Every time," he said, "that one bunch of docile councillors accepts a prettification scheme in one part of Britain, it adds to the portfolio that the consultants can flash to laggards to make them feel behind the times or unfashionable."

It's true abroad too. A recent survey of traffic-calming in Europe by Tim Pharoah and John Russell gathered the complaint that: "The intensive use of coloured paving, frequent visual blocks, different textures and a plethora of street-furniture is often too fussy and destructive of traditional street character." Mr Grouser rightly asks: "Why not just level up the road and see how it works?"

Looking back last year on his 1960s report, Sir Colin Buchanan, our most famous authority on *Traffic in Towns,* remarked that: "We should have known better, for the truth is that the public mind is so besotted with the motor vehicle that it is quite prepared to trade off environment for possession and use of motor vehicles." This, and not the expensive God-wottery, is the key issue, and it's very sad that the brick and tile industry should have managed to divert the local public's attention.

But, in an off-the-cuff interview in the 1970s about what should be done, Buchanan, foreshadowing Mr Grouser, remarked that residents should "sandbag a few streets and see what happens!" If it's a disaster, they'll have to think out why—and we won't need all that fancy pottery. If it's a success, we'll all congratulate them—and learn how to bring the advantages of pedestrianisation to Market Hill, without the dated urban hardware. God wot!

138. Greener than thou

So Jonathon Porritt chose to use someone else's party platform to give the Green Party a year's ultimatum: that, unless it changed its ways, he'd move on. You can sense the pent-up ire in his feeling that the party was "infested with fantasists who make the Tower of Babel seem a model of reason"; that his old chums lacked the organisational ability to walk a dog; and had a "wholly irrational abhorrence of political leadership".

Very rationally, I share this abhorrence, and I'm one of those who argued with valued green friends that an Ecology Party, as it was then, was a bad idea. Greenery was a social movement that had to permeate everywhere. It should have its pockets of infestation in every party of right, left and centre, but its real task was that of changing attitudes. Politics, as always, would come limping after reality.

But, leaving aside Porritt's frustrations, there *are* a number of deep divides in the green world, which its slowly growing influence is going to widen. One is like the age-old divide among Christians, between personal salvation and social action. I'm reminded of what must have been the last interview with Henry Miller in the prologue to the film *Reds* | "All these busy people changing the world," he drawled, "they couldn't even change themselves."

On the other hand, I can't help feeling that it trivialises big social issues to reduce them to personal behaviour. The issue came to a head with what Porritt called a "devastating paper" from Murray Bookchin at the National Gathering of US Greens a few years ago. Bookchin talked about "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology" (his paper is printed in *The Raven* no 3, £2.50 from Freedom Press), and his thoughts are really worth pondering:

"Deep Ecology has parachuted into our midst from the sun-belt's bizarre mix of Hollywood and Disneyland, reborn Christianity, spiced with homilies from Taoism, Buddhism, spirituality. Social Ecology draws its inspiration from radical decentralisation thinkers like Peter Kropotkin, William Morris, Paul Goodman, among many others, who have advanced a serious challenge to our present society with its vast, hierarchical, sexist, class-ruled, statist apparatus and militaristic history."

On the other hand, Bookchin claimed, Deep Ecology has virtually no real sense that our ecological problems have their roots in social problems. "It preaches a gospel of original sin that accurses a vague species called Humanity, as though people of colour are equatable with whites, women with men, the third world with the first, the poor with the rich, the exploited with their exploiters." Porritt (in his recent book on *The Coming of the Greens)* dismissed Bookchin's views as "an old-fashioned hatred of anything supernatural". I, on the other hand, found in them a welcome dose of that wise social and political realism that Porritt told the liberal Democrats, of all people, that he couldn't discover in his own party. Both aspects of the green dilemma are illustrated in a deliciously infuriating new book by Charles Hoult.

Living Green (Green Books, £5.95) describes his cycle tour around Britain last summer, barging in on green people and enterprises. He found plenty of them making an eco-trip out of their ego-trip.

But all round the country Hoult met people who, far from lacking the organisational ability to walk the dog, had achieved the impossible, like the Suma Wholefood Co-op in Halifax with its £7 million-a-year distribution business, or the Ecology Building Society with its £6 million of assets, rooted in the ideals that the building society movement has abandoned, or the Centre for Alternative Technology at Machynlleth. Hoult's perceptive snapshots show that these busy folk don't stop to search their souls to find if they are Deep Greens or Social Greens. They make every kind of compromise with reality. They also make nonsense of the entrepreneurial heroes of the eighties, going into liquidation every week, and of the party-minded caucuses who want to round up everyone to support their current agenda.

The German greens and the Eurogreens were thrilled to win seats and be courted by the party fixers. And what happened to *them?*

139. Lutz's liberation

Reputations travel far. That's how Wales came to be a liberation for Lutz. He grew up in a small town in Germany and sang his way as a boy through the endless list of Bach chorales and masses in the church choir. But what really excited him were the beautiful violins, violas and cellos that came in for the big performance on high days and holidays. He would watch from the choir-stalls the sensuous and sonorous shapes of the instruments.

He graduated from the shopfloor to become stand-in choirmaster, and his reputation spread. Would he conduct the Glee Club and the German equivalent of the Barber Shop Singers too? He had a way with singers, and the word got around. He was trapped.

Then he heard of the Welsh School of Musical Instrument Making at Abertridwr in one of those tight little south Wales valleys. Its home is an old primary school from the days when, as the Welsh say, the valleys were alive with children. In fact, it is a branch of the Ystrad Mynach College of Further Education. And the sad news is that it will close this summer as part of the country's cuts in its education budget.

Lutz was astounded by the fervent sound of those massed methodist choirs singing *Cym Rhondda,* and at the way everyone in the pub would, at the slightest provocation, burst into *Sospan Fach* and a lot of rugby songs he didn't understand. A choral group from Abertridwr that went to a German festival were told: "We sing from the head, but you Welsh sing from the ' heart."

He did his three-year course and went back home to make stringed instruments in a nice little workshop. "Just play it and see," he would say to visiting fiddlers. But to pay the rent he was lured back into the choral scene. "Things haven't been the same since you left," said the church folk, and that took up Sundays. The erudite *a cappella* gang

were waiting for him to do "Schutz, Scheidt, Schein" and "Buxtehude" on Mondays. Tuesdays came the *kinderchor* and its parents, wanting a Eurovision-winning number for next year.

There was a blessed relief on Thursdays when he did violin repairs with natural glue, after Wednesday's gruelling session: Union Night celebrating the triumph of the proletariat with guitars. Friday was the hardest: when the Veteran's Association met, and he had to try hard to ensure that the old boys didn't burst out into the *Horstwessellied* as they stumbled home.

Saturday in the pub was an easy evening. Lutz was always there, as someone might have heard of the reputation of his fiddles and might even commission a cello. He couldn't help his choral reputation. It was just an albatross that pursued him everywhere. But if this was to be his fate, couldn't he suggest that, as he had learned that Abertridwr actually means "three streams meet here", might they not unite the rivulets of the town's choral music into one stream, and persuade everyone to change their holiday plans to a summer tour of south Wales.

It planned itself in his head. The church choir would do a Bach chorale, the Monday lot a Monteverdi madrigal, the children's choir would do *Y Deryn Pur,* all about the dove of peace, Wednesday's group would sing the *Internationale,* and Friday's oldtimers would bring tears to everyone's eyes with an innocuous folksong about the Lorelei. Then they would all join together in a tribute to their hosts and sing *Cymru Fach* about that dear little country where Lutz had made all his friends. Why not meet at the *Musikverein* and talk about it next Thursday night?

Thursday came and Lutz realised what he had let himself in for. He had spent years getting off the choral treadmill, and here he was, inviting more. In his English language course, he had come across the lines of Auden that read: "Put the car away. When life fails,/ What is the point of going to Wales?" He sat there with the coffee heating up, but nobody came. The activists of each of his choirs saw him as their own particular wizard, and didn't want to get mixed up with the others.

What a relief for Lutz! He can go to Wales this summer with his load of fiddles and celebrate the demise of the Welsh School of Musical Instrument Making and Repair in his own way, and theirs.

140. Moving on

The man who remarked reflectively to Arthur Koestler, "Maybe I've been licking the wrong boots all these years" touched an important difference between our parents' or grandparents' generations and the contemporary world. They stayed put. We move on. It certainly applied to male jobs. The boy who was apprenticed at 14, or became an office boy in the bank or the town hall, retired 50 years later with a gold watch or chiming clock.

One in a thousand of them ever became managing director, branch manager or town clerk, something inconceivable nowadays, as a wholly different set of people enter as graduates and escalate through jobs. And if there are any long-term survivors in the lower ranks, we regard them not with admiration for their long and faithful service, but as examples of the Peter Principle: that people rise to their level of incompetence.

This was never a valid assumption. Ideas about work used to be different At the county high school I attended, the English teacher was there for 38 years, the science teacher for 39 and the history teacher for 40—and they weren't duds, even if I was. Today, most children's careers in any particular school are longer than those of their teachers. And one of the many factors for demoralisation in that profession is the decline in the chances of spiralling up the career structure, so that, instead of moving on, they tend to move out altogether.

There has been a similar shift in local administration. Herbert Manzoni was for decades city engineer of Birmingham, with results once admired and now deplored. Henry Morris, father of the community college ideal, spent his entire working life as education officer for rural Cambridgeshire, admired for his indifference to professional advancement. Today, every level of public office, from ministers downward, is like a set of revolving doors, where the incumbent has just enough time to wave an encouraging greeting to his or her successor, as each goes off at a tangent pursuing a career.

No doubt we all deplore other people's lack of dedication, while determined ourselves to seize the chances that turn up, on the sound principle that you only live once. In the making of a slimmer, leaner, British industry in the 1980s, all those flexible and upwardly mobile careerists deplored the atavistic assumptions of the people sacked in droves from heavy engineering, shipbuilding, mining, metal-bashing and car-building, for imagining that they had a job for life.

I am sure that there's a skill, taught in business schools, of analysing not the handwriting, but the job records of applicants for work. John Wolfenden used to say that you should never stay more than ten years in one job: the first three learning it, the next four doing it and the last three getting ready to hand it on. But he, of course, was a Top Person. Suppose you are down at the bottom, implementing the latest switch in direction, the latest fashion in management ideology from the top. The truth is that, nowadays, some jobs are what the jargon calls a learning experience, while others make you feel that life has passed you by.

The golden rule is Never Go Back. If you stay any time in any workplace, you spend years making the experience tolerable for yourself. If you're then made redundant, the worst thing is to start the process again. I was talking to a man who worked for years at what was once Austin at Long-bridge. The car industry would hire and fire the same people year after year as the market fluctuated. He'd become a cabdriver, used to making his own decisions. Then he went back to the body-plant "I couldn't face it, as I'd been that way before," he explained. The key factor that everyone yearns for, whatever job they pick up, is the "span of autonomy", the extent to which you can

make your own decisions. People used to create it. Now they have to move on to find it.

But the Scottish teacher Robert Mackenzie had the best tale about job expectations. When he was a boy in Aberdeenshire, the old train driver on his branch line was told that head office had decreed that drivers should retire at 70. "If I had thought it wasna to be a permanent job," he said, "I would never have ta'en it."

141. I'm not Stiller

We got to Zurich two days late for the funeral of its most celebrated citizen. Max Frisch had left instructions that no church or government should come near his corpse, and Swiss jokers told us that the two representatives of the ministry of culture in Kanton Zurich came two hours late so as not to offend the 699 remaining members of the 700-strong signatories of the manifesto of writers and artists called "Boycott the Snooper-State".

This was a reaction to the month's festival for the 700th anniversary of the "oath of comradeship" between the three original cantons. For, in 1989, the federal minister of justice, Mrs Kopp, had to resign in an atmosphere of financial scandal, and it was accidentally revealed that the secret police in Berne had files on a million citizens, including her. It brought the biggest demonstration ever seen in Switzerland, when 350,000 people assembled in Berne to condemn the federal council for betraying not only the people, but the very idea of direct democracy.

There was no constitutional basis for secret files, and a parliamentary inquiry resolved that people should be able to see them. About 380,000 people wrote to demand theirs. As in the US, they arrived with bits blacked out Then the discovery that manipulation of photocopiers could reveal the words underneath obliged civil servants to use razor-blades to perforate the top copy and send off a second one.

The police file on Amnesty International's Swiss office began with seven blacked-out pages. A friend in Lausanne showed me her 18 pages (her mother has 36) and I noted the sheer trivia the unblacked entries revealed. If we had a Freedom of Information Act in Britain, you would find the same idiocy among *our* secret police. She had met Gabriel and Daniel Cohn-Bendit; she had received a family photograph from abroad. As the items were in various languages, we know that the cantonal, as well as the federal governments are involved, and they show that, as in Britain, personal post is opened. What strikes you is the complete unimportance of the carefully gathered information.

Frisch, who along with Brecht and Dürrenmatt (who died in December) was one of the big three German-language playwrights of the century, must have had a file 100 pages long. In his novel, *I'm not Stiller,* he recorded that his fellow-citizens were paralysed by fear "Fear of the future, fear of one day being poor, fear of life, fear of

having to die without life insurance, fear that the world could change: a panic-ridden fear of intellectual daring."

This fear was reflected in the official reaction to the anti-Snooper campaign: ignore nasty revelations and celebrate unity. Most Swiss are just bored, knowing that this means yodelling competitions and a thousand performances in town and village of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell,* an imported Scandinavian legend, and that anyway, Swiss unity dates from 1848, not 1291.

There are postcards, stamps and sugar-wrappers to celebrate the phoney anniversary, and members of the boycott committee have worked hard to undermine it Frisch supported the subversives. Durrenmatt declined, declaring that Switzerland should abolish itself in 1991 and recreate itself in 1992 on the principles that founded the country. That would be a *real* revolution. Another Zurich writer, Adolf Muschg, with a lengthy file, has just produced a book, *Switzerland on the Brink,* asking what will happen if the country he defines as a land of police surveillance, racism, defence paranoia and banking supremacy, joins the European Community.

I'm still a Switzophilian. I ruefully observe that the country's troubles are rooted in its governmental desire to be just like any other nation. I wish they'd stayed different When did *you* last see your secret file, when did you have a chance to vote on whether *your* country needs an army, or on keeping the railway to every last uneconomic destination, or on using your phone bills to pay for rural buses, or on excluding lorries weighing over 28 tonnes from *your* country?

If our politics were brought out in the open, in the way that a tiny minority of Swiss citizens have exposed theirs, we'd all be rejoicing that dissidents are a lot more influential than governments.

142. Woityla's women

When we arrived at Milan, Rossella greeted us with the declaration: "It's official, I'm not a woman." We were mystified, but she waved copies of the ordinary daily papers, *La Repubblica, La Stampa* and *Il Corriere della Sera,* all with similar headlines that explained: "Woityla declares that women are either virgins or mothers."

Several things struck me about this. Quite apart from the sheer awfulness of what this guy says to his flock, it was evident that the British press tacitly censors the remarks the Pope actually makes, so as to avoid embarrassment to British Catholics. I haven't seen this opinion reported here. It is also ironical to observe how, in the non-Catholic world, the papers are far more deferential than they are in the homeland of the church, to the claim for attention of His Holiness.

Maybe there was a time, during the regime of John XXIII (whose real name I don't know), when the bosses of the Catholic church were ready to make some kind of compromise with the way people live in the real world. But he died in 1963, and that hopeful period of his *aggiornamento*— meaning the attempt to pull the Catholic church

into today's world—ended with him. Brenda Maddox claims in her new Counterblast pamphlet *The Pope and Contraception* (Chatto & Windus, £3.99) that this was an "incalculable loss to the human race".

It may or it may not have been, depending on the extent to which you believe that people listen to their spiritual leaders. But his church's subsequent pronouncements on the birth-control theme display a quite terrifying social irresponsibility. I hope they are ignored.

I used to think that the concordat between Mussolini and the Catholic church was just history. Until, that is. we got to Bologna. For. in that city, the model regime of the Democratic Party of the Left (last year's Communist Party), has had to yield to a new concordat between church and state. Paola explained that her two-and-a-half-year-old Francesco was obliged to have an hour's religious instruction at his nursery school. (And. by the way. it is worth recording that a much bigger proportion of infants in Italy and France have automatic access to nursery education than in British cities.)

Decades ago, I concluded that it was not necessary to attack religion any more. I even jeered at my friend Nicolas Walter who works for the Rationalist Press Association. Quite wrongly. I imagined that the battle for a secular society had been won in the 19th century.

In my optimistic way. I underestimated the ability of zealous minorities to impose their will on majorities, here or anywhere in the world. As a simple, reasonable person, I would never have credited the revival of Protestant fundamentalism in the United States, nor the way in which it automatically lends its support to the worst aspects of American foreign policy. Nor would have I expected to see the rebirth of Catholic fundamentalism in Europe, nor that of Jewish fundamentalism in the Middle East, nor or Hindu fundamentalism in India.

For everyone with the modest hope that human beings can somehow jog along together, all these exclusive revivalisms are an unmitigated disaster, and one that nobody foresaw. I ask endlessly: "What's missing in your lives, that none of you can accommodate that majority out there who will never agree with you?"

It is the godly folk, of every conceivable faith, who push me into the position of condemning them all. *They,* not me. are responsible for those suicidal battles where adherents of one religion cheerfully murder, rape and emasculate other humans who are thought to support another faith. *They,* not me. provide the evidence that every crime against humanity results from *their* religious faith, whether in Clod, the State or the Party. I'm tired of being told that every religion is not merely a belief but a way of life. What kind of a way of life is it, I ask. if it encourages you to impose your will on everyone around who chances to have a different ideology? Let's not congratulate ourselves that we are any better. This unpleasant Woityla person in Rome has the same delusion.

143. Kropotkin Sunday

Thanks to the creativity of Kropotkin, anarchism, unlike Marxism. has not died." The speaker was the veteran professor of town-planning at Bologna University. Carlo Doglio. and he was introducing a day-long meeting organised by the local anarchists in an ancient palazzo in the city centre.

To me it was another sign of the academic rediscovery of Kropotkin, signalled 15 years ago. when David Stoddard. professor of geography at Cambridge. remarked that: "There had long been an inscription on the brickwork of one of the tunnels on the Cambridge-Kings Cross line that reads KROPOTKIN LIVES. I now begin to believe it."

The *Commune di Bologna* was the right place to celebrate this rediscovery, in the light of Kropotkin's eulogy of the free cities of medieval Europe in *Mutual Aid.* and his vision of a post-industrial economy in *Fields. Factories and Workshops.* Most people would agree that Bologna is the best-administered city in Italy, an endless rebuke to the sheer dreadfulness of central government there, and I heard a lot of sympathy with the dilemmas of the ruling party, the Democratic Party of the Left (formerly the Communist Party), with its symbol of a very big tree growing out of a very small hammer and sickle.

True. I also met people who bitterly regretted this transition and yearned for that old-style Marxism-Leninism. But those I know are in implicit agreement with the view that the mayor. Renzo Inbeni. gave to the *Guardian's* Ed Vulliamy: "We have sought to affirm in reality the idea of autonomy; that the worker, artisan or peasant should be as free from intervention as possible." As this *sounds* like the rhetoric of Thatcherism. though not its practice. I need to explain that it does *not* imply belief in big business and speculation, but the opposite: real support and co-operative institutional back-up for literally hundreds of thousands of small workshops and cooperatives, as well as for people who combine horticultural and industrial work-The province of Emilia-Romagna has, as a result. become the most prosperous and economically healthy region of Italy.

Marx and Lenin, with their contempt for the primitive economy of "petty trades" were way off the target. Kropotkin was right His views are confirmed in a new report from the International Institute for labour Studies in Geneva, *Industrial Districts and Inter-Firm Co-operation in Italy* (edited by Pyke. Becattini and Sengenberger) that none of us are likely to read. A pity, because they cite the view of Jonathan Zeitli that: "The economic development of the Third Italy has important implications for local industrial strategies in other advanced countries such as Britain." And they mention Sebastiano Brusco's opinion that in the small-workshop economy of Emilia we might not find "the sharp split between *working* and *non-working* spheres of life that tend to occur in Fordist environments."

Bologna's Kropotkin Sunday only began to recognise Kropotkin's answer to the big problem of the 21st century—the humanisation of work—as we were so busy with re-

lated aspects of his thought. The educator lambert Borghi examined Kropotkin's views on technical teaching and the integration of brain work and manual work. The jurist Massimo La Torre attacked his excessive optimism, but failed to see the importance of his plea for a "new economy in the energies used in supplying the needs of human life, since these needs are increasing and the energies are not inexhaustible".

My own task was to put Kropotkin's federalism and post-imperialism into a contemporary context. For it was he who. in 1919, drew to the attention of the British Labour Party's delegation to the Soviet Union the fact that: "It is not only the capitalists who exploit the labour of others. They are not the only ones who aspire to conquer cheap manpower to obtain raw materials in Europe. Asia and Africa." And it was he who warned Lenin in the same year that: "All attempts to bring together the constituent parts of the Russian Empire are doomed to certain failure. Their future is directed towards a federation of independent units."

Doglio chose the right word for Kropotkin's anarchism. It is as relevant to the post-Marxist Soviet Union as to Bologna... or Britain.

144. In full pursuit

It's a thousand years since the Battle of Maldon. when the Norsemen, having set fire to Ipswich, moved on to defeat the Anglo-Saxons at the little Essex town.

So, hankering for lame, it is staging every kind of event for the tourist trade, with hired Vikings and yeomen. In the Moot Hall, the more pacific history of the place is going on display in 42 feet of embroidered tapestry in seven panels, made by Essex stitchers and designed by Humphrey Spender.

One of the panels includes the hunt, which meets every Boxing Day near the war memorial. But the town has a vocal bunch of anti-hunt protestors, so Spender, conscious that the record should include their persistent hostile witness, showed the fox holding in its mouth a "Ban the Hunt" poster.

The pro-hunt lobby snorts with contempts. "Just like an urban intellectual." they say. "Sounding off without the slightest understanding of the place of the hunt in rural life, linking all classes in the common time-honoured rituals and pleasures of the chase, by far the best way of controlling fox numbers."

I have never heard such nonsense. What unites rural people, below a certain social level, is a withering contempt for the people who hunt. This is less out of sympathy with the fox, than from a loathing of the gentry, who, once on a horse and fortified with a stirrup-cup. really believe that they are monarchs of all they survey. Most of all, for a whole century, country folk have had contempt for the new rural affluent who aped the habits of their precursors.

Locally, foxes are seen as a menace to poultry, most effectively controlled with a shotgun. Fifty years ago my uncle in Essex had all his chickens killed. It happens every week somewhere. Two days ago. my neighbour had his ducks killed and all the eggs

destroyed. This didn't make either of them love the hunt—their attitudes had the same equivocation then and now. Near here last year, actually in the course of the hunt, a woman had her two cats killed by the hounds.

The truth is that the fox population, large or small, is entirely determined by human activities. One of the best-kept secrets of the hunting world is that, as changes in farming practices have eliminated the rearing habitats of foxes in many areas, they have to be artificially imported to satisfy the needs of the hunters. As we all know from wildlife programmes on TV. the intelligent creatures have tended to move to town along the verges of railway lines and into urban cemeteries, the last refuge of threatened wildlife.

Maybe foxes, too. have an automatic disdain for the kind of people who join the hunt.

Busky is a formidable man-mountain and darts champion in the next village, and among his avocations is a field of potatoes for the early market. His wife has a pet fox: it isn't all that uncommon. One wintry day, the hunt came charging through the spuds. She got down his shotgun. Busky went out and faced the gentlefolk on horses and fired a shot in the air. "If you don't get off my land." he said, "you're going to get the other round."

But the best bit of hunt folklore comes from Great Bentley, the village with the largest green in England. Years ago, to the delight of the chicken rearers, foxes had died out. The hunt imported one from Northamptonshire and, on the night before the great day. pushed it into an artificial earth made of nine-inch drainpipes with a stopper, to be pulled out the next day.

Early in the morning, two local lads released and shot the fox and hung it from the goalpost of the green to greet the hunt. As the horses were released from the trailers and the representatives of rural England emerged from their Volvos and landrovers, to assemble in order of precedence for the chase, the lads raised their hats to the temporary aristocracy.

You don't have to be in love with the fox to despise its pursuers.

145. Comers and goers

There were scare stories in the local press when the Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities predicted that, on top of the considerable influx of population (including me) since 1971. the region can expect the arrival of 130,000 newcomers by the year 2011.

I don't know whether the figure took into account the factor known as natural wastage (which will certainly include me), but it is a smaller percentage increase than that experienced by more populous parts of the country over the past 20 years.

The Community Council for Suffolk has responded with a robustly sensible report. *Integration of Newcomen,* based on investigations in nine urban and rural places. It

found, like everywhere else, that a key issue is going to be that of affordable housing. and pointed out that 75 per cent of Suffolk villages have fewer than 470 people "and are too small to sustain themselves: the quality of life for many existing Suffolk residents depends upon the prosperity attached to pressures of development for homes and jobs."

Very gently, it drew attention to the fact that "there is some evidence that new residents are resistant to more newcomers"—certainly the least palatable aspect of the Nimby syndrome. And another new report. the Countryside Commission's Visitors *to the Countryside,* finds that members of ethnic minorities rarely, if ever, live or work in the countryside. This led Alison Withers of the *East Anglian Daily Times* to go out and interview people of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origins who actually did. Happily, she found no horror stories, but felt that "for children, it can be particularly difficult." Considering how deeply rooted xenophobia is in our press, parliament and even our jokes, I suppose this isn't surprising, but I wish we and everyone else could adapt to the world of the 21st century.

Forty years ago. I heard on the radio a reading of Daniel Defoe's poem *The True-Horn Englishman.* I've never come across it again, but I found it an unforgettable demolition of the ideas of nations and nationhood. describing our origins from an endless succession of immigrants and concluding that: "From this amphibious ill-born mob began that vain ill-natured thing, an Englishman."

All our origins are a reminder that nations and boundaries are lines on maps, devised for their own glorification by rulers. Sadly, they can always find dissatisfied people to crusade under their banners. The rest of us, however fond we may be of the places where we were young or happy, are content to pursue the normal gratifications. wherever chance and the search for a living floats us into harbour.

I've a sister-in-law. born a Turkish citizen. She was in Chana last year, and needed to go to a place called Bukuruwa to be installed as the local queen-mother, because of her services to that community. It was an obligation she couldn't neglect, so she took the bus. which in those circumstances means a lorry—and as a gesture of chivalry, was pushed into the cab, to save her from the bumpy ride on the back.

The driver asked her where she came from. "Well," she said. "I'm British." He didn't see her as a typical Brit, so he persisted. "Before that." she replied. "1 was Israeli." But he persevered. "Where before that?" So she said that she was born in the

Turkish province of Trakya. "Don't tell me," he replied, "You're from Uzunkoprii." She agreed, and he explained that he had gone to Germany. looking for work, had married a Turkish woman and had followed her back to Turkey. But they had divorced and he had then returned to Ghana.

It's worthy of the Forteana column, be cause he turned to her. while steering round the holes in the road, and said, "We are the only two people in the whole of west Africa who love Uzunkoprii." Pure chance decides our loyalties to places, languages, cultures and religions.

The 20th century has paid an endless price for the cult of national identity. The Kremlin used to have a phrase, "rootless cosmopolitans", for those who had transcended

the confusion between affection for places and the desire to keep others out. Wouldn't it be great to enter the next century simply accepting that we are all rootless cosmopolitans now?

146. Academic drift

In his jokey way. Laurie Taylor (Diary. 24 May) was devastatingly right about the two edges of the current polytechnic upgrading exercise. As a visitor. I have already experienced his high-table nightmare among the Dulux-sprayed concrete polyblocks. Pass the port, Laurie. The conversation of course, was about sources of finance.

When I first visited my favourite polytechnic. the humble premises were shared with a secondary school. It seemed to me that the presence of the day-release students of mechanical and electrical engineering lent, for the pupils, the idea that education really is important. This spring. 20 years later. I was there to see an old friend installed as a professor, with imported pomp and not a blue jean in sight

I've also been to a college of higher education to collect an honorary fellowship where, in an anteroom, there were laid out. for all the platform guests, the academic-regalia (hired from a specialist firm in Oxford), which included gowns for all us nongraduates who were being honoured.

In every technical college or college of further education that I know about. I have witnessed the same inexorable upward aspirations. First, get rid of the schoolkids. next dispose of the craft apprentices. Win degree status for a single specialist course and it will be the thin end of the wedge for pushing up the aspirations of the whole college, which quietly starts dropping those tedious low-level classes.

I don't blame the colleges for knowing on which side their bread is buttered. But remember that the Oxbridge seminaries that everyone yearns to emulate only existed, like the ancient grammar schools, to give a classical and theological education to boys destined to be priests of the Church of England.

As late as the 1840s. two thirds of first-class graduates were ordained, al the very time when the Royal College of Art was founded to fight back foreign industrial competition for industrial products. (And look what's happened to the RCA!)

Nonconformists, along with Catholics and Jews, were legally excluded from the universities, hence the pioneering work of the dissenting academies in the 18^{th} century and the mechanics' institutes in the 19^{th}. as beacons of scientific and technical education.

Meanwhile, down at the bottom of the pile, every local college is busily trying to draw in the educational losers, with courses labelled "access", "open door", "new start" and similar sobriquets to attract people who have been let down by the system.

It's a sensible rediscovery of origins, but it leads to the big question. What is the magic that draws us all into the process known as academic drift? There isn't any mystery. That's where the money, status and prestige goes. And not only is teaching more difficult and more demanding the lower you get down the exclusion process, but

the teacher in school and at the humblest levels of further education, spends more time in front of larger classes with fewer resources, much lower pay rewards and prospects.

Wouldn't it be great if. by some feat of social engineering, the flow of academic drift could be reversed? We'd take it for granted that the lucky, the motivated and the highly gifted could educate themselves. We'd lavish our investment on the also-rans who'd fallen at the first hurdle of the education obstacle race, and we'd reverse the age hierarchy.

In other words, big spending on preschool and primary education, and huge investment in the early years of the secondary school. Two hundred years ago. William Goodwin began his book *The Enquirer* with the great affirmation that: "The true object of education, like that of any other moral process, is the generation of happiness."

Ask anyone in the academic caucus-race and they'll certainly tell you that at their end it is a generator of unhappiness, but worse even than that, of an endless preoccupation with institutional trivia.

147. Wild rovers

We had hardly settled in the Spa Pavilion Lounge, which looks out over a grey North Sea—having run the gauntlet of half a dozen groups of Morris men and women in their full regalia—than we were approached by a complete stranger. He asked us to be judges for the Chorus Cup. which concluded the 21st Annual Folk Festival.

The usual protestations were overruled with free drinks, and the advice that bribes were acceptable. We were to deduct points for over-rehearsal, and. at the same time, to present the Not-the-Chorus Cup. to reward the disreputable. By the end of the afternoon, we were well into the spirit of the occasion and were demanding to know why we couldn't hand out ten prizes, so as to reward the primary schoolchildren and the costumed Essex women, who seemed to range in age from 10 to 70, with their song (composed in the 30s and. therefore, historic) called "Clacton in Tulip Time".

All present were disappointed that the Bolivian musicians who had won the audience's hearts on the previous day had somehow got hijacked to perform elsewhere. But the evolution of our approach to Latin-American Indian music is a parable of the changing folk scene in Britain. Records of that breathy, woody flute music, of the Indian harp, the *tamborito* and the *bombo* were once made solely for a local market. Then groups like bis Indios and Los Paraguayos won audiences with no credentials other than that people enjoyed the sound they made. Today, in cities like Amsterdam. Cologne or Milan. Isatin American folk groups are heard in the streets. If they are rarer here, it must be because of the ordeal of customs inspection at our airports.

But a different kind of customs inspection used to impede the folk music revival in Britain. Youll remember the days when no folk singer could perform without explaining that she learned the tune from her grandmother in County Mayo, or that Cecil Sharp picked it up in the Appalachian mountains. The cult of an alleged authenticity held

everyone back and was only broken down by the rise of left-wing innovators like Bert IJoyd and Ewan MacColl, using the folk idiom for new songs, and by the ordinary pub tradition of music-hall songs, local songs from Newcastle, Liverpool or Glasgow, and a harvest of generations of popular music.

This explains why we were dragooned into judging the Chorus Cup. It was long-established enough to have become a tradition but. at the same time, nobody believes in the traditional criteria of authenticity. any more than they like the idea of competition. As for us. having served our purpose, we followed the musicians up the coast to the Ferryboat Inn. where they were playing just for their own pleasure.

The publicans are neutral. They just want music that will fill the bars on particular nights. If you want the kind of sound that would pass a customs inspection from the English Folk Song and Dance Society, there are John Howson's monthly sessions at the Queen's Head. Stradbroke. But there aren't really any barriers between them and the global village culture to be seen in any country pub on the right night. If Barney on the accordion should begin a Balkan-type rhythm, the young men at the bar put down their glasses, link arms around shoulders and embark on what they see as Greek dancing. And if the fiddler sets out on a Russian or gypsy melody, everyone starts clapping to the beat.

Take last Friday at the Polstead Cock. There were nine or ten instrumentalists, including some who had never met in their lives, responding to audience requests. The totally local reference was met with a song called "Change at Thorpe-le-Soken for Walton-on-the-Naze". But, as Roy from Hitcham chanced to be there and knows the verses as well as the chorus, there were Cockney songs, blended with Argentinian tangos. Woody Guthrie's commemorations of Sacco and Vanzetti. Yiddish klezmer music, somehow mixed with Irish dance tunes, and "The Wild Rover" to make what is rightly seen as a folk evening.

But the real delight is the way the performers pass key signatures and chords to each other, tossing around solo spots for improvisation, just like jazz players, yet welcoming and adapting to amateur intervention. The folk world has broken out of the imprisoning cake of customs.

148. Railway children

Everyone's recollection of the south coast shore-line, outside the major resorts, is of colonies of bungalows made from old railway carriages. Places like East Wittering or Pagham beach were a delight to the childhood imagination. A single one (unless a lucky corridor coach) would sprout a covered way for access down one side, a verandah, looking out to sea at one end and an earthcloset at the other. But the best consisted of two coaches, spaced about 12 feet apart with either a link to form an H-shape. or a full-length "platform", with the whole roofed over, providing a big living-room with a series of compartments opening off it: a Palladian villa.

Nor were these "bungalows" confined to the coast. Imagine wandering deep in the woods or the forest, and finding a railway coach. How could it possibly get there? Who lived there? For Jean Metcalfe, visits to her "radiantly eccentric and go-as-you-please" grandparents in their railwaycoach home in the New Forest, surrounded by animals, flowers and old motorbikes, were "the days I remember most vividly".

Right-thinking people viewed the whole scene with horror and disgust. It was one of the reasons for the foundation of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England in 1926. The first landmark in its outlawing was the Lindsey County Council Act of 1932, intended to halt the spread of Bohemia on the Lincolnshire sandhills, followed by a load of minor legislation, culminating in the once-and-for-all Town and Country Planning Act of 1947.

But attitudes change. In the early days, a big aim of the owner was to disguise the origins of this smart house with its two-storey fully-glazed terrace at the front. The side walls were pebble-dashed or painted with Snowcem. so that you had to be a detective to recognise the rhythm of railway windows, like a percussionist's musical score.

Today, at Shoreham beach, the next generation—fascinated by the tales of how the coaches were delivered, de-wheeled. from the nearest goods yard at £15 each, and how a team of six horses towed them across the Adur river at low tide—spend their weekends stripping off the disguise in order to polish and varnish the original hardwood. and buy gold-leaf transfers to restore the lettering that announced 1st. 2nd or 3rd class.

It's the same in Suffolk. Mike and Helen Williams inherited a railway bungalow at Westleton, near Leiston. Their two carriages were built in 1896 and Mrs Williams says that: "It is a beautifully constructed building, still in wonderful condition." They wanted to build their new house there and sought an enthusiast, railway museum or preservation society to tow away and re-recycle their carriages.

And when John Russell and Maggie Weir bought a site with a Victorian 27-foot railway coach at Kesgrave. they pulled down decades of extensions and additions and learned its history at the National Railway Museum in York. They find that it was built in 1876 by Cravens of Sheffield, was widened from eight to nine feet in 1902. finally withdrawn in 1913 and bought from the Great Eastern Railway for £11 in 1918, de-wheeled and hauled by six carthorses from Little Healings to Kesgrave. John finally sought out one of the many railway preservation groups to take it over.

I've met other inheritors who have found, from the army of railway antiquarians, the pedigrees of the vehicles once seen as sordid shacks and shanties. They know where they were built and which railway companies they belonged to before amalgamation under the Railways Act of 1921 provided a further harvest. But nationalisation in 1948, although it instigated even more disposals, produced few new uses. And if privatisation comes now it will have the same effect—modern steel coaches are either sold abroad or cut up into scrap.

Some of those old coaches have had three lives, from use on the real tracks, to secondary uses, and back to the theme park or tourist attraction. Their builders made

joinery infinitely more durable and weather-tight than the house-builders of their days or ours: windows and doors that fitted, roofs that did not leak, floors that resisted a generation's boots—even before the carriages were put out to grass.

149. Pickled coke

Considering that his off-the-cuff opinions on most subjects make headlines, it was odd that Judge James Pickles' BBC *Byline* programme—giving his careful conclusions from 27 years of sentencing drug-offenders—was met with such media silence. Certainly. Sandy Smithies of the *Guardian* found his argument—that the war against drugs is futile, that the laws aren't working, that the police and prisons can't cope, and the legislation of all illegal substances is the only answer—was "cogently reasoned".

The anarchist fortnightly *Freedom* simply reprinted the opinion of Errico Malatesta. given 69 years ago. long before even our grandparents recognised that we had a drugs problem. Malatesta wrote (in *Umanita Nova,* 10 August 1922) that:

> "The more severe the penalties imposed on the consumers and traffickers of cocaine. the greater will be the attraction of forbidden fruits and the fascination of the risks incurred by the consumer, and the greater will be the profits made by the speculators, avid for money. It is useless, therefore, to hope for anything from the law. We must suggest other solutions. Make the use and sale of cocaine free from restrictions, and open kiosks where it would be sold at cost price or even under cost. And then launch a great propaganda campaign to explain to the public ... Certainly the harmful use of cocaine would not disappear completely ... But in any case the evil would decrease, because nobody could make profits out of its sale, and nobody could speculate on the hunt for speculators. And for this reason our suggestion either will not be taken into account. or it will be considered impractical and mad. Yet intelligent and disinterested people might say to themselves: since the penal laws have proved to be impotent, would it not be a good thing, as an experiment. to try out the anarchist method?"

At a time when the economies of whole nations—like Colombia or Bolivia—are. to everyone's despair, dominated by the cocaine trade. I find Malatesta's comments very significant. Purely by chance. I have been in the past year to two cities, each of which suffers from a grossly exaggerated reputation as Europe's drugs capital. Contrary to rumour, neither has legalised cocaine or heroine, though both tolerate cannabis. The common factor in Amsterdam and Zurich seems, to me. to be the heroic steadfastness of the social-democrat councillors, supported by the police chiefs and the judiciary, to hold on to something approaching the Malatesta/Pickles attitude in the face of the outrage of the good citizens (users, like me. of tobacco and alcohol).

As we get our impressions mostly from TV. the BBC's *Out of Court* programme on the Dutch approach to narcotics gave the impression of an ineffectual switch from tolerance to repressiveness. Fortunately. Professor David Downes, in his book *Contrasts in Tolerance* (Oxford. 1988), comparing penal policy in Britain and the Netherlands, was able to print the material gathered for. but not included in. the programme. So we saw David Mellor describing the Dutch experience as "an object lesson of how not to do it", but not the Amsterdam chief of police declaring that: "Everywhere in the world they put in more men. more power for the police, and they never succeeded in stopping the problem. America does it for 40 years ... and all I hear is 'give the police more men.'"

In Zurich, there is the famous Platzspitz park in the middle of town, known as "Needle Park". Against intense opposition, the communal council maintains a policy of containment and help, through a series of Malatesta's kiosks, directed as much against the Aids menace as towards decriminalising drug-users. To my astonishment, I was assured by my hosts that we must attribute Zurich's liberality not to the dreadful lesson of US experience, but to the influence, among its therapeutic opinion-formers, of the German version of *Gestalt Therapy: excitement and growth in the human personality.* This was written in 1951 by Frederick Peris. Ralph Hefferline and Paul Goodman, and I found it unreadable years ago. But if it inspires a messy tolerance, rather than a hopeless and ineffective game of repression. I'll just have to absorb the message.

150. 'Will this superb landscape be used for executive housing?'

Imagine a moth, its wings and stubby body give you a silhouette ground-plan of the lunatic asylums built, by the dozen, on the fringes of British towns and cities by the Victorians. You can recognise them on the map anywhere. It was progressive in the last century to get people into institutions and it's progressive now to get them out.

The architect John Burrell recently won first prize in the 'Tomorrow's New Communities" competition for his plans to incorporate redundant psychiatric hospitals into the urban fabric. He made the significant point that these institutions—built to last and swallowed up by suburban expansion—contained wonderful landscaped gardens of mature planting, maintained by a century of inmate labour. Since they were self-contained communities, they also included halls, churches, workshops and landmarks in die form of Gothic water-towers. So, instead of idiotic demolition, wouldn't it be wise to recycle the buildings as the central places that, lamentably. new suburbs do not have?

Last week, I met him, appropriately, in Birmingham's Rubery Hill hospital, which was built by a famous Birmingham architect. John Henry Chamberlain. With another

on the same site, this is being sold off by the regional health authority. We were the guests of Gala (Group for Action in the Longbridge Area) at its Community Action Day, together with local residents, the health authority's staff, the city's planners, *and* the prospective developers, whose identity was still to be announced by the health authority.

Many other interested parties were there too. for this is a special site. Situated next to a very deprived part of outer Birmingham—a mixture of interwar speculative building and post-war council estates—it covers 210 acres, and when a resident, Kath Nicol, drove me through its meandering paths, we saw a fox scuttling through the rhododendrons under the towering Scots pines planted by 19th-century patients.

The area scores high on all the usual indices of impoverished and stigmatised people: a large ageing population, a disproportionate number of young, often single-parent families, a high infant mortality rate, a high rate of children "at risk" and a high morbidity rate. There is also a singularly low rate of access to car use.

This last is the supreme irony, since the area is dominated not by the hospital site, but by an enormous car plant, started when Herbert Austin took over a derelict factory to make motorcars in 1905. It has been known by half a dozen different names in the past 20 years: BMC, British Leyland, and now Rover. Owned by British Aerospace, it is reducing the workforce (23.000 in 1980,14,000 in 1991), which is continually being urged to apply for voluntary redundancy. Residents think that the city council is soft-pedalling enforcement of pollution regulations for fear that Rover might react by closing down the plant. After all. that is going to happen at Cowley.

Burrell talked of the once-in-a-lifetime chance this vast green site offers. Gala's planning advisor Joe Holyoak urged a Community Development Trust to exploit the chance of "planning gain"—meaning that the city's planning consent for whatever the developers propose should depend on part of the site being devoted to perceived local needs: community health provision. low-rent housing and workspace, recreation facilities—as well as the care of former patients. After all. the philosophy of community care assumes a caring community.

Gala's activists know that a lot is at stake and have to hope for the small gains they might win from the deal. Will this superb landscape be used for executive housing and out-of-town hypermarkets, severed by the A38 from the people who live around there? All official lips are sealed. So the future is perilously dependent on the members and officers of Birmingham's planning committee. Can they, dare they, rise to this unique opportunity?

151. 'Who, in such a regime, willingly enters the teaching profession?'

In the acute teacher shortage after the war, the City of Leicester set up its own teacher training college, taking over the concrete huts of a wartime auxiliary fire station in Humberstone Drive.

By the fifties it needed a permanent home, and I chanced to work for the architects given the job of designing it around an empty Georgian house—Scraptoft Hall—in beautiful grounds. On principle, we used the local Leicestershire brick and aimed at creating a group of buildings that were cheap, simple and durable. Joyously we had a huge ceramic mural all the way up the staircase, made by the potter Frances Sokolov, famous two decades later as the punk-rock singer Vi Subversa. Once the place had opened, we swelled with pride when the new principal. Francis Cammaerts. called it the most imaginative piece of educational construction he had seen.

Our excitement wasn't to last. This was partly because we have all recognised that successful education, whether of teachers or their pupils, has little to do with the buildings it happens in, and partly because, in one of those huge shifts of governmental opinion, all the teacher training colleges were incorporated into the nearest higher education institutes. The library, with its great collection of. Ordnance Survey maps built up over many years, was simply sold off to a second-hand book dealer, and the request that it be distributed among Leicestershire schools refused.

There were even more frustrating histories in the teacher-training world. I can remember visiting the brand-new Milton Keynes College of Education in the mid-1970s. A lovely place. I thought, but before the first crop of grass was tall enough to be mowed, government policy closed it down. The local education authority was not to blame. That college had the shortest life of any education institution in Britain, and the fault lies entirely with the Department of Education and Science, and the endlessly changing secretaries of state who display their ignorance of educational priorities every time they open their mouths.

All through the eighties, governments denied that we had a teacher shortage. while blaming *schools* for the collapse of manufacturing industry. (Study the words they used and you will see they are based on a misreading by their think-tanks of Martin J Wiener's interesting book on elite education. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit. Who* could blame any student. in the face of endless denigration. for avoiding a career in teaching?

When the teacher shortage was actually admitted, a series of short-term initiatives such as "licensed teachers"—a variant on the pupil-teachers of a century ago—were promoted and quietly dropped for lack of aspirants. And when the Royal Society and the British Association for the Advancement of Science joined in warnings about the shortage of science teachers, the appalling Kenneth Clarke (sitting in that office until

something better turns up) disgusted head teachers by claiming that recruitment of science teachers was up by 50 per cent.

Every week, the press carries reports of ever more absurd and heavy-handed intervention at ministerial level, last month's hilarious tale was that the government (in the form of Kenneth Baker in 1989) set up a study of the teaching of grammar, on which it spent an incredible £21 million. Two years later it is declining to publish the result as it doesn't fit the government's ideas. This month's was Mr Major's address to the Centre for Policy Studies, overturning the plans for testing children at seven, 11. 14 and 16—on which millions of teacher-hours have been spent—promising to "resist insidious attacks on literature and history in our schools".

Who, in such a regime, willingly enters teaching? But far worse, what child conscript enjoys the role of cannon-fodder on this battleground?

152. 'Unlike the cities, everything you see in a *favela* has been created by the people who live there'

Ben Derbyshire belongs to an architectural practice, Hunt Thompson, that specialises in tenant-led rehabilitation of rundown council estates. So when he got an invitation from the Prince of Wales' Business Leaders Forum to join a visit to Brazil, his instinct was to accept and ask to see *the favelas.* the squatter-built settlements on the fringes of the cities. The guidebook warned him off. and better-off Brazilians never go near them—seeing the squatters as the source rather than as the victims of their country's problems. I But in Rio and in Sao Paulo, trusted local priests made the introductions for him.

I find the impressions he brought back very significant. He doesn't romanticise poverty but, like other observers, he found the shims to be places of hope, unlike the cities, where he encountered despair. He notes that: "Practically everything you see in *a favela* has been created by the people who live there: I helping themselves and each other." It presents "a striking contrast for someone like myself who is much preoccupied with wresting back a sense of control for people in British cities who have become marginalised, dependent and powerless ... We are much committed to community development work which builds confidence and ability in people to take control of their lives, and we argue the case constantly for the providers of services to release some of the absolute control they have enjoyed for years."

In the *favelas,* surrounded by appalling poverty, he discovered a vital society based on mutual support and respect. "People care for each other, look after each other's children, help build (or rebuild) each other's houses, work together to put in drains, watch out for each other's property, and protect each other from the corrupt police."

The pioneer of this kind of interpretation of Latin American experience back in the sixties was another British architect, John Turner. He published case histories showing that with just the slightest support—instead of brutal suppression—the *barriadas* of Peru evolved in 15 years, through their own efforts, from straw huts into fully serviced suburbs.

The question ever since has been: "But what if things get worse?" And they have. Already beset by gold-braided, death-squad armies, leaden bureaucracies and playboy elites, the poor in South America are paying for the vast foreign loans that have been salted away in secret accounts abroad. Nothing worries the rich, not even hyperinflation, as they only use US dollars, and tax evasion is seen as their inherited right. Provided the rich get their cut, drugs don't disturb them either. They live behind bullet-proof stockades where the latest horror—cholera—has been met by food imports and bottled water.

In the seventies, the Colombian Bogota daily *El Tiempo* had a strip cartoon about Copetin, a street kid, and the top-selling novel in Rio was about Zeze, the shoeshine boy from the *favela.* By the nineties, this sentimentality has gone. In the cities, as we know from TV, squeamishness about street children has been overcome. Ben bleakly reports that: There are estimated to be eight million of these, and when they get too much for local businessman an unholy alliance is struck with the police, and the children are just rounded up and shot"

When I asked him for his reflections on the future, he cited the view of a priest whom he had asked whether the *favelas* would still be there in 50 years time. The reply was yes—"and 50 years after that". Another was fearful that the whole urban scene was sliding into violence on a Colombian or Peruvian scale. The rich world's banks are in deep trouble for their folly in shoring up the South American ruling class, and the interest is being squeezed out of the people who own nothing beyond a determination to build their own lives on the fringe of the rich men's cities.

1992

153. New Town truths beyond the campaign profiles

In the 1950s, following the New Towns Act of 1946, a number of new towns on the outskirts of larger cities sprung up around the UK. After the war there was an appetite for healthy, fresh environments free from the trauma of bombing and evacuation. These towns became not sites of affluence, with low-income people contained within the cities, as had been hoped by many, but the opposite: "The accidental achievement of New Towns," writes Colin Ward, "was to provide rented housing for non-affluent outward migration." But housing swiftly became an issue in these towns as populations grew – as did employment. "Some time next century, a bunch of amateurs will have to reinvent the New Town idea."

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In the constituency profiles that have filled the posh papers for weeks, special attention has been given to the post-war New Towns, with the patronising idea that places like Basildon or Harlow really are the habitat of Essex Man (and Woman), that Livingston really is Silicon Glen, and that Milton Keynes is full of employees of firms with Japanese values.

These assumptions are wildly misleading, whatever their electoral implications. In the first place, the New Towns aren't new any more. Back in the 1960s, at the moment when the first crop of babies born there grew into teenagers, New Towns became the same boring old home towns as anywhere else.

Second, they absorbed only a small proportion of the outward population movement in search of space. Far more people live in the new estates on the fringe of every non-metropolitan town or village.

Third, of course, the last place where the migratory elite chooses to settle is in the town whose industry provides its income. Frederick Gibberd once told me that he was the only architect-planner who actually lived in the town he designed. But his home was an elegantly converted barn set in the beautiful gardens he and his wife had made from derelict land on the fringe.

Like the journalists, I've followed the New Town trail, although with a different intent. I just wanted to find out whether the experiment had worked. But I'm left with reflections on the shift from long-term aims to instant expediency among all our politicians, and on the aspirations that have been dropped on the way.

When the New Towns Act was passed with all-party support in 1946, the British were a nation of neophiliacs, anxious to be rid of the shameful legal of the urban past. Its horrors had been all too well revealed in the wartime experience of universal conscription, bombing and the evacuation of city children. Everyone wanted new, healthy environments. But by now we are a nation of antiquarians, devoted to an invented Heritage, determined that nothing new shall disturb our own backyard, and united in deploring the utilitarian public-service architecture of the fifties and sixties.

People with freedom of choice decanted themselves; and the attempt to contain low-income people within the cities has been a more spectacular failure than any New Town. The accidental achievement of New Towns was to provide rented housing for non-affluent outward migration. This avenue is by now firmly closed. Every New Town has its homeless next-generation young.

The other lost assumption was full employment. Peterlee was founded to give an urban focus for the grim and isolated pit villages, while Corby was to do the same thing for Midlands steelworkers. Stevenage, when I first knew it, was no longer called Silkingrad (after the minister who dared to designate it as a New Town). It was easier for the development corporations to say the magic word diversification than to achieve it in a declining economy.

Wooing internationally mobile industry, they had to forget the high social aims, and rival each other in targeting the company directors influenced by access to "executive housing", international airports, private schools and golf-courses. Government, meanwhile, is attracted, not by the New Town idea but by the development corporation mechanism. It sidesteps those tedious local authorities and the boredom of accountability. Appointments and budgets come directly from Whitehall.

But population pressures remain. Some time next century, a bunch of amateurs will have to reinvent the New Town idea.

1993

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1994

154. Colin Ward is Amazed at Getting Out of the Labyrinth.

I've never been a wild enthusiast for mazes and labyrinths, though I've known plenty of people who seek out every chance to walk in one in stately homes, ancient sites and public gardens. And whether they are constructed with hedges or walls, or are simply a pattern of turf, stone or brick on the ground, you never know until you do it whether it is truly a labyrinth, like the one where Thesus slew the Minotaur, with a route that leads you inevitably to the centre, and sometimes out again, or whether it really is a maze, with teasing choices and dead ends.

It was when I was trying to disentangle history from legend in Chartres cathedral that I got entrapped in the labyrinthine scholarship of puzzle-building. The maze there is the largest decorative feature in the whole of that vast structure: 12 metres wide with a path of white stones separated by thinner blue ones, 294 metres long.

Several other French cathedrals of the 13th century had them set in the floor, but only three remain. The one at Amiens was removed, because the noise of children playing on it was distracting during services.

The Chartres maze was known as "The Road to Jerusalem", and I learned from its interpreter, Keith Critchlow, that this is also the name given in Germany to the children's game hopscotch, chalked on pavements and playgrounds.

There's now a project called Learning Through Landscapes, which urges that school grounds could be transformed from tarmac deserts into experiences for both learning and pleasure. One of its mentors, Wendy Titman, was telling me about her book *Special Places, Special People; the hidden curriculum of school grounds …*, and the results of learning children's own preferences.

"Why do you think that the number of mazes open to the public has grown from 40 in 1980 to over 100 today, and why are they a playground priority for children?"

I was unable to provide a reason. "Computer games," she said triumphantly.

So I read another book *The British Maze Guide* by Adrian Fisher and Jeff Saward ... , and dared to chase up one of its authors, Adrian Fisher, billed as the world's most prolific maze designer ... Fisher is certainly the hot gospeller of the maze world and designs them everywhere in all materials.

When I raised the computer game analogy, he said: "Yes, it's true, but our colour mazes are a much more rewarding experience than the usual solitary situation of

children, on their own, working through an over-structured programme. We give a starting set of rules, but our colour mazes demand creative and cooperative play by being deliberately deficient in formal rules."

London visitors will be familiar with the visual pun on the word "Warren", in Crosby Fletcher Forbes' ceramic tile mazes on the platform walls of Warren Street underground station, and may even have surfaced to see John Burrell's medieval-style brick maze on the pavement of the Warren Street Playground nearby.

But Fisher insists that the greatest play-value of mazes arises when children abandon the rules and invent new games. "This is very creative: inventing new rules, playing with them to see how they work and modifying them in the light of experience. This process requires a high degree of communication, persuasion, social skills, interactions and cooperation."

Inevitably, I saw his conclusion as a social parable. We can take a solitary pilgrim's progress on the road to Jerusalem. Or we can change the rules through negotiation with other travellers, and take a different route, not into, but out of, the labyrinth, evading all those dead ends on the way.

1995

155. Squatters in Rural Norfolk Have a Message ...

In retrospect, I belonged to the golden age of house-purchase. We both had regular jobs and the building societies were still non-profit-making, friendly societies with their origins in 19th-century working-class self-help. Foreclosure on mortgage debts was unknown. The societies would tumble over themselves to avoid it by reducing and extending repayments.

Market-worship has changed all that. It instigated a real-estate boom that turned every investor into a property-speculator, from the Church of England to the pension funds. Almost all the societies have joined the indecent rush to stop being friendly and become ruthless usurers.

Coupled with the deliberate casualisation of jobs in a flexible labour market, the collapse of property prices has brought misery to 300,000 households in the past five years alone. And, of course, we have auctioneers specialising in repossession jobs, knocking down the houses to the highest bidder at a fraction of the outstanding debt. Even then, some houses remain unsold and rot, at a time of acute housing distress, urban and rural.

There are, of course, possible solutions: like turning the failed home-owners into tenants, or adopting the "urban homesteading" approach favoured in the US 20 years ago, or setting up housing co-ops renting rooms to members of the young and dispossessed.

In East Anglia we have one marvellously creative solution. At Pulham St Mary, near Diss in Norfolk, there's a 20-room 16th-century manor house, a listed building, repossessed by the Leeds and Holbeck Building Society. It had been empty for years, during which thieves and vandals broke windows and ripped out five marble fireplaces, fountains, gates and lead from the roof.

Last October, six squatters, all from Norfolk, moved in as an alternative to sleeping rough, mended the leaky roof and windows, and set about making the place habitable. They were sued for repossession by the Leeds; but two of them, Paul Wessell and Matt Bevan, went to court with an Affirmation of their needs, supported by a petition from local residents and councillors arguing that the house ought to be inhabited and protected from further decay.

They succeeded and were granted a shorthold tenancy at £80 a week for six months. A building society spokesman told the *Eastern Daily Press-*. "We are currently finalising a formal agreement. It must be stressed, however, that this is a unique case ... and it

is not the normal policy of the society to allow squatters to take over empty properties that are up for sale."

Some of us argue that it should be. And that the next step for the Pulham St Mary squatters is to form themselves into a Co-operative Housing Society and consolidate their position in the village. We also remember how, when some urban local authorities shifted from using thugs to drive out squatters to a policy of acceptance, some very durable housing co-ops were formed that flourish to this day.

Economists warn that the downturn in house prices is permanent, not temporary, and this is bad news for both families and mortgage-lenders left with a mountain of debt. But with an ounce of foresight we could transform it into good news for the next generation of the homeless. The Norfolk squatters have won a toehold to a future. Shouldn't the 250,000 borrowers owing six months or more of mortgage arrears, link with others in their own areas to become squatters in their own homes ? And wouldn't the resulting housing co-ops reduce not only their own misery, but the actual financial debts of the mortgage-lenders?

Inevitable losses, resulting from the speculators' Thatcherite utopia, would be transformed into small aims: domestic security for those households that need it most, and a recovery of the tarnished reputation of the building societies, faced by the results of their improvidence.

1996

156. Colin Ward Reappraises The Titmuss Book That Gave New Meaning To the Expression "Blood Bank"

When Richard Titmuss, the insurance clerk who became our most acute analyst of social policy, produced his last book, *The Gift Relationship,* in 1970, I dismissed it as an elaborate and academic restatement of Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid,* filled with indigestible detail about the pale yellow fluid known as plasma and constituents like immunoglobulin. Happily, when I wanted to consult it recently, the county library had a copy in its reserve stock, stored, like plasma, for my needs, and I changed my view.

What set Titmuss off on his investigation must have been a 1968 publication from the Institute of Economic Affairs, *The Price of Blood,* which made an economic case against a monopoly of altruism in blood transfusion. So he embarked on a comparison of the commercial market in bought blood with the voluntary donation of blood.

He found that the dominant characteristic of the American blood-banking system was a redistribution of blood and blood products from the poor to the rich, since the sellers tended to be the unskilled, unemployed and other "low-income groups and categories of exploited people".

He found that when voluntary donors in Britain were asked about their motives, "the vividness, individuality, and diversity of their responses add life and a sense of community to the statistical generalities", but that 80 per cent of answers suggested feelings of social responsibility towards other members of society.

Titmuss concluded that on four testable, non-ethical criteria, the commercial trade in blood was bad: "In terms of economic efficiency, it is highly wasteful of blood; shortages, chronic and acute, characterise the demand and supply position and make illusory the concept of equilibrium. It is administratively inefficient and results in more bureaucratisation and much greater administrative, accounting and computer overheads. In terms of price per unit of blood to the patient (or consumer), it is a system which is five to 15 times more costly than the voluntary system in Britain. And finally, in terms of quality, commercial markets are much more likely to distribute contaminated blood."

He died in 1974 and consequently did not live to see the phenomenon that he called "the philistine resurrection of economic man in social policy." And although he was to

record that among cardiac surgery transfusions in the US, "in the commercial group the total hepatitis attack rate was 53 percent, in the voluntary group nil," neither he nor anyone else could have anticipated the Aids epidemic, and the disaster that befell haemophiliac patients, heavily dependent on blood products, as a result of the importation of contaminated commercial blood.

Not did he live to see the vast confidence trick we have witnessed since the 1970s where, as Brendan Lambon argued on the letters page (26 January), business studies and economics, as taught today, amount to "the most successful programme of political propaganda ever undertaken in the country". Economics has become simply market economics, and other concepts of social interaction are relegated to the public relations industry. ("If it's uneconomic, get the mugs to volunteer.")

Rereading Titmuss is a reminder of how rapidly the market ideology has been transferred from economic theory to social policy, with a pathetically weak dissenting voice. I'm now inclined to see his book as a parable. Blood, as the saying goes, is thicker than water, which is the fluid that holds it together. We can't survive without blood, but nor can we survive for more than a few days without water.

A century before Titmuss died, the Public Health Act required every household to have a water supply. Twenty years after his death, profitable, privatised water companies were depriving people of a water supply because of non-payment of bills.

157. Colin Ward investigates the French approach to problems that are common to both our countries

Stendhal called it the town with a mountain at the end of every street, but I wasn't in Grenoble last week for the tail end of the winter sports. Even so, it was a delicious sensation to take the bus to Chamrousse and eat in sunshine in the open air. surrounded by snow and skiers.

My mission was to learn about the network of Foyers, operated by a voluntary body, AUI, which provides housing (with individual frontdoors, mailboxes and telephones) for young people of 18 to 25. as well as job training. People stay for around six months and are then helped to find a place to rent on their own. There are four Foyers in Grenoble and seven more scattered in small towns around the Isere region We ate in one of the two training restaurants, open to the public, and, needless to say, the food was superb. Another of its many initiatives is a monthly *Le Bon Plan* for recipients of housing benefit, which in France does not yet exclude the vulnerable young.

Like the Foyer movement here, its French originators suffer from financial uncertainty, since the services they provide are labour-intensive and of an enviable quality. When I was asking about the job training aspect the director, Bernard Faure, stressed that the Foyer's first task was to help the residents to learn how to be before learning how to do. Considering the way that society has alienated its young at a vast

social cost, the emphasis was on helping them to rediscover the habit of belonging to a community.

And a series of other familiar issues were raised in provincial France. One was that of illegal immigrants. A group of Africans had taken refuge in a church and an adjoining gymnasium. hoping to win a reconsideration of their case. The church did not want to be seen as refusing them sanctuary but relied on the state to evict them, which it duly did. Humanitarian bodies protested, but the bishop expressed his indignation at the way that "certain organisations" had manipulated these foreigners. On the day I left Grenoble. 63 people were held in custody to await deportation back across the mountain frontier with Italy.

Another theme we are well acquainted with is that of gypsies or travelling people. France has its equivalent of our Caravan Sites Act of 1968. requiring local authorities to provide sites, with the cost met by central government. In Britain this obligation was removed by a clause in. of all revealingly inappropriate laws, the Criminal Justice Act In France it still exists, and Grenoble's municipal council resolved in February to open" mini-camps" in three areas around the town as alternatives to the *camps sausages* which nomadic people had set up illegally. This has brought furious protests from residents' organisations.

Yet another parallel concerns water. France, like Britain, has had its wave of privatisation, with two huge conglomerates. *Compagnie Generate des Eaux* and *Lyonnaise des Eaux*, as the beneficiaries. Back in 1994 the *Guardian* reported that "Lyonnaise subsidiaries in Grenoble and Lyon are suspected by local judges of funnelling funds to conservative parties in exchange for contract favours. No illegality has yet been proved. ' Grenoble's municipal water was privatised in 1989 and last month a coalition of opposition councillors called *Démocratie/Ecologie/Solidarité* tabled a motion calling for "the return of water services to municipal control' at the same price at which they were sold. They were outflanked when the mayor announced a deal for a mixed water economy with the town owning 51 per cent and *Lyonnaise des Eaux* 49 per cent accompanied by a retrospective reduction of water bills from 1 January last The coalition split apart over this deal. which some of them claimed as a victory.

The most interesting thing about the story is that it could happen at all. For a century the British were told that France was the most centralised country in Europe. Today this dubious honour belongs undoubtedly to Britain. Can you imagine any British city regaining a controlling interest in its water supply?

158. Colin Ward hears Julian Le Grand define welfare claimants as knights, knaves or pawns

When I was young the older generation would reprimand its juniors with the admonition, "You don't know how lucky you are.' Now I'm old, the situation is reversed. If

young people had a sense of social history, they would say, "You don't know how lucky you were." And they would be right I paid compulsory contributions to pre-war and post-war social insurance systems and never had a moment's worry about jobs, health, housing or the schooling of my children. I also assumed that my state pension would be geared to average earnings and the cost of living.

Naturally I was a critic of the system, but for other people rather than me. I wanted personal and social security to be built around the ancient human attributes of self-help and mutual aid. And I listen carefully to serious people like Frank Field, who wants to find a way of *Making Welfare Work* in a totally changed economic and social environment.

This is why I felt stimulated by the inaugural lecture by Julian Le Grand as professor of health policy at the LSE. His topic was *Knights, Knaves or Pawns? Human behaviour and social policy,* and he noted, of course, that post-war policy had been built on three assumptions. First that Keynesian management would ensure full employment; secondly, that the family would consist of a male breadwinner and a female home-maker and child-carer, but also that the social security system was in part designed to correct "underlying differences in income and wealth generated in the market" and that earnings differentials would stay unchanged or could "more likely narrow, as widespread equality of educational opportunity ensured that job skills became more widely diffused".

None of these assumptions remains true. "and, perhaps most profound of all. labour market inequality is widening dramatically'. But, as his title showed. the intriguing thing about his paper was the way he categorised the explicit or implicit beliefs, or unconscious values, of the policy-makers. So, he claimed, "a welfare state constructed on the assumption that people are predominantly self-interested-that they are knaves-would be quite different from one constructed on the assumption that people are predominantly public-spirited or altruistic—that they are what we might term *knights* rather than knaves. Similarly, if policy-makers work on the assumption that people are essentially passive or unresponsive—neither knights nor knaves, but pawns—then again the policy concerned would be quite different from one designed on the assumption that human beings respond actively to the incentive structures with which they are faced."

He develops this theme deliciously in terms of actual trends, and I need to add that he recognises the gender-specificity of his language. noting that "it is not implausible that the balance of human motivation differs significantly between the genders". But he goes on to discuss "new" forms of welfare, "some based on the assumption that people are knaves, some on the assumption that we can convert knaves into knights, and some on the assumption that we are ignorant about the mainsprings of human motivation."

In considering the future of welfare, I just want to add another category, that of partners. It was this assumption that was the motivation for all those friendly societies, building societies, coffin clubs and medical societies that nearly 200 years ago were precursors of the welfare state. Le Grand cites Enoch Powell's conclusion, very like that of Aneurin Bevan earlier, that "the unnerving discovery every Minister of Health

makes at or near the outset of his term of office is that the only subject he is ever destined to discuss with the medical profession is money".

This wasn't so when partnerships of medical societies selected their own doctors in the Welsh valleys and converted those professional knaves into partners in pursuit of individual and social health. Let's change the terms of the whole welfare debate!

159. Colin Ward concludes that government agencies are the last people to trust on environmental issues

Like anyone else, I am too far from the devious workings of government to understand the strategy of its abolition of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, the National Rivers Authority and various waste regulation authorities on 1 April. As watchdogs of the quality of land. water and air, they were amalgamated as the Environmental Agency.

What is evident is that the new superbody has been charged with the task of making recommendations that fit the current political 'realism' and applying the techniques of cost-benefit analysis to its recommendations. In other words, its £500 million budget isn't being provided to allow it to rock the boat of government, industry and commerce.

We were forewarned of this by the reception, 18 months ago, of the report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, chaired by Sir John Houghton, who told the Royal Society in February that the annual cost of shifting to a reduction of energy use and of carbon dioxide emissions in the developed countries would be 'considerably less than most of the estimates that economists have made of the damage likely to result from climate-change impacts".

This, no doubt, was his attempt to persuade us that the benefits of the shift to an environmentally viable economy would be greater than the costs of this difficult adjustment. But the government thinks otherwise.

So last year, Environment Secretary John Gummer announced that the Royal Commission's recommendations for 'large-scale schemes to clean up rivers and protect public water supplies from industrial pollution will not be implemented". The *Guardian* reporter(24 February 1995) assumed that "the government appears to have backed off from adopting legally enforceable quality standards because the secretary of state would be open to legal action if they were not met".

Similarly, on the day after the Environmental Agency came into being, the press reported that the government had ruled out the introduction of measures urged by the royal commission to reduce car use. Its response, prepared last year but delayed until next month, was sought by some departments in view of the stock market flotation of Railtrack, but resisted by others. The *Independent* explained that 'The government has turned its back on a green agenda to reduce traffic and encourage more people

to use public transport for fear of alienating motorists and the road lobby" (2 April 1995). And the *Times* on the same day brought the inside story that " Department of Trade officials have claimed the draft version would damage British industry, while Department of Environment experts believe the proposals will do little to tackle pollution. 'Sir George Young inherited the great debate from Brian Mawhinney and would have chosen to have done things differently if he had been given a free hand,' one government source said. 'You should never underestimate George's green instincts, but there is little enthusiasm for giving them free rein at this stage of the electoral cycle.'" (Times, 2 April 1996)

In other words, policy is temporised day by day (as in the beef debate) while ministers give careful hints that if they were really in control, things would be different.

This is why the unofficial pressure groups with a continual commitment (and "representing no one but themselves' as ministers always say) are a better guide to long-term issues than official spokesmen for their new creations, ranging from Railtrack to the Environmental Agency, who only tell you what they want you to know. You would do better to send a large stamped addressed envelope to Transport 2000, Walkden House. 10 Melton Street. London NW12EJ. or, if you are a provincial rail user, to Transport Research and Information Network, 6 School Lane. Berry Brow. Huddersfield HD4 7LT.

The surest defence against the enormities of government is an informed public.

160. Colin Ward encounters, not a Mad Cow, but a Blue Cow, buried at the back of a filing cabinet for 50 years

John Olday was the German son of a British sailor, born in Hamburg in 1905, who grew up in the doomed Weimar Republic and was swept first into the *Wandervogel-type* youth movements. Here, as he put it. "I walked around like a genuine member of a secret society in short trousers and a Russian blouse. I let my hair grow long and as wild as possible. My legs were bare and sun-tanned and my feet were covered with sandals. We lived two lives: the everyday 'respectable' life and our own, which was so fundamentally different.'

This was followed by participation in revolutionary movements like Spartacus and then in anti-Nazi sabotage, which he described in a pre-war bock of autobiography, *Kingdom of Rags* (Jarrolds, 1939).

He got out of Germany through his claim to British nationality, which also took him into the army. When he went absent, a friend of mine had the job of quietly dropping his awkwardly long Lee-Enfield rifle into the nearest canal.

Olday was a cartoonist in the savage German style of the Brecht-Weill period. The artists he most admired were Ernst Barlach and Kathe Kollwitz. The anarchist paper

War Commentary published his anti-war cartoons, which were issued by Freedom Press in 1943 as *The March to Death,* reprinted in 1995. He would also sing and play folksongs on the guitar.

After the war he got a job as a uniformed attendant at the National Gallery, contemplating the Durers. He then emigrated to Australia where. I was told, he ran an anarchist cabaret, before returning to booming West Germany and subsequently to London, where he died in 1977.

It was not until a few years ago when I visited fellow-grandparents in Germany that I heard again the songs Olday used to sing and play, in what I learned was the Hamburg dialect. But he has swung back into my consciousness in a very strange way.

When he was on the run he gave the text and the 47 drawings for a story for children to Marie Louise Berneri, and she sought a publisher, hoping that it would provide him with some money once he was out of detention. She had no success, although she even made a French translation.

Now his words and pictures have been found, stuck for 50 years at the back of a drawer in a filing cabinet. The book, stylishly prepared for publication by Charles Hall, has just appeared as *The Blue Cow and her Fantastic Exploits* (Freedom Press, £3.50).

An artist has a dream in which a blue cow appears, and he asks her what she would like as a birthday present. She has no idea what to choose, so he presents her with the gift of self-consciousness. 'The blue cow. rather dumbfounded, took the invisible present. Not knowing what exactly she had to do with it. she ate it.'

This results in a sequence of adventures, culminating in a great protest meeting of all the farm animals, where "the noise was terrific, until one of the cows demanded silence, and speaking in the name of all the cows, said that something ought to be done. So they all decided in favour of going on strike.'

I, of course, read this with hindsight, but it is highly unlikely that Olday and Orwell met in the period after November 1943 when *Animal Farm* was written. In any case, the reason for the resentment of the cows was merely jealousy of the blue cow's success with the big strong handsome bull.

She also yielded blue milk, which was sold only at the Blue Cow Inn. "You only had to taste it once, and you never again wanted to drink anything else."

What astonishes me is that Olday never enquired what had become of this little book. But I suppose that if you spend your life wandering, with little more than a suitcase, a guitar, a figure of the Hindu goddess Kali and a photo of the German revolutionary Max Holz, you quickly forget what you have left behind.

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Volume	Issue	Date	Contains Fringe Benefits Column	Column Title	OCR Hyper-link	Note
1	1	10 June 1988	No			No mention of Colin in first issue.
1	2	17 June 1988	No			Colin publishes a featured essay in the second issue.
1	3	24 June 1988	Yes	2. Colin Ward introduces the country column which is radically different. It's about the city, too.	(Click Here)	Colin's column begins ~page 60.
1	4	1 July 1988	Yes	3. Colin Ward: the travellers who don't whittle clothes pegs and tell fortunes.	(Click Here)	
1	5	8 July 1988	Yes	4. Colin Ward finds a group of young, unemployed people in Hull are	(Click Here)	

The Ted K Archive

Colin Ward
Fringe Benefits
17 June 1988 — 3 May 1996

1. Introduction from *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow*. <www.archive.org>
2–152 & 157–160. Half of all the 'Fringe Benefits' columns in 'The New Statesman & Society'. <www.archive.org>
153. New Town truths beyond the campaign profiles. 3 April 1992. <www.newstatesman.com>
154. Colin Ward is Amazed at Getting Out of the Labyrinth. Originally printed in *New Statesman & Society* (April 22, 1994): 30. <www.files.libcom.org>
155. Squatters in Rural Norfolk Have a Message ... Originally printed in *New Statesman & Society* (June 9, 1995): 30. <www.files.libcom.org>
156. Colin Ward Reappraises The Titmuss Book That Gave New Meaning To the Expression "Blood Bank". Originally printed in *New Statesman & Society* (8 March 1996): 35. <www.files.libcom.org>
Colin Ward's weekly column in the journal *New Statesman and Society* called *Fringe Benefits*. Many of the titles should be read as having the words 'Fringe Benefits:' before it, so 'Fringe Benefits: Back Pages', i.e. the fringe benefits of back pages.

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