

4

EDITORIAL

Great Britain! Aren't your distributions getting rather skew?

According to the Fabian Society working party report 'Income and Wealth in the 1980s' by Thomas Stalk, the government has deliberately increased inequality and has abolished the only official body which regularly monitored the consequences of its actions.

Early September head-lines feature plans to tax or freeze child-benefit, charge for dental check-ups, offer loans instead of emergency payments to social security claimants. With high rental costs, more mortgage defaulters and homeless families, higher transport costs, the prospects for the poor is very gloomy.

One could quote Churchill with a new interpretation:

'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few'

I don't think Churchill had interest payments and embezzlement in mind! Nevertheless a new Patriotic spirit is called for which recognizes the benefit to the nation of community well-being. Can we not use our statistical skills to establish that it makes no economic sense to starve the strength and morale from the greater part of our populace - that concentrating wealth in the hands of speculators, and giving official blessing to selfish profiteering is a recipe for economic destitution? Even some prominent Tory statesmen recommend a more even distribution of wealth and opportunity as the best plan for national prosperity.

In this age of irresponsibility, where public corporations are going private, what are our responsibilities? What can we do in the face of the rabble rousing press, and the entertainment geared confusions wafting forth on the air? Debate and political discussion are not fashionable, so how can our minority interest publications shift the orientation of people's awareness?

In my view the professionals at the interface, where services are delivered and the our welfare state is crumbling, are very aware of what is happening. But is there explicit communication with those dependant on these services? Does the consumer understand that his independence and 'choice' depends purely upon his ability to pay? Unfortunately the customer is not only confused and depressed but weakened by the reduction of the services and the inevitable objections may not stop the trend.

A country divided against itself is ill at ease, and morale is low for those having egalitarian views. All the more reason to press on with the dialogue. To get you started I list below some of the myths which abound. These need knocking down. Your country needs you!

By the way there are some very relevant contributions in this issue; read-on.

Janet Shapiro

London

September 1987

A few common myths.

'High salaries to top directors buys good management and planning'

'Rationalisation of the work-force with consequent redundances is efficient and desirable'

'In all circumstances open competition leads to a cheaper more efficient service'

'Local authorities, struggling to provide adequate housing, must be rate-capped and denied funds, whereas the tax-allowance subsidy paid to those buying private houses must be sustained to protect property investment'

'Cuts in public services are necessary because the country is poor and cannot afford more'

Voting Patterns in Britain: a call for further statistical analysis.

Is anyone interested in collating recent studies of voting patterns in Britain? The Newsletter has included work on the validity of pre-election polls, but things are changing fast.

I have read with interest a paper by Brian Moore: 'Some consequences of a Three-Party Split in UK General Election', ORS Vol 38 No 7 July 87. This paper uses a transition matrix approach but without verified data since pre-election polls do not include questions about 'change' in voting intentions.

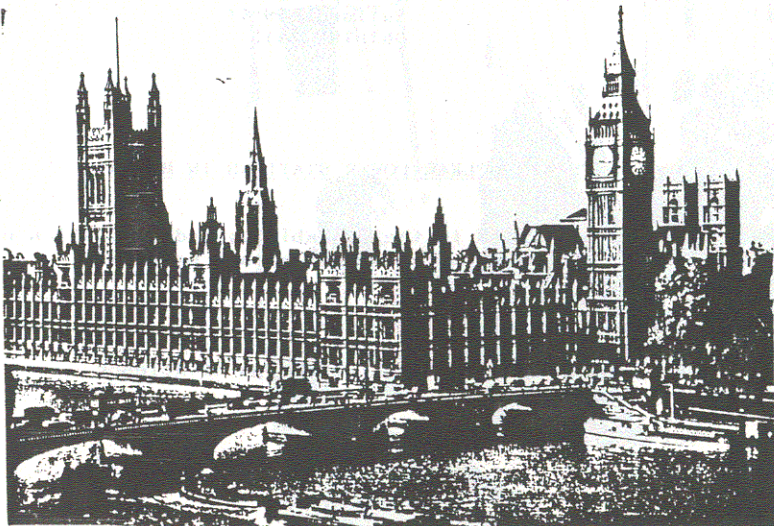
Professor Eric Hobsbawm also quoted some strange statistics in his article in the Guardian Sept. 28th 87: 'Only a little more than one third of electors with a university education voted for the Tory Party in 1987 compared with 44% in 1983.....'

Rarely more than one skilled worker in three voted Labour. Six out of ten trade-unionists refused to support the party the unions had founded, four out of five white-collar workers supported other parties and less than half the semi-skilled voted for the party of the working class. (Conversely almost half the Tory vote came from workers.) Some regional figures are also quoted leading to no easy conclusion of the North being a Labour stronghold. He also said;.... 'the position of Labour in its own heartlands is far weaker than the position of the Tories in theirs.'

The leadership of both parties seem to be aware of these trends; with the Labour Party leader addressing himself to the aspiring middle classes, and Norman Tebbit commending the 'beer-drinking' readership of The Sun on their artistic taste in female nudes.

For clarification, a good comprehensive statistical analysis is called for to assess just how far political attitudes have changed.

Janet Shapiro



Baker's Bill:-

'Opting-out'

In the Guardian Sept 22nd, children from the 'centre of excellence' Bronx High in New York report 'over-crowding', large classes, rapid staff turn-over, lack of real guidance from teachers, no social mixing of racial groups and neglect of pupils who are struggling to keep up. This is the model which Kenneth Baker has in mind for his City Technology schools. Highly selective, resting upon good parental support, efficient on funding, and with limited educational objectives, steering away from liberal educational thought which advocates the teacher's responsibility to adapt the school environment and teaching style to the pupils' needs. This is definitely 'OPTING-OUT' of the responsibility of providing comprehensive education for all. The idea is catching. Mr Neil Fletcher approved the idea of Local Authority run 'Magnet Schools' to compete with the City Techs. Press quotations and publications:

'Magnet Schools'

IEA 2 Lora North Street London SW1P 3LB '3

'Teachers sense death knell for state schooling' Guardian Sept. 21st

'The biggest parent's organisation The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations has come out against proposals intended to give them more choice' Guardian Sept 23rd

'Counties object to Baker's Bill'

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities sought to extend the formal consultation period to Dec 15th.

'Wandsworth Conservatives, with a majority of only one on the council look the most vulnerable to a determined campaign by teachers and parents of the kind that has seen off earlier attempts to break up inner London's education service.' Guardian Sept. 22nd

'Right urges more radical reforms'

'The reform of British Education' The Careidge Press, 8 Victoria Square, London SW1 £2.95 Guardian Sept 21st.
Could someone do a critical review of this paper?

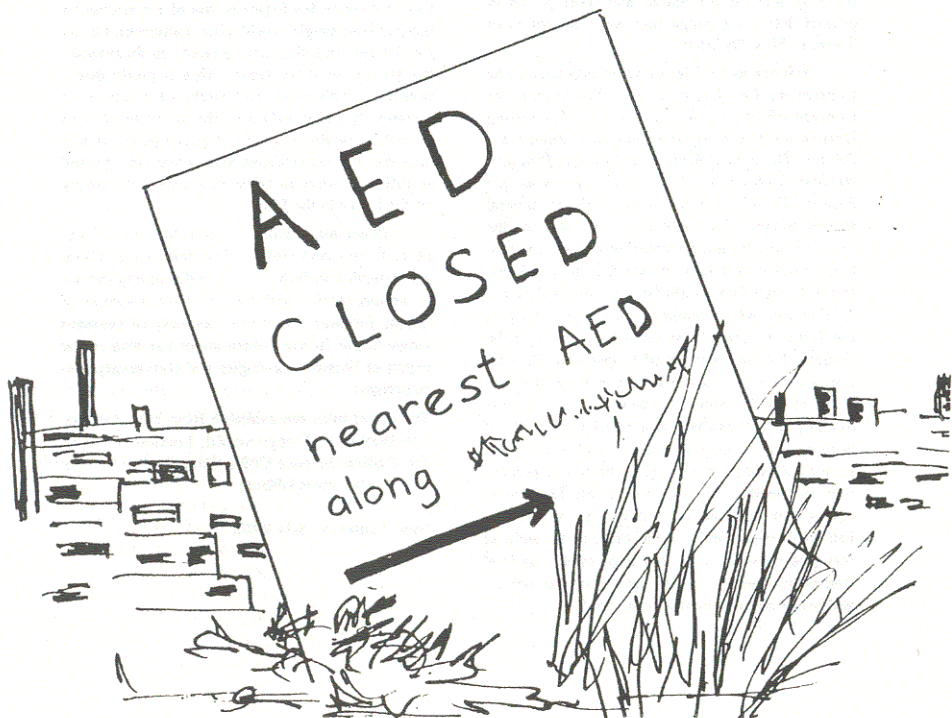
Health Service Cuts: Press quotations and publications

'Cuts will deprive 3,000 of early surgery'
'One health authority member Mr Peter Ruhemann said "Our budget has not ben increased to meet our rising population....." Guardian Sept 10th

'Hospitals axe services as funds run out' Guardian Sept 11th

'Health authority shuts accident unit amid Tory MPs' protests' Guardian Sept 19th

'£400 million boost sought for NHS'
Agenda for Health, Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, 12 Whitehall London SW1



Book Review

Science as Politics: ed L Levidow. Free Association Books 1986. ISSN 0305 0963, ISBN 0 946960 47 X.

Science as Culture (pilot issue): ed R Young. Free Association Books 1987. ISSN 0950 5431.

Formed in the mid 70s, to examine the connection between Science & Politics, the Radical Science Collective has produced a series of journals/books loosely known as the Radical Science Series. The two titles mentioned above are respectively numbers 20 and 21 in the series. They have a journal format with a collection of fairly disparate articles, essays and long book reviews with the common theme of the interconnections between politics, science and culture, taken from a radical perspective. As such they form an essential source for courses on Science & Society. However, more importantly for the rest of us, they fill a gap between the gee whizz science of the mass media, specialised articles in other profession based journals, whether radical or not, the shorter articles in Science for People (from BSSRS), and the infrequent and short pieces in general left wing magazines such as Marxism Today or New Socialist.

Science as Politics contains articles on *The Copernican Revolution: Social Foundations of Conceptualization in Science*, *Socialising Darwinism: Historiography and the Fortunes of a Phrase*, *Dialectical Biology as Political Practice*, *Nuclear Politics in Yugoslavia*, *Hazards for Export: Double Standards* as well as several shorter essays. As could be surmised from the titles, the articles are not short on intellectual content, and are of a high standard in an academic sense, though they might be a bit dry and heavy for someone whose reading didn't extend far past the *Futures* page of the Guardian. It might be thought that the subjects of Copernican Revolution and Social Darwinism have been done to death in the literature. However it remains true that any subject can be rediscussed, in the light of both new and changing cultures and in the presence of seemingly unchanging threads of perception of reality. Moore's article on Darwinism places it in the context of the upsurge of survivalism, militarism and fitness crazes, as well as reemphasizing the role that a particular societal framework had on the way the theory was written and hence on the way it was misused.

Science as Culture is addressed to a slightly larger audience. Mosco's article *Star Wars is Already Working*, indicates the economic, ideological and political effects of the ongoing SDI program in the way that EP Thompson's 1985 *Star Wars* pointed out the political and economic reasons for its initiation. He also discusses how Star Wars systems or their real spinoffs may be used against the third world, as an extension of existing US practice.

Most of us use computers, listen to the radio, watch TV (though probably a lot less than most people) - these technologies exist within a social and political framework that is not fixed. Whether people are enabled or disenfranchised by these technologies, whether they are participants or mere consumers, and whether the social content of these technologies is that of a consumerist materialistic single world-view culture or allows for richness and diversity, depends on the prevailing powers in these areas. This is partly determined by legislation, and Barbrook's article on community radio indicates the political choices available, the diversity of politics of people in this area and the possibilities and potentials, realised in different ways in other countries but existing on the fringe in the UK.

Other articles in this collection are on *Science, Poetry and Utopia*, *The Scientist as Guru*, *Sex Selection in India* - the last discussing the use of amniocentesis and the selective abortion of female foetuses as a result not only of previous views in the Indian subcontinent but also of the export of Western ideologies and commodity consumerism.

The above titles are available from Free Association Books, 26 Freegrove Rd, London N7 9RQ. The Radical Science Collective may also be contacted at the same address.

Dave Saunders, July 1987.

NATURES'S POLITICS by BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

Love and peace
 and nuclear-free,
 and life and plants
 and liberty,
 and food and shelter
 answer me,
 who made it political,
 the right to see
 the right to view,
 the way dis pen now talks to you,
 a place where children free to go
 now answer me or don't you know,
 no need to dream or think too hard
 just take a look around your backyard,
 for life is nature's miracle -
 who made it political???

Acknowledgement 'The Dread Affair',
 collected poems by Benjamin Zephaniah,
 published by Arena Books.

FIGHT DEM by BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

If you get uptight and you want to fight
 fight dem, not me.
 if you check out de scene and de tings don't right
 check dem, not me.
 I came I saw I live here and I have my tribulation to bear.
 If you get uptight and you want to fight
 fight dem, not me.
 Cause while you're fighting me
 dem will arrange apartheid.
 While you're fighting me
 dem kill the Irish one
 While you're fighting me
 dem will decorate the death of Peach.
 While you're fighting me
 dem invading in our land.

If you check history and you find a lie
 see dem, not me.
 And if you pay for the whole and but half is sold
 check dem, not me.
 I come from afar but I live here
 and all I want is an equal share.
 If you get uptight and you want to fight
 fight dem, not me.
 'Cause while you're fighting me
 dem will have time for corruption
 While you're fighting me
 dem will cook a' evil food.
 Dem are the real racists.

Look at the way they oppose immigration.
 And to do their dirty work
 they make racists out of the youth.
 if you live in the kitchen and can't afford chicken
 blame dem, not me.
 And if the tax you pay is high and you're living in the sky
 blame dem, not me.
 My upbringing resemble yours,
 a life of toil, a life of chores.
 So if you get uptight and you want to fight
 fight dem,
 you better fight dem,
 not me,
 not me.

Acknowledgement 'The Dread Affair'
 collected poems by Benjamin Zephaniah,
 published by Arena Books.