

Another Standard

Community, Art, Culture and Politics

50p



**The Wide World
of Community Art
Australia**

USA • Kenya • Wales

El Salvador • Russia

Ed Berman Interview

Spring 83

AS

**Another
Standard**
Community, Art, Culture and Politics

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SATURDAY MORNING

COMMUNITY -WHAT IS IT?

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

INTERNATIONAL AND ETHNIC
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SATURDAY EVENING

SOCIAL WITH TOM ROBINSON

SUNDAY MORNING

COMMUNITY ARTS -RADICAL
MOVEMENT OR INTEGRATED
CAREER STRUCTURE-A NEW
FORCE OF REACTION?

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL
ACTION -PLANNING FOR THE
FUTURE

BOOKINGS:

Details from: Friends & Allies, c/o Rene Rice, Chat's
Palace, 42 Brookesby's Walk, Chatsworth Road,
London E9.

The Wide World of Community Art

There are many ways in which a movement, large or small, can be criticised, and the community arts movement has suffered its share of criticisms in the ten or twelve years in which it has existed in this country.

Initially these criticisms took the form of 'is it art?' and then subsequently 'is it worthwhile art?' These arguments were not very difficult to refute. The first evaporated as soon as you opened an Arts Council report and saw what else they were funding. If *all of those* were in the arena, then we most assuredly were. The second was really only a slightly more sophisticated variant on the first, at least in the way it was used against us, and rapidly succumbed to a barely more sophisticated version of the same retort.

Subsequently most of the criticism took the form of finger-pointing at individual projects. 'You can't call *that* art!' Sometimes these were right and sometimes they were wrong, but it didn't really matter. Whoever was voicing criticism in this way was accepting, explicitly or implicitly, the basic premises upon which we were basing our work. In effect, they had already been convinced.

There has, however, been a kind of doubt thrown on the work from time to time which has been much harder to refute, since it concerns itself with the basic premises of community arts. It has not, perhaps fortunately, been pursued with much vigour or interest by the funding bodies, but instead has tended to be used against us by those who ought to be our friends and allies.

This doubt, simply put, is that community art as a strategy has more to do with the problems facing the practitioners than any real need in the people with whom we work. The argument says that community art is a response by artists and would-be artists to a blockage in their career structure; that the profession has got overcrowded and that community arts represents an ingenious attempt to open another branch by some of those who have been crowded out.

Joan Munroe hinted at such an analysis in the last issue when, talking about her experience of community video, she said, 'I wonder, do people really want to be film-makers, and simply didn't have the technology before?'

This issue, in a somewhat roundabout way, seeks to refute that analysis. If it really were the case that community art was a response by frustrated professionals to a lack of professional opportunity, we could expect a number of things to follow.

Firstly, community art would be a temporary and localised phenomenon. The branch would exist only until more opportunities were made available at head office, and while it existed it would have no effect, and be of no interest, to those already at work in head office.

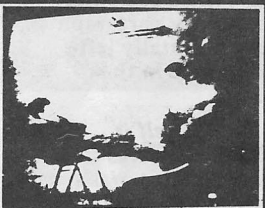
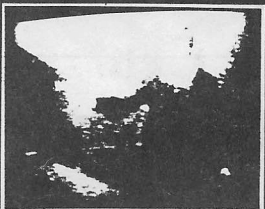
Secondly, its ideas and theories would be rationalisations to justify funded makework rather than real reasons which could be built upon and developed. Moreover, as rationalisations they would have little or no real application, and certainly no possibility of generalised application.

This issue refutes this by looking at a variety of community arts developments around the world, projects which work in many different cultures and yet are linked by the same theoretical premises. In America, where the pattern of funding and the expectations of the career artist are both very different, there has nonetheless been a broadly similar growth of community arts work, dedicated to the collective production of work which relates to a specific, known community. In Kenya, where the cultural antecedents, the political situation and the economy are most assuredly different, there has nonetheless been a movement towards a similar work.

The articles in this issue offer evidence, although not proof, that the ideas behind community arts are far from parochial and much more than temporary. Community art is a response to the conditions under which people, in many parts of the world, currently find themselves living. It is part of a much wider struggle to change those conditions.

Another
Standard
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Spring 83



Write to:

Another Standard,
3/4 Oval Mansions,
Kennington Oval,
London SE11.

Dear Another Standard,

Being a collector of coffee table books and fond of pre-packaged political opinion, I read your review of Jill Posener's book and decided to add it to my collection.

As with most collectors of coffee table literature, I got somebody else to buy it for me, on your recommendation.

Imagine my disappointment in receiving this dull collection of badly presented snaps.

I went to art school in the sixties and would recommend Ed Rusha's '26 Gas Stations' or the Tupperware catalogue, (providing you have a Mari Wilson LP to put next to it) as a more worthwhile addition to anyone's coffee table.

Spray it loud, had Miss P. spent more time on the photographs and presentation and less on the "Paw" puns, she might have come up with something.

The introduction states that Miss P. managed 'The Mistakes' up until 1982. I think she's still managing them.

Raoul Collins.
Edinburgh.

Jill Posener did, in fact, ring us up to express her 'disappointment' with this particular review, and was going to write something to that effect for this issue – although, I imagine, to make a rather different point to yours.

We're still waiting.....

Dear Editor,

In response to your article on the demise of ADA (Chorley) in the last issue of Another Standard, while I appreciate the understandable concern expressed when a regional arts association ceases to fund a revenue project, it would be useful

to consult the relevant RAA before publishing the reasons for the cessation of that funding which were somewhat inaccurate in this case.

North West Arts expressed its reservations to ADA (Chorley) nine months before it closed, which related to definition of policy, planning of projects, the output and quality of arts work.

In spite of this, a substantial increase was allocated to the project for 1982/3 to cover two full-time salaries, to facilitate the project's future effectiveness.

At that stage, both workers and Management Committee members conveyed enthusiasm, commitment and a willingness to confront the acknowledged difficulties the project was experiencing.

However, subsequent deliberations within ADA produced no consensus; Management Committee members resigned (leaving one member acting as treasurer) and both workers resigned.

There was in fact no project to fund. North West Arts felt it would be more appropriate to research the needs of other areas of the North West region rather than attempt to resuscitate the community arts project in Chorley, where there was minimal interest from the community after a lengthy five year period.

Yours sincerely,
Liz Mayne.

Community Arts Officer.
North West Arts.
Manchester.

P.S. I think Another Standard is an informative and stimulating publication, which I promote enthusiastically!

Dear Another Standard,

I am writing concerning the article in your winter 1982 issue, entitled *Art, Pleasure and Politics*.

I must say that it took me a considerable time to read it, mainly because the language used was so impenetrable. In fact it wasn't until I had had the magazine for some time, and had read everything else that I finally steel-ed myself to start it.

When I did read it (and I had to read it more than a couple of times before I was confident that I understood what the authors were saying) I found myself in agree-

ment with almost all of it.

I cannot believe however that I am the only reader who likes your magazine because it is written in plain English, yet still manages to discuss progressive cultural issues in a lively and informed way.

Please do not abandon this policy and degenerate into obscure jargon. We can find that elsewhere.

Carl Roberts,
Manchester.

We agree with you about using plain English, but we disagree about your example. There will always be some ideas which require complicated language to express them precisely, and whose importance justifies it. This was one of those.

Dear Editors,

I started subscribing to Another Standard several issues ago.

I particularly like the new format – both in terms of the range of material you are trying to cover and the overall design.

I would also just like to say that I have been specially impressed by the breadth of analysis contained in the articles and interviews written by Dermott Killip.

Sadly, these have not appeared for a while. Could you tell me whether he writes for any other publications or whether he has written any books?

Keep up the good work.

Miranda Coombes.
Bents Green.
Sheffield.

Search us, lady. He left at Christmas.

Dear Another Standard,

Just to say, interesting article on the Docklands Community Poster Group, specially for someone like myself who lives in an equally problematic dockland area.

We could really do with a similar sort of project up here on Merseyside.

The difference here, of course, is that the only big money moving into the

community will only be appreciated by those of us with a horticultural bent – by which I refer to the hanging gardens of Toxteth.

Yours faithfully,
Leroy Gordon.
Liverpool 8.

We agree. The more that can be done to counter this Edgar Rice Burroughs approach to the inner cities, the better.

Please keep your letters as brief as possible. For reasons of space those letters marked with an asterisk have been edited.

Apology

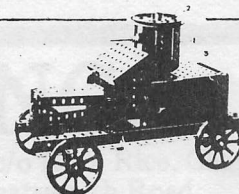
Firstly, the credits and introductory paragraph were accidentally left off an article in the last issue.

The Truth itself is Revolutionary was written by Alan Washington and Freddie Nelson, who are members of the Addisham House Tenants Association in Hackney, East London.

The introductory paragraph should have made it clear that the visit to Grenada was an educational/arts project designed to enable a number of people to experience first hand the roots of their culture.

Secondly, the report on the Harrogate Conference billed in the last issue has changed/developed into a full-scale interview with Ed Ber-man. As a result the details of what the other speakers said will remain their secret.

To make space for the interview the report on Owen Kelly's talk at the Shelton Trust AGM has been postponed for a rainier day.



THE STATE OF THE ART



Community Art and Education

The most recent Arts Council Education Bulletin contains a supplement on community arts and education, which looks, albeit briefly, at the range of work taking place in this area; but acknowledging that much of this work operates, for the most part, outside the formal education system and often challenges its structures, although many community arts groups have established strong working relationships with schools, colleges and the youth and adult education services.

The photograph above illustrates some of the work done by the Arts and Technology Laboratory, who are a working community of artists, scientists, designers and research technicians concerned with the creative use of technology.

All That Jazz

The Arts Council is instigating an experimental Jazz in Education scheme this year in partnership with the Regional Arts Associations and the Musician's Union with advice and support from the British Association for Jazz Education.

The broad aims of the scheme are to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of jazz; to increase the accessibility of jazz to the public and to stimulate a deeper awareness of the contribution of jazz to music education.

A small number of pilot projects will take place over three years involving musicians, composers, teachers and amateurs, working collaboratively in pursuit of these aims.

The projects will be funded jointly by the Arts Council, the Musicians' Union, the relevant RAA and the local authority.

It is expected that the scheme will be of most interest to education bodies but education is defined broadly to cover, for example, youth clubs and arts centres, as well as schools, colleges and adult and continuing education.

In the first year, the Regional Arts Association Music Officers will be approaching a small number of local authorities and/or host organisations, since funds are limited.

However, it is hoped that the number of projects will increase in the second and third years and that, if the scheme is successful, the RAAs will take over full responsibility after that period. Since the projects will be exploratory, they will be carefully monitored.

The Art of the Orient

Oriental Arts is a Bradford-based group, formed in January 1976 with the specific purpose of promoting racial harmony and understanding through the use of music, dance and drama.

The group aims to reach people who, in the main, do not have access to the arts, often for reasons of cultural and social deprivation.

The work divides into two main areas: regular workshops and live performances of Asian Arts.

Local artists, together with artists from all over the country, have participated in the events.

Workshops in Asian music and dance have been arranged at Bradford College, Bradford University and in local schools.

A youth club has also been set up in the Bradford 7 area.

For more information about their work, contact: *Champak Kumar, Oriental Arts, 9 Southbrook Terrace, Bradford BD7 1AD Tel: 0274 22772.*

Arts for Labour

ARTS FOR LABOUR may be moving away from its "Stars for Labour" image, and beginning to contribute to the formulation of a socialist arts policy for use by the Labour Party.

It is planning a conference in the early summer to work on such a policy.

At its AGM last month, Felicity Harvest (from the Rio in Hackney) was elected onto its committee, and she would be interested in talking to other people about the contribution community artists can make to this process.

There may be an opportunity here to pick up where the old ACA Parliamentary Lobby left off.

Membership of Arts for Labour is open to all arts workers who broadly support Labour Party policy (you do not have to be a party member) — details are available from the Labour Party at 150 Walworth Road, London SE17.

Felicity Harvest can be contacted at The Rio, 107 Kingsland High Street, London E8. Tel: 01 249 2722.

Meanwhile, in the Labour Market...

A curious memo circulated within the MSC has come our way. It reads as follows:

"Projects which concentrate primarily on activities such as theatre, dance or mural painting may not be able to provide work experience and training which will be relevant to future employment.

With effect from the date of this memo therefore, District Offices should no longer approve or renew schemes in the Community Arts field which do not provide relevant work experience and training.

Schemes which offer an element of Community Arts

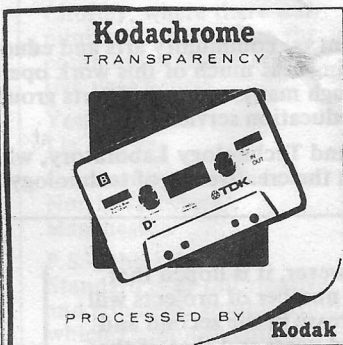
as part of a wider programme may continue to be approved provided that the majority of the programme can be related to the requirements of the industrial, commercial and service sectors.

District Managers should consider the following points and ensure that:

1. The project provides suitable vacancies for long-term unemployed people.
2. The project provides significant community benefit, and that consideration is given to the relative permanence of such benefit. It will therefore be necessary to submit scheme applications to the area boards for approval.
3. The work opportunities on a project will provide opportunities to improve the transferable experience and skills of participants in order to improve their competitive position in the labour market".

It can only beg the question, 'what does this all mean and what should be done?'.

Tape/Slide Conference



A two day conference, organised by the Shelton Trust, on making better use of tape/slide is/was being held on March 25th and 26th in Manchester.

The event is aimed at both tape/slide users and those interested in learning more about the medium.

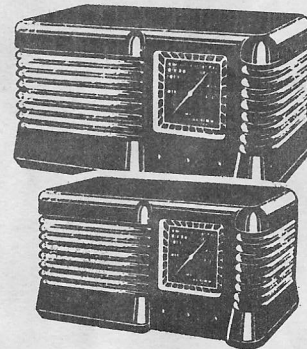
As well as discussing different aspects of tape/slide work there will be screenings of sequences.

Amongst those contributing to the conference are Blackfriars Photography Project, Free Form, the Film Workshop Trust and Inter-change.

We hope to be reporting on this event in greater detail in a future issue of *Another Standard*.

Radio One

A conference for people active in community radio initiatives and who are working towards radio stations controlled by the listeners, is being organised by Commonsound — the sound workshop based in Sheffield.



The conference is being held on April 8th, 9th and 10th and will include workshops on the 'pirates', women's radio, ethnic minorities, cable radio, community radio abroad, music policy and youth broadcasting.

There will also be more strategy-based sessions, discussing the different approaches within the community radio movement, outlining transmitter alternatives and which ways the Home Office could move, changing the IBA/BBC as well as the future for cable television.

Further details/booking forms etc. can be obtained from: Commonsound, 87 The Wicker, Sheffield S3. Tel: 0742 22991/738572.

Radio Two

The fifth issue of *Relay* — "the other magazine about the airwaves" — will be published in April.

This issue will include articles about free radio in France, Third World radio, Black radio, women's radio, Radio Basildon, Scottish Community Radio Desk, the Feminist Film Group and pirates and cable in North America (whew!).

To subscribe, write to: Relay, Box 12, 2a St. Paul's Road, London N1.

Thinking Aloud

with
T.P. Harcourt

As a solicitor who spends an unwisely large portion of each week at a law advice session in a neighbourhood advice centre, I get many strange queries, not least of which come from your friends and mine on the professional left.

It's odd in some ways that things which would have amazed me five years ago hardly even cause my surprise muscles to tingle nowadays. This no doubt is in some way due to hanging round with a bad crowd — community workers, in my case.

There are some people I know who would think nothing of spending £500 on a feasibility study for a community weatherman, but would be happy to spend endless amounts of time (theirs and mostly mine) trying to weasel their way out of a parking ticket.

Not that the advice sessions are entirely taken up with this kind of middle-class frippery. It's just that it is sometimes difficult to fit in the cases of harassment, wrongful arrest etc, due to the endless stream of trivia which streams out of the radical bureaucratic 'mind'.

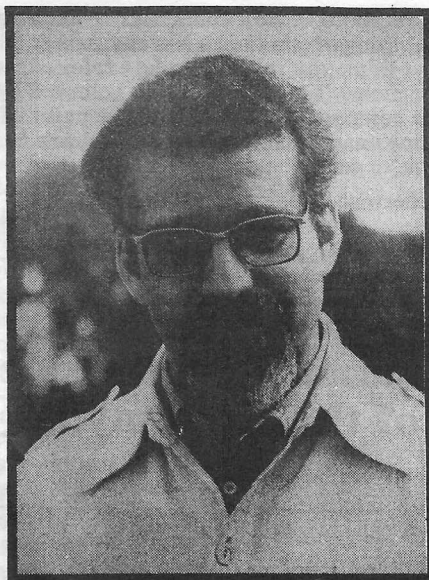
Shouldn't the sessions be prioritised, I hear you ask? Yes they should, and so they would be if it wasn't for the fact that the very people who clog up the sessions also clog up the centre management committee.

They of course have strong views about this sort of thing. In fact you can more or less guarantee that they will have strong views about this sort of thing regardless of what this sort of thing turns out to be.

Coffee supplies for the centre, a matter for some ideological consideration. Parking fines, a symbol of an incompetent local state running riot. A frightened youth wrongfully arrested, get to the end of the queue.

Still they mean well, and they are, after all, only talking to each other.

Local youth and old people have begun to form an uneasy alliance at a nearby club, and they are going to start advice sessions there.



ED BERMAN

Ed Berman is the founder member of InterAction, a national arts and social enterprise company based in Camden, London.

Recently he made a speech at the 1982 Arts and Management Conference at Harrogate, where he referred to his current short-term appointment to the DoE as an inner-city adviser, a post created by the (now) Minister of Defence, Michael Heseltine.

Rod Brookes, projects coordinator with the national community arts company Free Form, and an adviser to the GLC on community arts, was also at the conference and interviewed Ed Berman shortly afterwards.

At Harrogate you said that 'art is an upper-class cultural imperialist trick'. Was that a throwaway provocation to an audience of arts and leisure managers, or is there a political analysis behind the statement?

I don't know how *political* the analysis is, but it wasn't throwaway. There's some thought behind it.

It seems quite clear to me that the reason we give money to opera and not to, say, tiddlywinks or model airplane-making is that a small group of people who have, over the decades, been able to persuade, or trick, an even smaller number of people who have their hands on the levers, that an eighteenth century Italian folk art is somehow normal or normative of twentieth century British society.

That smaller group of people, through a host of agencies or governmental processes, have then also managed to persuade, or trick, the whole of the rest of society into believing that this folk art form is normal for our society and deserving of subsidy, whereas it really is not.

All sorts of things, various crafts, get grant aid because they have a very articulate lobby for them. Whereas other crafts, often done by a much broader swathe of the population, don't get any grant aid at all, because the people involved are not articulate. They're not plugged into the various machinery in society that pulls a lever.

There's no great movement in funding bodies for, say, the carving of model airplanes from blocks of balsa wood, yet other kinds of woodcarving have highly articulate lobbies, even though the practice is tiny in comparison.

As

INTERVIEW

It strikes me that the purpose of public investment in the arts should not be to reinforce a small sector of the population's interest in a particular thing, when that small group can probably afford it in the first place. They are welcome to their thing: I wouldn't want to see it stopped. It just doesn't seem logical to fund it within a democratic framework. It's public money that's being used and it just doesn't make sense.

So the word *imperialist* here isn't to do with the international actions of certain countries historically, but rather the power of a certain group of people who are promoting their own narrow interests which, because they take up the lion's share of the money, repress everything else.

If these things were in a language everybody understood maybe it would be different. I mean, even the Church changed the Latin service to the language of the countries it's used in, but that took a couple of thousand years. I don't think we have time to wait that long.

It's a con-trick because the people who *could* express their viewpoints to resolve the disparity aren't allowed in. It's not even a thing you can vote on unless you're asked to come in and vote. That isn't going to happen unless you're previously known by the small group in charge, and so it goes on.

I can't even begin to tell you how appalling I think it is: the amount of money I see going on things that simply don't bear any relationship to any significant number of people, or to any significant experiment.

Over the last five years, hundreds of thousands, millions, of jobs have been lost from industry, and yet the world of arts, crafts and leisure hasn't been hit anywhere like so badly. It survives extremely well in comparison. What's your analysis of that?

It's proof of what I've just said: that the lobby, the power structure, have managed against all reason to keep a disproportionate amount of money locked into that field.

It's not as simple as that, I know. Some jobs in society have gone which may have needed to have gone anyway; not just here but in any country.

However, if you have power, and a particular interest in something, there's always a natural tendency to conservatism with a small c, *reactionaryism* if you like. If nobody else is articulate enough to show that there are other things happening, or get their hands on the levers, then the disparity just grows.

Yet even the so-called radical arts groups have survived relatively well. Why?

They're part of the same group. They know how to pull the levers; they're part of the machine. The levers may be on the other side, the left side, but it's the same machine and they've learnt how to play it.

It's not the only machine around though, as we've known here for some time. There are job development machines, management training machines, education disparity improvement machines and so on; all of which seemed a lot more important to us than, say, experimental theatre.

That's where conservatism shows up on both sides. If you're good at experimental theatre there's going to be a tendency to carry on doing it, even when the world around you is changing out of recognition.

You also said at Harrogate, presumably as a response to Roy Shaw.....

Who's Roy Shaw? You mean *Sir* Roy Shaw?

You said that 'we don't need an arts lobby, we need a leisure and occupation lobby'. What makes you think that established concepts like leisure and occupation are any less of an imperialist trick than the arts lobby?

Well, if you took occupation of people's time in general as your base-line, and divided up the cake accordingly, starting with what people wanted to do, you'd find percentage improvements in each sector.

The way it is now in the arts (and the usual figures show that something like 5% of the population is involved in that area), you wouldn't think that there would be more money being spent on it than on sports.

Yet we have one quango dealing with sports, the Sports Council, and compared to the quango dealing with arts, the Arts Council, sports gets about a quarter of the money that arts gets.

That surprises me. I would have thought it should be the other way round: that the Sports Council, with roughly four times the number of participants and observers, would by any kind of democratic standard have at least four times the money.

Of course changing that is heresy to those people who love the arts; but I find it rather sad that people make demands on other people's money to give themselves status.

...I've met a lot of nice people who have never heard of Harold Pinter...

There are 50 football teams in Kentish Town that don't get a lot of money, but one theatre company which gets a helluva lot. I find that kind of comparison in public funding appalling.

The sources of funding are often of great, sometimes obsessive, interest to those in the community arts field. It may be an old chestnut, but do you have any moral or political scruples about the source of backing for arts programmes – or is all money dirty wherever it comes from?

That's slanted. You could also ask: is all money clean wherever it comes from, or neutral wherever it comes from.

Unless there's a direct string attached, or some direct abuse of your receiving the money then it doesn't seem to me to matter where the money comes from.

That's my personal opinion, but I work for an organisation where opinion gets into discussion, and where people have votes which form policy.

Sometimes questions have come up here at InterAction about whether we should take money from Barclay's Bank, for example, or a business which is directly concerned with South Africa, and I've probably sided with the group against that, but how far do you take it?

You can always trace money back to an unacceptable point: you know, it came from a bank someplace which invested it overnight somewhere you wouldn't approve of if you

knew about it. So I come back to the original thing of whether it has any strings. If you think you're going to be exploited, or the money's going to become coloured by the company's promotion to the point of being unacceptable, then turn it down. You've got to be damned careful.

Otherwise, money's pretty neutral.

...the arts are a barnacle on the side of the economy....

Your short-term appointment to the DoE made some waves within the community arts movement. Some were delighted that community arts activity had sufficiently broad credence to be taken seriously; others thought your acceptance was a sell-out to a thoroughly reactionary government, anxious only to buy you off. What's your response to these different views?

Well, I can't comment on any of it because the question is so slanted and narrow.

I'll rephrase it...

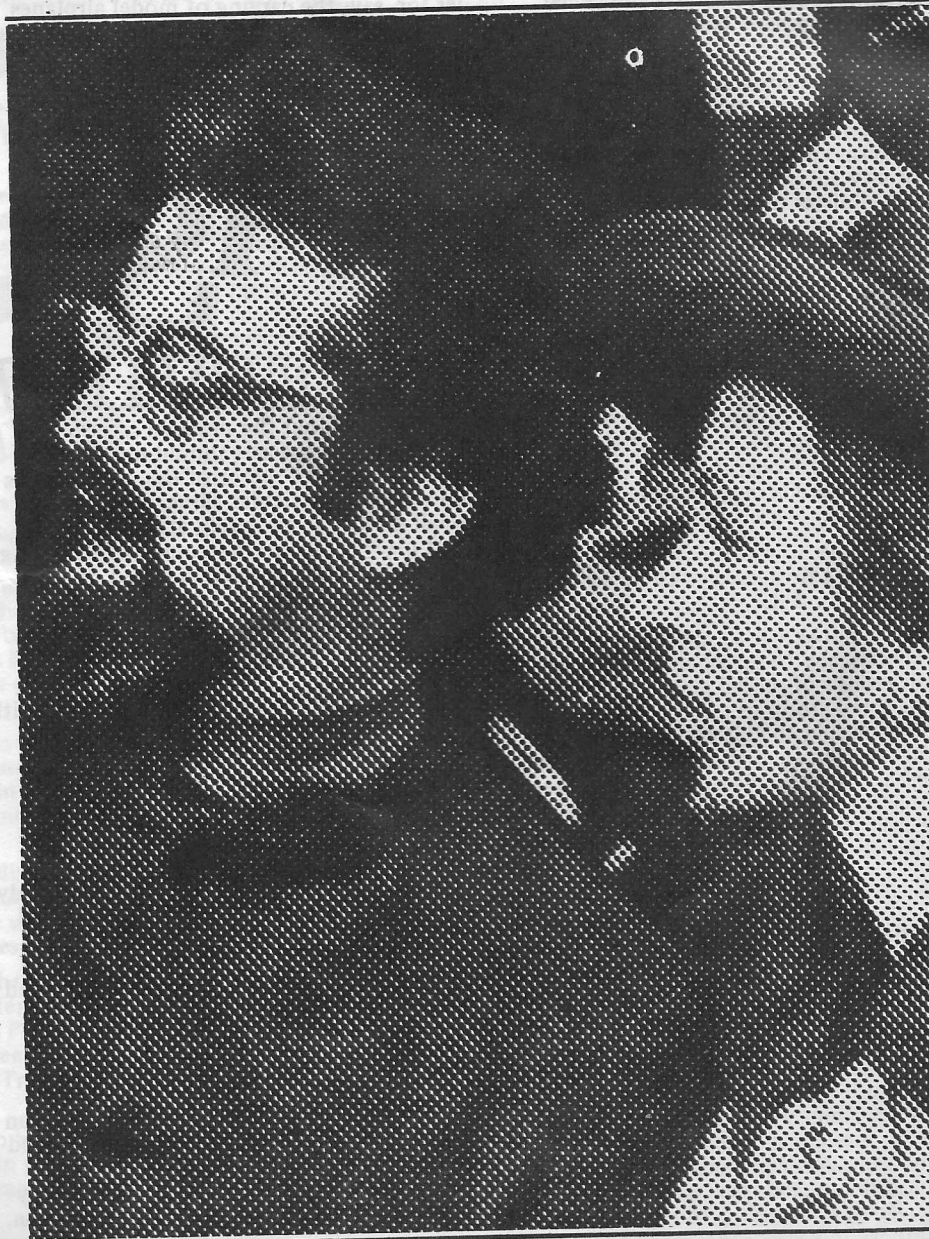
Let me help. There are two questions here: one, what I'm doing there and what do I think I'm accomplishing; and two, do I feel it's a political appointment. Let's take the second one first.

I'm not a spokesman for the Government, or for the Secretary of State. I'm not even a spokesman for the voluntary sector. The job that I was offered was to be an *advocate* for the voluntary sector from the inside, both to the Civil Service and Ministers, and also to advise people on the outside, to make better connections to get things done.

I was also asked to look at policy, programmes and their implementation to see if the money could be better spent. That seemed a reasonable framework and that's what I'm going to stick with. I'm not a spokesman for the policies of this government and that has also been made absolutely clear to me in writing.

Now for the other part of the question. I still seems slanted.....I don't think my credentials were from the community arts movement.

I've only been tangentially involved in this since the early seventies. InterAction has moved in different directions, the economic and social developments of neighbourhoods. Some of the instruments useful for that work are the arts, some are media, others



are cooperative businesses, training techniques of different kinds. It's those broader skills which InterAction have developed that, I think, impressed the people that offered me the job.

As for what I'm accomplishing, I hope it's a great deal. I'm working 20 hours a day, 7 days a week, because it's a rare opportunity to have a go at doing something within this framework. I mean, I don't have my hands on any levers of any kinds, but I'm in a position of giving advice which is quite unusual, not just inside, but to try to ensure that the people on the ground who are helping other people in an effective way are the ones who get the money.

I'm looking at ways in which more money can be generated for them, and ways of their generating more money themselves, if they can understand how to do it, which the voluntary sector is not good at.

Voluntary groups keep looking to the government (local and central) alone for money, instead of looking around them: if they could just shift their perspectives one or two degrees they could empower themselves a great deal more.

... I am not a spokesperson for the government...

Much of the voluntary sector is stuck in a way of looking at itself in relation to local authorities which is really unhealthy. When you consider that its being called upon nationally to carry some 10% of MSC places and about 10% of the Urban Programme money it's really frustrating to know that currently many groups don't have the capacity to absorb all that money and do a first-class job with it, and our critics will say, 'there you are, the voluntary sector really is amateur, and only volunteers'.

There's a whole growth area in the voluntary sector on the threshold of being able to deal with very substantial sums of money and diverse programmes. I'm going beyond the traditional understanding of voluntary sector here. There are voluntary organisations with many high quality professionals involved in 'not for profit' businesses, limited by guarantee, sometimes registered as charities, doing masses of directly community oriented work, like housing associations.

But unless we can understand that change, and stop local councils saying 'but they're supposed to be voluntary organisations and they're wanting money for staff, that's crazy', we're stuck.

That's part of what I'm trying to do, change attitudes on both sides. This growth area is more than volunteers, it's more than charity work, it's a whole junior partner of the private sector. It's not commercial but it is the junior partner of the private sector—the partner with the public brief.

Something else you said at Harrogate was that 'the arts are a barnacle on the side of the economy'. What did you mean by that?

Looking forwards, as I was then, I was saying that for us to survive and grow we had to recognise that creativity is much more fundamental than the arts. It's a core thing that is pushed out socially through any medium conceivable, any format, anything from business to art to teaching. Anything can be done creatively; most things are done unimaginatively.

I saw what was happening. People starved of funding went in with pressure and got those little committees set up (the central ones are now dismantled, they've been regionalised) and it wasn't a lot of money. The field is too small and it will never grow under its present co-option or title to be large enough to allow for the great wave of creative differences to come out — its just not at take-off level in economic terms.

Well, there's nothing wrong with barnacles for a while — you scrape them off and start again and repaint the ship.

I just think we've got an awful lot of entrenched things from the past that are getting too large a share of the cake. Some of those crustaceans put forward the weirdest arguments like 'you can't live without theatre and the arts'. I mean, come on, how often do you hear that, that society would be nothing without them?

What they mean is that they have a desperate, passionate hunger to do it, or be part of it, and that's fair enough. But I've also met a lot of really nice people who have never heard of Harold Pinter or Tom Stoppard, never heard of Picasso, let alone seen any of their work, who raise sensitive, caring children with imagination.

I think there are values other than imagination put through art forms if you're into the spiritual salvation of the human race. If I thought that I could prevent an explosion at a nuclear power plant by showing the guy in charge a million Picasso paintings, I'd do it. But somehow I'm not persuaded by it.

No, its people clinging to the ship, taking up disproportionate space, and slowing down change, who are annoying. Look at Covent Garden: I don't dislike it particularly, I've been there. It's a very flash gaff spending a lot of money on people who seem to be able to clothe themselves pretty well, and keep themselves swelteringly warm with fur coats inside a very warm building. Why should they vote themselves such a large share of public money?

...I'm in a position of giving advice which is unusual...

I think they're victims of the con as well; some of them are also perpetrators of it. But then that's where I get a little upset....

In the early seventies the community arts movement adopted a very clear political lobbying line with the ACGB and RAAS to set up specialist community arts panels and officers. You took a different path, saying that specialist panels would ghettoise community arts, letting other panels off the hook. Looking back, did the community arts movement make a strategic error?

....People say 'I can't act, I can't sing, I'm not creative' which is a bunch of horseshit...

Therefore, I convinced my colleagues here at the time to diversify, reaffirming our basic underlying philosophy of a structural approach to creativity and its application across the board, opening up creativity so that people can do it in whatever field.

That way it was also going to be difficult for us to be wiped out, and if the ACGB grant was taken away — which I recall happened once — it would only affect 10% to 25% of our budget, which was in fact the case.

But some would say that the specialist community arts panels are now taking other panels along with them. In GLAA, for instance, where the Drama Panel, the Music Panel and the Film & Video Panel are now adopting very clear community arts criteria.

I don't think that's what's happening, though I admit you can describe it that way. I think they're probably adopting ethnic minority strategies or more democratic strategies, but with a definition of community arts overlaid. It's not much more than that.

creativity is a basic capacity that everyone is born

Would it be fair to say then that community artists have wrongly thought of creativity as being solely the preserve of the arts?

Oh, yes. It's absolutely fundamental to me that anybody who thinks that is an elitist snob.

Creativity is a basic capacity that everyone is born with. It's the ability to recombine perceptions and put them back out again, through skills, in a way which is different from simply mirroring what we took in. Interpreting and creatively using words, images and movement have no more to do with the arts than they have to do with business, sport, teaching, whatever.

There is a collusion here — it goes right back to what we started with: cultural imperialism. People in the arts fields themselves say that creativity equals the arts, and therefore persuade others that this is the case.

So when people say 'I can't act, I'm not creative, I can't sing, I'm not creative' — which is a bunch of horseshit — you can see how totally repressive the accepted concept of creativity can be, and see the role that the artist has played in perpetuating that repression.

I find it sad that we use the word *arts* or the phrase *community arts* to get a leg up in the thing we love, and end up being destructive. We ought to know better, and act more fairly.

Don Coutts is a producer/director with RPM Productions Ltd., Rock People Movies (or Revolution Per Minute!), an independent company with six directors, all paid the same, and other free-lance workers.

All of its money and equipment come from Channel 4. Some of the directors had worked together previously in the BBC's Community Programme's Unit and were invited by Mike Bolland (also ex-BBC CPU), a commissioning editor for Channel 4, to submit some programme ideas. Thus 'Whatever You Want', an access programme for young people was born.

The programme has not been without controversy, with two programmes being withdrawn and its presenter, Keith Allen, of Alternative Cabaret fame, resigning.

Therefore, as this first series nears its end and Channel 4 reached its hundredth day, it seemed a good opportunity to talk to Don Coutts.

What is RPM's relationship to Channel 4?

Awkward! We've not been as upfront as we should have been and perhaps backed off where we need not have done. One of the reasons we have our massive contract is because we're capable, and we were the only company to suggest some form of participation in making programmes with the public, and that became a criterion for them to give money; which, because it is limited, makes them play safe with so-called known quantities.

All of our programmes are shown to Mike Bolland who either passes them or, as with the case of our banned Trades Union programme, takes them on further.

ITV has never had any kind of access before and the IBA's charter states that no production company is allowed to state publicly its own politics, which is, of course, completely fatuous. Ultimately, as I'm sure you are familiar with, 'he who pays the piper, calls the tune'.

How is the success measured?

Channel 4 measures success via viewing figures, and in their terms ours are appalling, 100-200,000. Channel 4 is struggling with a McCarthyite press and it's as if, in the face of the witchhunt, the original access aspect of C4's broadcasting brief has completely changed.

.... I find TV very divisive because the audience essentially is passive.....

I don't think 'Whatever You Want' has met its brief. In some ways I think we've failed because we've not achieved a wider audience for alternative opinions.

We are very short staffed and simply don't have the organisational back-up. It's taking more energy to keep the thing on the air than to make the programme; because you know that that air time on Monday evening has to be filled, you concentrate on all the physical problems and your initial reason for doing it becomes diluted.

Because we've had to make 16 programmes in as many weeks, we've tended to work with more articulate people and all the mechanics of 'going out' weekly mean that we simply don't have enough time to talk and work through the content.

Not Many Revolutions Per Minute

Karen Merkel talks to Don Coutts

I think we've had some success with our Rock presentations. It's an uneasy carrot to have in a young people's access show. When we did all our initial research, the young people that we met told us over and over again not to intersperse all the content with rock music, implying that they can only concentrate for two minutes at a time! This meant that we've developed quite a concentrated music slot in each show, which I think we direct quite well.

It's also given us a chance to help open up the Ace in Brixton with 16 fairly amazing gigs. We were adamant we weren't going to use a commercial venue and the Ace is an interesting place that we've been able to support.

It's not been without problems though; we were caught in the cleft stick of wanting



Beki Bondage from the Vice Squad: on tv for the first time on Whatever You Want.

really good gigs and wanting to use unknown bands too.

Other successes? We have batches of fantastic letters and have had to construct quite a back-up service of booklets and pamphlets on all the subjects we've covered. It's obviously encouraging to hear all these people who wouldn't normally be reached positively.

What do you think about Cable TV?

If Visionhire and people like that have their way, there won't be any access to Cable. It seems to me that there will be more of the same but just paid for in a different way.

I find the whole costs of TV obscene. I can't come to terms with the amounts of money we spend. Each programme costs £30,000 and £12-13,000 of that goes on video alone.

The thought of fifty channels appalls me. I find TV very divisive because the audience essentially is passive — with cinema you have an active relationship, i.e. you pay for what you want to see. The problem with that tends to be that cinema preaches to the converted.

However, I want to make political programmes in a non-political circuit. The only reason I work is for political reasons, but I haven't cracked how to make the content educative and entertaining, and I don't mean like Jasper Carrot telling political jokes on a chat show.

I've worked on TV in Belfast. TV works much better on a local basis because the audience is more easily defined and the programme can be responsive.

I'd love to work in a community set-up. I think community video has tended to be pretty amateurish in its production and therefore not very effective. I'd like to see it produce more work that is more viewable which might mean more professional set-ups.

Making TV programmes is not a particularly skilled job. I used to be an editor, but that's a skill anyone can learn. Beyond that all I do is 'get on with people. I think ideally that we should all take time off and work in the media — like people work on the sugar harvest in Cuba!

.... I find the whole costs of TV obscene..

I'm very disillusioned with TV now. Basically, however they're made, I don't think subtle programmes work. Which subtle programme can you remember? We remember programmes like 'Cathy Come Home' and the problem with RPM is that at the moment Channel 4's initial fervour and enthusiasm is fast becoming paranoia and the institutional thing takes over and we spend most of our time battling for our lives instead of concentrating on making good programmes.

As I said, our problem is the same as a lot of community projects — 'he who pays the piper, calls the tune'

Karen Merkel is a member of Free Form's performing team. She is also the London director of the Shelton Trust.

THE WELSH CONNECTION

Phil Cope discusses the history of community arts in Wales, its present state and its potential for the future.

The archetypal, golden-voiced, brass band-loving, Eisteddfod-attending Welshman is as inaccurate an analysis of our national interests as the haggis-eating, caber-tossing Scot. Welsh people are as uninterested in and alienated by what has been offered for the past few hundred years by the arts as their counterparts in the rest of Britain.

The intellectualisation of art, which gained ground rapidly with the forced move from country to town during the Industrial Revolution and which firmly established the gulf between artist and consumer of art, has been as evident in Wales as in the rest of the Western world.

But, now, as this industrial infrastructure collapses, with the high levels of unemployment and the social ills that go with it, there has been, over the past three years or so, a new attack — albeit from a tiny task force — on the division which alienates working people from participating in arts activities, and with it a parallel attack on fortress funding.

But the story of Community Art activities in Wales really began in the early seventies.



really apparent until 1980, and only became nationally evident at the first Welsh Community Arts Conference, held at St Donats Arts Centre in March 1982.

Over seventy people attended the conference, representing projects from all parts of Wales. Because most of these groups were meeting for the first time there was, as you would expect, little agreement to be found about what we should be doing, with whom and why — every shade of Community Arts opinion seemed to be presented: from facepainting to community activity, from those dedicated to inflatables to those dedicated to bringing the Tories down.

Although 'more balls were thrown into the air than caught' (Mike McCarthy),

Above and left: Activities led by the Vale of Glamorgan Community Arts team. The photo above shows The Burial, a street event in November 1982. The photo on the left is of Barry. Below: Activities organised by Bethesda Community Arts.

weekend was, I believe, of value in bringing together most of the Community Artists then working in Wales to share their experiences and problems, and in laying the foundations for future, regular exchanges of ideas about the way forward for Community Arts in Wales.

This last point was, in retrospect, probably the single most important achievement of the conference, given the isolated nature of most Community Arts groups and individuals in Wales.

As a result, soon after the conference, Wales Association for Community Arts (WACA) was set up.

Four meetings later we have a steadily growing membership, a publication on Community Arts in Wales supported by North Wales Arts, West Wales Arts and the Shelton Trust in hand, and a series of one day mini-conferences planned.

New projects are springing up throughout Wales every month, some on MSC, some with grants from the Regional Arts Associations, some independently.

West Wales Arts Association are experimenting with the idea of community arts councils — groups of local individuals who receive funds to initiate arts activities in their own area; North Wales Arts Association and South East Wales Arts Association both fund two full-time community artists in their areas.

County, town and borough councils are being steadily introduced to the value of community arts work in their areas, particularly where high levels of unemployment exist or where youth provision is low.

All this sounds very positive and so it is. But have we been here before? Similar excitement was felt about the growth of this kind of work in Wales in the early seventies.

with the establishment of Transitions Trust (on the lines of Inter Action and Interplay) in Cardiff.

Their early work led to a number of exciting initiatives being developed in the capital city, including the establishment in 1974 of Cardiff Street TV (which has survived as Chapter Community Video Workshop and which was the forerunner of the four principle video projects now in operation in Wales).

This new work was inevitably accompanied by new requests for funds to the Welsh Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations, who at that time had no stated policy for Community Arts.

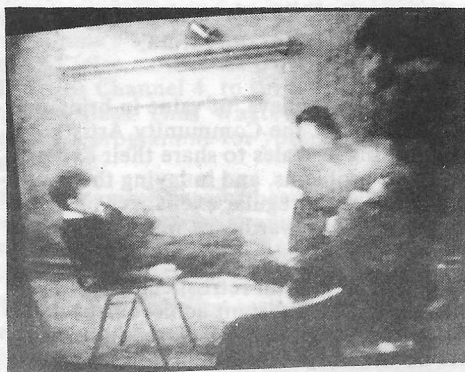
Requests for a Community Arts committee to be set up and/or a Community Arts officer were lost in the arguments about who was to be financially responsible for the work, and as a result the momentum was lost and the work dwindled into a six year period of hibernation.

Its re-emergence throughout Wales was not



WELSH CONNECTION 2

Ten years later we still have no coherent policy for the development of Community Arts from the major arts funders. The Welsh Arts Council – equivalent in British terms



to the English Regional Arts Associations who began having Community Arts responsibilities devolved to them in 1978 – have themselves passed on this responsibility to the three Welsh Regional Arts Associations in the belief that the smaller the association the better the judgements about Community Arts effectiveness would be.

This was probably a wise move given the geographical and cultural differences within the principality, but unfortunately, the funds that are allocated by the Welsh Arts Council to the three Regional Arts Associations are insufficient to begin to match the growth of this new work.

South East Arts Association, for instance, which serves a population of approximately one and a half million people, received a mere £160,000 this year in total grant aid from the Welsh Arts Council for all its work – supporting its four Theatre In Education revenue clients, touring performances, as well as community arts.

This amount is less than similar-sized English regional arts associations' community arts budgets alone.

Similar discussions to those had in the early seventies are happening now between the regional arts associations and the Welsh Arts Council.

It is hoped that, given the new national perspective to the movement in Wales, and the much greater degree of interest now being generated, that these discussions will result in a more realistic funding policy for community arts, and the development of more easily understandable lines of communication between artists, communities and funders.

Above: VoGCA video project with the mentally handicapped.

Below: the Resources Centre, Cymmer.

At a time when the public accountability of state spending is high on most people's agendas, this second opportunity for, in particular, the Welsh Arts Council to direct



more than their traditional crumbs from the funding table to community arts should be most attractive.

Without such a commitment, art in Wales will remain the province of a cultured few, making contact with no more than the legendary 5% who presently benefit from the total state spending on the arts.

Without such a commitment, the new possibilities of art playing a significant and active part in the lives of 'ordinary' people in Wales will be lost.

Phil Cope works for Vale of Glamorgan Community Arts in South Wales.





Community Arts & Third World Solidarity Struggles

What attracts many people to international solidarity work is the cultural (folkloric) tradition as much as the politics. A lot of energy goes into bringing the products of these traditions into London, using them to raise funds, or morale, to make a point, or even to indulge a taste for something new and different.

While this may be a good thing, it's a pity that such activity often develops in opposition to our own traditions. This is partly because of the cultural and political absorption of people in solidarity campaigns

But I would like to argue that community artists need to look closely at the issues involved and move beyond simple servicing of campaigns to a real involvement with them.

The issues are difficult. What, after all, do the struggles of a people in El Salvador have to do with the struggles most commonly associated with our notions of community? And why, when we have so far to go in creating our own art, do we have to take on someone else's?

The issues came to a head for those of us in the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign who decided, about six months ago, to paint a mural.

We knew already that a mural is qualitatively and politically different from sticking up posters or distributing badges, t-shirts and post-cards. To begin with, a mural has to go somewhere, and once there it has a life for which its creators are responsible. It lives publicly in somebody's neighbourhood.

It was obvious very quickly that the last thing we could do was to take a 'slice of life' from the struggles in El Salvador and thrust it under the noses of a people with their own problems and local fights.

To go ahead with the mural and not do this became, therefore, the first major challenge.

The group which began the discussion of the mural was very mixed. It included a few enthusiastic English campaign members, some Latin American members, a number of people not closely associated with the campaign who were interested in political murals and a group of Chilean muralists who had already developed their working methods along lines established in the revolutionary traditions of their own culture.

It was here that conflict raised the project into a protracted discussion of methodology and approach. We found ourselves polarising the different working methods of Latin American collectivists and English 'humanist' socialists.

**.... working with their
community of interest
as well as with specific
geographical
communities...**

The Latin American group rightly challenged our 'bourgeois' notion, as they saw it, of narrative and visual unity, preferring to put together a series of images which were not necessarily coherent and then judge the best in terms of skill and power.

We, on the other hand, would not admit that we wanted something that was good by the standards of Western fine art, and

argued that a mural in Deptford (where there was a possible wall) had to be coherent for the people living there.

For us, that meant the narrative tradition. The mural had to tell a story using powerful images which would attract, disturb and inform.

The group is still sorting out many of the issues. Hopefully, a yoking without compromise will be possible. Such projects are needed, at the very least, because each method, each tradition can inform and affect the other to produce something with a different aesthetic to reflect its politics.

It would be useful if members of solidarity campaigns made working with their community of interest, as well as with specific geographical communities, a central part of their work.

The mural for El Salvador is one way of doing this, involving strong artistic commitment from different people and positions. But there are other ways of going about it.

One project which is still in the planning stages involves locating the various parts of London where Latin American expatriates and exiles live, and working with them on small, but continuing schemes which involve bi-lingual and multi-cultural work — for example, translating poetry and short fiction, or creating it in two languages.

This can be done not only with poetry but with music and song as well, and can involve not only Latin Americans but Londoners. It can operate on a one-to-one basis, and/or workshops that develop as suspicion and resistance break down.

Such projects have the virtue of pursuing the central political goals that I associate with community arts, and of bringing gradually into play an internationalism which displaces the parochialism that sometimes encloses a community inside itself.

This article was written by Peter Bradbury, who is the Community Arts Assistant at GLAA. It was written in a personal capacity

From Russia With Love

In December of last year members of the 7:84 theatre company toured the Soviet Union, playing one-night stands in three centres, Moscow, Tbilisi and Leningrad. Gordon Parsons accompanied them and describes here their performances and the state of live theatre in Russia today.

Theatre is by far the most socially responsive of the arts — rivalled perhaps only by football! It mirrors and reacts to the economic, social and political climate with an immediacy which makes very understandable Establishment unease or, often, downright opposition to the living theatre, whether expressed in the warm, claustrophobic embrace of the bureaucracy as in the socialist societies or in the financial starvation, media trivialisation and, occasionally, the blimpish blatherings of the Teddy Taylors of capitalism.

One of a number of fascinating reminders of the dangerous chemistry of the live theatre came to me while watching a brilliant performance of Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* at Moscow's Taganka Theatre.

This adaptation of a truly amazing novel had a line of dialogue, 'without documents you do not exist'. This provoked a round of applause from the audience. Yes, I know this might be part of the 'theatre as safety valve' theory but there must be positive value in such a moment of shared political awareness.



..... there were possibilities of peeling at least one or two layers from the onion

The Taganka visit was one of a dozen theatre trips made while accompanying John McGrath and the Scottish arm of his 7:84 (7% of the people own 84% of the wealth) Theatre Company on a brief tour of the Soviet Union in December last year. The group played one-night stands in three centres, Moscow, Tbilisi and Leningrad.

Despite the remarkable popular and critical success of their recent Clydebuilt Season (don't miss *Men Should Weep* when it reaches London), the company had been forced to go dark until the next Arts Council hand-out. There was no way of taking a full production so McGrath and a small group of 7:84 artists from past and present put together a show comprising excerpts from the company's successes over the past decade.

As might be expected from 7:84, there was a strong musical element in this collage of dramatic cartoonery, music hall and contemporary popular entertainment designed, as McGrath pointed out in his introductions to the Soviet performances, to make a theatre which spoke to working people about their lives in a meaningful and essentially entertaining manner, unlike the British bourgeois theatre which for educat-

ional, social and economic reasons was largely inaccessible and irrelevant to their experiences in a capitalist society.

Audience responses are always difficult to read, especially foreign audiences. Added difficulty arose from the innate politeness of Soviet audiences. Having made a similar tour the previous year, however, with a very different show, Brighton Theatre Company's *Brothers Karamazov*, I did sense some confusion, deeper perhaps than that related to language difficulties.

The Moscow performance in Friendship House, home of the Soviet-British Friendship Society, played before a packed, largely invited audience of students, theatre workers and VIPs, was bedevilled by problems — a broken accordion, the apparent impossibility of obtaining an amplifier for the electric guitar, little or no stage time for rehearsal and sore throats all round. Even 7:84, with their vast experience of gigs in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, almost broke under the strain of communications.

I was able to discuss the performance with a Russian friend I had made on the previous trip. He expressed both an awareness of the rougher technical edges and an apparent excitement at the unexpected vitality not of the group, who were not understandably very vital in Moscow, but of the material.

The criticism of technique was to be expected. Soviet theatre training is devastatingly thorough on technique. On a visit to the Lunacharsky Theatre Institute we were shown performances by final (fifth!) year students of pastiche Offenbach and a truncated version of *Oklahoma*. What was notable was the meticulous concern for detail.

These were students in training on the Musical Comedy and Operetta Course. This categorisation of training appears to be comprehensive in the Soviet Union. The idea of a broad training fitting an actor for theatre of all kinds as well as film and TV work was inimical to the emphasis on technical expertise.

Incidentally, they even train critics which may amuse until one remembers the dilettante ignorance of the technical aspects of the field displayed by the majority of Western theatre critics.

.... the most beautiful music in nature is the sound of the people acting together

The two thousand mile journey to Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, left behind most of the bureaucratic inflexibilities of Moscow and replaced them with a zest for life and an almost disconcerting willingness to improvise — a salutary reminder that Moscow is not the Soviet Union.

Some indication of this unnerving flexibility came when a group of us dashed off to Tbilisi's popular Youth Theatre one evening having been informed by the management on the previous day that a performance of *The Good Soldier Schweyk* would be taking place.

We found a dark theatre and were told that an extra rehearsal of a new play which had been having difficulties had replaced the published programme but that we were welcome to sit in. The director even considered performing *Schweyk* after all for the seven of us until he realised that the leading actor had left the theatre. We were never able to discover how potential audiences were formed of these vagaries of performance.

7:84 performed twice in Tbilisi. Firstly a modified show to drama students of the city's Theatre Institute and then a full performance to a public audience in the Cinema Actors Theatre. It was explained that, to avoid the restricting compartmentalisation, the cinema actors — Tbilisi is the Hollywood of the Soviet Union — had established their own live theatre.

The warmth and generosity of Georgia was reflected in the exuberance of 7:84's performances. Audiences responded with more open enthusiasm and involvement. A particular highspot was the long, lyrical and moving speech about Finn McCool, the legendary Celtic hero, from McGrath's show *Boom*, proclaiming the most beautiful music in nature to be the sound of the people acting together.

Liz MacLennan had prepared the speech in Russian for the Soviet audiences, but realising that the Georgians would not appreciate this 'tour de force', in a number of senses, she had learned the speech overnight in Georgian, despite all the linguistic complexities.

After the public show, the company and their friends were feted in true Georgian style, resulting in an almost surrealistic exploit when, deposited in a very merry condition outside the theatre at midnight and finding no Intourist coach, an empty, late-night Tbilisi trolley bus was commandeered to take us all back to our hotel far off the drivers route.

It is another indicator of the close relationship between theatre and society that one of the most creatively inventive theatre companies in the world, the Rustaveli Company, are Georgian.

Interestingly Georgian flexibility does not rule out standards of technical excellence quite the equal of the Russians. A performance of a modern folk farce, *The Swines of Bakhula*, about a Georgian peasant's hilariously demented struggle to rid himself of his neighbour's pigs, was performed with the pace, timing and visual wit of a team of Chaplins.

Arising from the 7:84 visit there are plans to bring the Cinema Actors Company and this production to Britain if officialdom on both sides does not intervene.

Leningrad was much the most sophisticated of the three cities we visited. The audience response to the 7:84 show, again staged in Friendship House, reflected a high proportion of English speakers.

On this occasion the company peaked with perhaps the one performance of the tour with which they were satisfied. They even evoked a solid communal response to Dick Gaughan's rasping rendition of the 'Internationale', which, I learned in Moscow, is no longer widely known despite its earlier role as the hymn of the Soviets.

Theatre is as popular in Leningrad as it is throughout the Soviet Union, with capacity audiences attending performances at the city's seventeen theatres at the most surprising times, including Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Differences in the composition of audiences was notable. In Leningrad I was able to visit a variety theatre where the audience was largely made up of family parties and older people. The programme was of exactly the kind found in the 1950s in Britain's dying palaces of variety — a series of turns from comedians and singers, interspersed with teams of high-kicking girls and circus acts.

.... a zest for life and an almost disconcerting willingness to improvise

The major difference was once again in technical expertise. The singers were obviously opera trained, not needing the microphone to which they nevertheless clung, and the circus acts, as one might expect were superb.

The fairly savage battle for coats at the cloakroom after the show contrasted starkly with the sedate world of Leningrad's Kirov Theatre where we saw the Kirov Opera perform *Boris Godunov* two nights later. Here a much more sophisticated audience differed from Covent Garden audiences, I felt, only in their higher level of informed response and obvious enjoyment.

On enquiring about the apparent 'class' differences between variety theatre and opera audiences, I discovered, as I had suspected, that tickets for the former were easier to come by and were cheaper — the

indicate that, as George Steiner has recently argued, censorship can perversely have positive artistic force in making the arts fight back, whereas the blanket acceptance and disregard of the 'free world' produces little stimulation.

Still there is a problem with the 'safeness' of much, perhaps most, Soviet theatre and it is a problem the theatre hierarchy are conscious of.

At a meeting with critics and theatre administrators in Leningrad, it was explained, in answer to McGrath's question whether there was a Soviet theatre policy encouraging plays to be written about contemporary problems, that there was considerable concern over the dearth of good, new plays. Soviet theatre was increasingly staging adaptations of novels, letters and documents.

'Second-hand playwriting is spoiling our theatre'. To counter this a playwrights' workshop had been established in Leningrad, gathering together professional and amateur dramatists to discuss the merits and weaknesses of their work.

There is also a new journal of 'Contemporary Playwriting'. Both these moves, however, could so easily become victims of the official, bureaucratic complacency especially as they appear to have been spawned from the top.

Compared with the Soviet problems of inflexibility, however, the British theatre faces virtual extinction if we see the dawning of the new Victorian age so close to Thatcherite hearts.

It would be presumptuous nonsense to pre-



equivalent of £1 rather than £2.50 (for the best seats in the Kirov).

There is little doubt that Soviet theatre reflects many of the contradictions within Soviet society. Bureaucratically organised, it operates within self-perpetuating limitations, more restricting, I am sure, than any official censorship.

The very fact that such a devastatingly satirical attack on society as the Bulgakov work could run for years in Moscow suggests that the latter is not the major problem.

The fact too that Polish theatre has led the post-war world in theatrical creativity would

tend that two fortnight visits to the Soviet Union in a period of fifteen months could give more than a fascinating glimpse of the nature of that vast society through the focussing lens of its theatre.

I do believe though that in engaging with that society not through the normal package, sightseeing tour but through its live theatre and the workers who keep it alive there were possibilities of peeling at least one or two layers from the onion.

Gordon Parsons is the theatre reviewer for the *Morning Star*.

VOICE OF america

Last summer Andrew Duncan, from Free Form, spent some time in America, where he made contact with a number of American community artists.

He met Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, the coordinators of NAPNOC, the neighbourhood arts projects national organising committee, and they agreed that it would be interesting and useful to maintain a regular contact between community artists in Britain and America.

NAPNOC, which is in many ways the equivalent of the ACA in Britain, has suggested possible exchange visits, and has begun to look around for ways of funding this.

Andrew Duncan subsequently attended the NAPNOC conference last October in Omaha, and it is hoped that some American community artists will be able to attend the ACA conference in Salisbury.

In the meantime we are presenting you with a much edited version of a report of the Omaha conference, which was originally published in a longer form in NAPNOC's journal *Cultural Democracy*.

The report takes the form of quotations from the discussions at the conference, and is useful, we believe, because it shows some of the similarities and some of the differences between community arts work in Britain and America.

Community artists from Atlanta to Seattle, New York to California, converged on Omaha for NAPNOC's 6th Annual Conference and Meeting. Cohosted by the University of Nebraska Department of Dramatic Arts (and with support from the Nebraska Arts Council), this year's meeting on October 15th-17th offered an interesting and inspirational exchange of ideas about the state and direction of the movement for cultural democracy — and everybody had a good time!

The keynote session was entitled *Practising Cultural Democracy: Cultural Work as Organising*. Most of the major themes of the conference were introduced during this hour and a half, and once raised they came up again and again throughout the conference.

The main question was of relationships. What is the artist's relationship to a community? To the world community? How is it affected by the necessity for financial support? By the level of organisation within the community? What about the forms we use? Our language and its sometimes staggering impact? And just what is it that artwork can be expected to accomplish anyway?

Arlene Goldbard opened the session by saying that 'many of us have to fight over and over the notion that we are farm clubs for the big arts institutions, that we are 'emerging artists', that we are in the cocoon stage.

Based on the experience of many in this room we either have to say that we have spent the longest time in our cocoons of any any butterflies in history, or that perhaps there's nothing to 'emerge' into that's more satisfying than the kind of community work that the people here are doing now'.

John Pitman Weber, of the Chicago Mural Group, pointed out that much of the impact of community arts work depends on the relationship between artists and community members.

...what is the artist's relationship to a community? to a world community....

'Speaking from a public arts perspective, I think that the fact that a portion of our audience participates in the designing and execution of our work, and a slightly larger proportion participates in making the thing happen, is crucial to whatever effect that we have.

The young people who actually do the stuff with us go through a personal transformation through this creation, and that changes them — very often profoundly.

So the meaning to the larger community audience of what we're doing depends on the extent to which we're able to create an identification between this larger audience and who's doing it, so they don't see it as 'those outside agitators doing this to us or for us poor slob who are unable to create beautiful things for ourselves', but rather as 'we're doing it'.

That they are identifying the people who are doing it as being themselves, as being their folks, means that regardless of the specific theme or issue, the fundamental symbolic message is that change is possible and people in that community can be active agents in changing their own world. That painted wall, or sculpture, or whatever proves it.'

In response to a question about whether was content with a symbolic relationship to a community, John continued, 'what the dividing line is, is pretty unclear, because you're always dealing with a small percentage of the people in the audience.

Take a neighbourhood with a few thousand people, and the participants, when they're physically doing the project or supporting it, might only be anywhere from 200 or so.

The question is really how effective a verbal and organisational and personal conveyor belts that spread the experience, the feeling of it, from those people who are directly involved to the larger group. There is a whole lot of different things that can affect this. Certainly in the last few years we have been able to rely less on the presence of the grass-roots activists to serve a part of that conveyor belt....very often because they're not there.

Lee Hawkins, from Cherry Creek Theatre in Saint Peter, MN, suggested that the relationship between the artist and community is always symbolic.

'Work that's produced in the community can be a symbol of the people in that community if they are given the tools and skills to carry on that work independently. Or, if nothing happens, if that relationship doesn't develop, then I think that it is a symbol of something else, which is that the relationship wasn't successful.

The relationship of the artists and the communities they serve is either one of dependence or liberation. If we're working with a community of people and trying to get them to take on work that they can participate in and begin creating themselves, then it's a liberating experience in a fundamental sense. But I think if they become dependent upon artists as specialists, the one who is always going to have to take the lead in creating something, then it's a relationship of dependence.'

The way in which at least one theatre has its relationship to its audience and community was explained by Phyllis Jane Johnson of At The Foot Of The Mountain in Minneapolis.

One of the hallmarks of our company's work is some commitment to always deal with the concept (and I think that's very related to the women's movement) that the personal is political.

When we did a play on prostitution, we insisted on not seeing those women on the street as different from us. We realised: how is prostitution a phenomenon of our culture, and what does it have to do with our personal lives?

We just did a piece called Junkie on addiction and recovery. We wanted very much in that piece to focus in not on the documentary, down-in-the-gutter horrors of dependency, but also on the process of recovery – what that could mean and where we could move.

If the source of addiction is some kind of spiritual despair, how can we take courage to risk exposing that so that our audience will also confront that spiritual despair? And how can we show direction in where to go next?"

Mike Mosher, a muralist from San Francisco, suggested that artists can deceive themselves into inauthentic relationships.

'Too often we have the capacity to be able to do the paperwork, or do whatever needs to be done, to perhaps even fool ourselves into that symbolic relationship....'

I had an experience, which really made me think about these things, of getting a mural painted over. I realised that many of the people in the tenants' organisation who had signed letters and petitions saying that they wanted this mural were also the ones who, when the movers and shakers in the organisation said 'we don't want this anymore' signed the petitions to have them painted over.

Now they weren't the ones who signed the petition to say 'don't paint it over', who were considered a sort of rag-tag bunch; out of work people who had helped us erect scaffolding and so on, and weren't really in the so-called positions of power in the tenants' organisation.

That made us muralists question the procedure that initiated these murals. Was it just coming from the Art Commission having some money to throw around? And all these questions exposed the the power behind artwork getting to the people on anything. I mean, maybe the main difference between community arts – the movement – and the rest of the art world is not accepting institutionalised power as it is handed to us. Most artists try for this museum, this or that, rather than taking a chance that might fail but makes you realise that you have to trace back to find where these things come from.'

John O'Neal said that for New Orleans Free Southern Theatre these questions were most successfully resolved at the height of the civil rights movement of the '60s.

Our overall objective in FST was to support and reinforce the aims of the black liberation struggle, which we see as a struggle of oppressed people to put an end to their oppression and help build a new society.

So the most valid times (the times when we have done best at reaching towards that objective) is when we were part of a broad social movement, the broad movement that in fact created us and made it possible for us to exist. And I would even go so far as to say made it possible for what is generally called 'alternative arts' to exist.

The social movements initiated by the mass of the people in the '60s (prominent among them the black movement, but also including the efforts towards peace, toward ecology, the womens movement and so forth), all these mass movements that sort of spontaneously occurred as an expression of the people's desire to be shed of the oppressive limits that they found in their experience.

When those movements were on the high tide we had vast audiences all over the place because all we had to do was call on the movement office in such-and-such a place and say 'hey, we've got a play, we're coming'. They'd say 'great!' If they didn't like the play they'd come back to us with concrete things.

That's where our money came from, in spite of the fact that most of the money we spent came from foundations and government sources. But they didn't give us money because we were so good and so bright and so talented and skillful and all that – although we of course were. They gave us that money because the people demanded that these institutions be responsive to



their interests.

Yet I don't think we resolve the kind of questions on the floor here in the long term without recognising a relationship of the artist on a vital social movement, because we don't exist in a void.

The link, it seems to me, has to be some kind of organised political link between self-conscious artists working in some community, and the structures that exist in that community for it to make decisions about what it's going to do.'

Arlene Goldbard suggested that interdependency might be a better word.

'We're in the midst of something right now: the movement against nuclear proliferation. I've paid a lot of attention to it in the last year or so, focussing on this theme of a cultural worker relating to an organised movement, because so many of the groups in NAPNOC have been doing work against nuclear weapons.

Given the stage of development of that movement in the US now, all of the anti-nuclear proliferation work that's done now is basically consciousness-raising. So although the methods of making a television programme or writing a book or making a poster or a play are different, the function of the work doesn't differ much.

There's nothing in the movement to say that it's more effective to write a book than to put on a play, for example. Which makes the interdependency of artists and organisers really clear and might have something to teach other movements.'

John Pitman Weber added something.

'I think we need to reinvent format. If we look at the total cultural situation it's very different from the way it was 15 years ago. That means different kinds of institutions, their structures, where our audience comes from, how they actually got into the hall or got onto the street corner for the celebration at the end of the mural or whatever.

It's different than it was. If we're going to be effective we need to reinvent the whole theory, and not simply continue doing what we've been doing.'

Phyllis Jane Rose spoke about the importance of language in this context.

We are a radical feminist theatre. Lately, we have taken the words 'radical' and 'feminist' off the public label because they're such jargon words, and if people don't want to support you they use them against you.

It became a controversy that wasn't worth the maintenance of those words. It was often easy for people to use them as dividing words, creating division among women, and we've always been very committed to working for the health and support of all women, so it seemed real important not to create divisions that had nothing to do with us.'

We're in the midst of something right now the movement against nuclear proliferation....

John O'Neal raised the question of which values the progressive artist taps into.

'It seems to me that we have to recognise that there is indeed a great deal of oppression in society and exploitation, and that some people benefit from it and some are victims of it.

I don't think that you are going to get the people who are benefitting and the people who are victims to agree about what should be done about it. So how you go about answering the question of how you get plugged in depends on who you're plugging into and how you see your interest in regards to them.'

Martha Boesing, from At The Foot Of The Mountain, expanded on this argument.

'For me the question that is really important is the question of exactly who is our community, and when are we going to take responsibility for identifying that?

I think as artists we do serve a community; if we don't we might as well quit. To me the vital question is how can we become part of world culture? How do we move out of serving some specific little community that we in our work are able to connect into, and make that a more vital world community?

I don't know the answers, but to me those are the questions that people have got to explore and fight through together.'

NAPNOC

BUGA IT



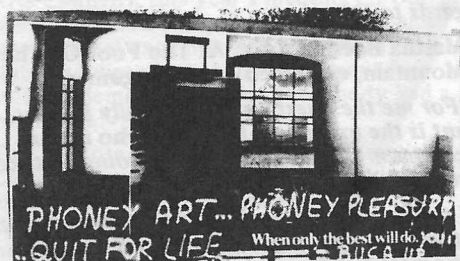
BUGA UP is an alliance of radical graffiti-ists, based in Sydney, Australia. They describe themselves as 'not a group but a movement' whose main targets are 'unhealthy promotions', writes Hania Janiurek.

A lot of paint has sprayed from the can since the inception of **BUGA UP** (Billboard Utilising Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions) in October 1979.

Since then the number of graffitiists actively involved in **BUGA UP** has grown from three, working in the inner city of Sydney, to about a hundred, working in five of the six states of Australia.

People from 8 to 71 are now active in **BUGA UP**. These include entire families, and people from over thirty different work areas.

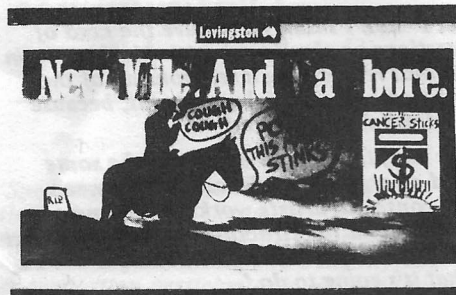
Originally the **BUGA UP** campaign was broadly aimed at all 'unhealthy' billboard advertisements. However, in response to public opinion, the focus for attention became primarily tobacco and alcohol promotions.



As members of the campaign point out in their catalogue — which acts as both manifesto and as a regular photographic documenting of their activities (documenting from a very clear and stated position, unlike the recently published collection of photographs of graffiti — 'Spray It Loud') — advertisements are one-way communication, specifically designed to influence us as consumers, and that nowhere is this more obvious than with the ugly and imposing billboard advertisements which saturate their/our environment.

And thus, their campaign acts to bring to attention the fact that the products pushed in these ads are often useless or positively harmful to our health. Yet, as individuals without corporate resources, we have no effective legal right of reply if we object to the products themselves or the way in which they are promoted.

Instead, the companies are free to regulate themselves and do so in their own interest. It's enough to make you want to paint on a



billboard and **BUGA UP** their system — fighting companies whose operations span continents and whose annual turnover rivals the Gross National Product of many countries. The power and money that these multinational corporations command is enormous — but so is the power of consumers.

BUGA UP are trying to directly combat this assault by advertisers and the companies they represent on a generation of young people reared in an atmosphere of mass and massive consumption by working beyond their billboard graffiti campaign.

They have extended their work into primary and high schools where they have given talks and shown slides of refaced billboards.

Aware that kids aren't that interested in listening to a white-coated doctor lecture to them on the evils of smoking and drinking, credibility is established by anecdotes about graffiti, the police and jail.

The interest and dialogue this creates then provides an excellent forum for discussion about the health aspects of smoking and

drinking, and the ways in which they can resist the pressure of advertising and peer groups.

It is this power that the **BUGA UP**pers are attempting to harness, using graffiti to begin a process of two-way communication creating a dialogue where before there was only an instruction or threat that if we didn't live their lifestyle of booze, fags and mass consumption we were somehow inadequate.

"Anyhow, have a" You can imagine the rest and so do almost 100% of 13 year old smokers who have taken part in recent extensive health surveys conducted in New South Wales and Western Australia.

The results show that children are directly influenced by cigarette (as well as other) advertising. So much so that over 50% of kids who smoke "choose" Winfield (the brand advertised by the 'anyhow.... slogan' — nearly double the proportion of adults. Nearly all the rest smoke Benson and Hedges, Alpine and Marlboro,

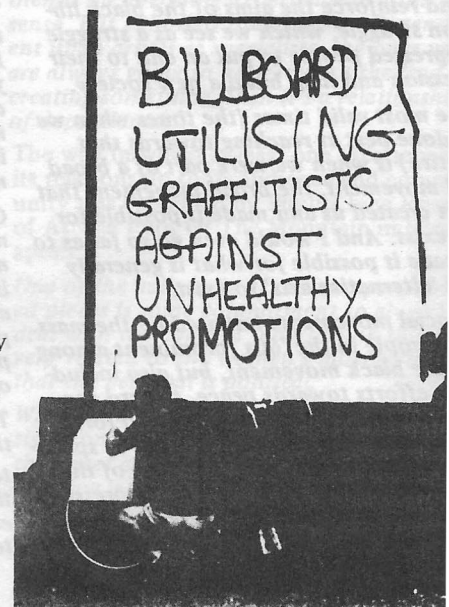
These brands, more than any others, promote images which directly appeal to young people. Alpine promises the "gateway to womanhood", sexual activity and confidence; Marlboro promises freedom, potency and masculinity; Benson and Hedges — sophistication and status; and most insidiously there is the nonchalant, laddish confidence and fatalism of Winfield's "Anyhow".

Health awareness amongst adults over 30 has meant an increasing number are cutting down, or stopping smoking altogether. Cigarette companies are replacing this lost revenue by redirecting their advertising towards children, 75% of whom are unaware of the associated health risks. (M. Swanson, Western Australia Health Education Unit)

By focussing on a particular issue, in this case health v. multinational corporate interest, and providing a ready example of immediate and 'exciting' activity to resist the pressures created by the imposition of other people's ideas of what you should buy, **BUGA UP** provide a very positive alternative to many 'community-work' orientated methods of direct action, which tend to always keep a safe distance.

As the slogan goes — Speak Up, Act Up, **BUGA UP!**

Hania Janiurek is part of Mediumwave.



Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan writer whose novel *Weep Not, Child* was in 1964 one of the first African novels to impinge on European consciousness. In this article Dick Dietrich describes a powerful community arts project he undertook in his own village.

Community arts (or art) cannot escape from the class power struggles that shape our everyday life. You have no choice: whether or not you are aware of it, your work reflects one or more aspects of the economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in society. There is no neutral position.

The previous paragraph is paraphrased from Ngugi's introduction to *Writers in Politics*, a realisation which led him away from writing in English to working in his mother tongue in his home village of Limuru, on one of the most exciting community arts projects I have ever heard about.

The dominant culture will always be the culture of the ruling class (Marx). In Kenya, the dominant culture is a foreign culture and the ruling class is allied to foreign International Capital, in the classic traditions of neocolonialism.

Principles on culture and the freedom of expression contained in the declarations of the United Nations and UNESCO, to which both Kenya and Britain are signatories, are served by neither foreign culture nor by high culture. The principles of cultural democracy are the principles of democracy extended, and democracy in Kenya is a sham just as ours is in Britain.

Whenever grass-roots culture in Kenya expresses the rhythms of the people and concentrates on the burning issues of the time, its democratic expression becomes a threat to the ruling classes. It becomes a crime against vested interests, and something that must be repressed.

In Ngugi's home village of Limuru poverty was king. In 1976 a new committee was formed in the village and an old mud and wattle barracks was renamed the Community Education and Culture Centre. It was to be run on a democratic, collective decision-making basis.

...the rediscovery of the power and creativity of collective work...

Its first programme lasted six months and taught 55 workers to read and write Gikuyu, their mother tongue. This prepared the roots of development, before embarking on the second project – a play.

The play would provide follow-up material for the new literates, be of entertainment and be a process of collective selfeducation, besides raising funds to finance programmes in education and material culture.

The initial script was produced by Ngugi in April 1977, and went through a process of rewriting by the workers. Rehearsals began in June and the first performance was in October 1977.

The play examines the position of the Kenyan working people after independence from British colonial rule. The actuality of oppression has changed little – from the

LESSONS FROM AFRICA



cold to the frost. The actors recall the people's tradition of unity and struggle, and revive the songs and dances from the freedom movement. The traditional beliefs and customs of the people are compared with Christianity and the neocolonial legal systems.

The result is a gathering of confidence and a clarification of issues until the way forward to a better society becomes clear.

For Ngugi, it was a period of great excitement; the rediscovery of the power and creativity of collective work. Through collective effort the script was continually revised, dance and music were developed and the overall organisation managed.

A worker (who was usually employed as a messenger) coordinated the construction of the thousand-seat outside theatre with covered changing rooms. The design and construction process took place in public, first with matchsticks, then with a scale model, then the actual theatre.

The entire process of the drama was timed to fit in with the rhythms of the village. Most of the activity took place on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and the rehearsals drew bigger and bigger crowds. The process of creation was constantly being demystified as new talents were unleashed.

Visitors from other centres started asking for support in doing the same thing in their areas, and the power of the process finally caused the play to be banned in December 1977, for reasons of 'public security'.

The hypocrisy was stark. The play was licensed by the same office that banned it. The

centre was licensed by the government, which was an active party to the UNESCO policy for an integrated rural development, with culture (including rural theatre) as the central core.

Furthermore, at the end of December, Ngugi was detained without trial in a maximum security prison, and stayed there until the following December.

In looking at this project in Kenya, what parallels can be seen for Britain?

The strength of the project for me was the integrated concept through which the project considered every aspect of people's daily lives (including health and production) which were naturally regarded as aspects of culture.

The fact that the relevance of this approach caught the imagination of the people, and showed every indication of spreading, confirms its success in facilitating the access to, and expression of, culture by the people.

Not only was this recognised by the people, it was recognised by the ruling class. Are our efforts in Britain similarly successful, or are we naturally incorporated into the status quo, and thereby made ineffectual?

Worse, are we enticed into areas of cultural activity which are ineffective, into cultural diversions?

In Britain the dominant cultural medium is television, which is centrally controlled as a means of controlling views and values. The British people's struggle for democracy has provided us with two things (the vote and a standard of living which allows us to buy televisions) which are now being used against us as methods of control.

Videos, cassette clubs, libraries, cable tv: in five years these could change things, but if community artists do not now address themselves to training people to be able to use and fundamentally entertain with video when the cable lines open the people will be pushed to one side, and probably left out for ever, by commercial concerns that will be farsighted in protecting their own interests.

.....You have no choice: whether or not you are aware of it...

Ngugi and the Limuru people got it right. They were exposed as being criminals by the government whom they opposed. We can easily judge ourselves by the same standard. Unless we reap the anger of those we oppose we are children to be humoured.

I don't think that it is too difficult to understand that the ideas of the Limuru project could spread like a bush fire, as there is a vacuum for cultural expression in Kenya. The ruling class had to ban the play and detain Ngugi.

In Britain we don't have a vacuum of cultural expression: that was filled and controlled long ago by television. Instead, we have the problem of adapting community art methodology to the medium of real influence.

Anarchy in the UK

On Saturday 18th December 1982, Crass — the anarchist/pacifist band — organised a gig at the ZigZag club in West London. Colin, one of the many people who were there, describes the events leading to this particular performance.

The event was held as a demonstration — an anti-war protest, support of the women at Greenham Common, against nuclear war, and against the absurdity of that sort of violence from the state, the army, the police and from individuals in society. It was part of a continuing consciousness-raising exercise for everybody in society.

Crass have been finding it increasingly difficult to find venues in which to play. They were getting managers and different people who ran clubs refusing to allow them to play because of the audiences they attract.

Club owners were disturbed by the pogoing and tribal dancing and the sheer numbers of people turning up to gigs.

So Crass decided to squat a palace to be used for a one-off show with all the different punk bands, as a do-it-yourself thing, which in some ways is what anarchy is all about.

There had been some precedents set before. St James' Church in Islington had been squatted and used as a venue. From there, the punk scene surrounding A Flux of Pink Indians and the Poison Girls moved to Wapping, where they had an anarchy centre where gigs were held every Sunday afternoon.

From there, the scene moved to the Iberico Club in the Harrow Road in West London. When that closed down last year there was no other place for punk bands or the punk scene to go like a day centre for the unemployed or something like that.

A lot of punk music represents the views of young unemployed people living in urban areas. So they decided to squat the Rainbow in Finsbury Park, which they succeeded in holding for about a week.

Unfortunately they were evicted by the police. There were only a few people actually holding the building and before they could quote section six of the Criminal Law Act at the police they were evicted.

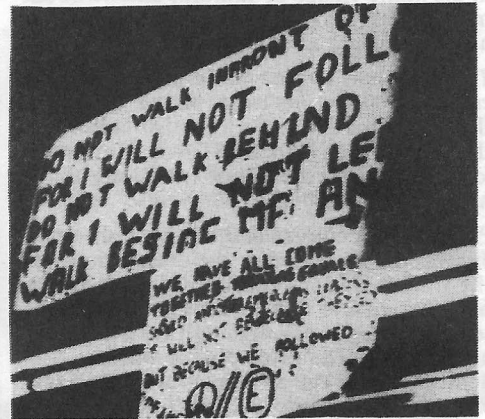
Section six is a special section of the law that is related to squatting. Under it, if you claim that you're in occupation of a

building which is empty then you can claim to have possession of that building.

Anyway, the Rainbow didn't work out. It is a very big venue anyway for the size of gig and filling that place with five thousand people at very short notice would have been very hard to do.

So, we moved to the ZigZag Club in Westbourne Park. We thought that this was a much more suitable size. The club was squatted on the Friday night by people from the various bands and friends people involved in the squatting scene, the Festival Music Co-operative — it was like a united front of the rebels.

As soon as we had squatted the ZigZag on the Friday night a press release was issued to all radio stations — both the pirates and



the BBC and IBA stations. They gave the gig a lot of publicity.

The bands that played were Crass, Rubella Ballet, Poison Girls, Anthrax and Soldiers of Fortune.

Crass organised an amazing video show of different Japanese films that had been made after Hiroshima which was shown in between bands.

Most of the bands did very good sets, really strong. The stage was amazingly decorated with lots of different anti-nuclear banners and CND symbols. The place was literally packed out.

The event went very successfully, without any trouble at all. There must have been three or four thousand people there.

It was good. It was like a niche of alternative London culture that manages to survive in the city.

There was a bit of a problem, people doing some graffiti. That was before people had really taken control of the place. People were trying to communicate the importance of us trying to make things better. Graffiti is great in the right place at the right time, really important street-level communication that is really under-used. But graffitiing the inside of a building, a night club or something like that those people understand the message anyway, they're the people who are in sympathy with that message. It's just a matter of tact, a certain amount of conscious responsibility.

The police kept a low profile. There were just a few present down the street. Some people from the gig went and talked to them and explained that it was just a party and that there was nothing to get worried about.

There was an understanding reached and everything went ahead fine.



PROJECT REPORT

Music may well be the most accessible art form, and in particular, the one which is least divorced from contemporary working class culture.

Despite continual efforts by the music business to impose through hyping and excessive publicity their idea of what should be the next Big Thing, there is a consistent upthrust of new ideas and new forms of expression which demand exposure: the Sex Pistols and the punk upheaval, the Specials and Two Tone, and the growth and consolidation of the independent record labels.

However, because kids and adults do get involved in music of all types and forms, and because there are bands playing music with styles and ideas of their own at a grass roots level, not just reflecting what is pushed down their throats by the mass media and the established culture, the potential has not been fully explored by the community arts movement.

Music is much more a part of working peoples lives than writing or painting, but it is still very hard to become a musician. If you want to play classical music there are opportunities in school. Some schools even offer teaching in the styles most kids want to play: lots of comprehensive schools in the West Midlands support rock bands and steel bands. There are still many young people in many places, however, who have little or no opportunity.

For this reason more community arts projects are becoming involved with musicians, wanting not only to support them with facilities and venues, but also offering teaching, rehearsal and recording facilities and encouraging experimentation with different images and forms.

Saltley Music Workshop has recently hit the headlines (even the 9 o'clock news), because of their musical activities.

Saltley Print and Media Workshop have been working in part of Birmingham's inner ring for several years. They became involved with the Rock against Racism campaign, and because of their involvement with musicians, one of their workers, Barry Coleman, began to look deeper into the possibilities of working with music.

He met two black musicians. Toney Owens and Freddy Waite, who were teaching kids how to play reggae music in their own houses in Birmingham. This meeting, together with involvement with 021 records who are independent music producers, led to the idea of a music workshop which would offer rehearsal and recording facilities together with record pressing, cassette copying and PA Hire, to support new bands, teaching facilities for local kids, and altogether an exciting place where ideas and experience could be fraternally shared.

One of the first ventures of the music workshop was the *Dub Venture* tour: Musical Youth and other young bands playing to raise funds for the workshop. It was difficult though to raise the large capital sums needed to set up the workshop so, alongside the tour, there was an application to the local Cooperative Development Association.

During the time the application was being processed Musical Youth hit the big time. They had succeeded in building themselves a reputation as a support band. Toney Owens, one of their teachers, was a promoter and was able to help them get gigs supporting touring reggae artists, and then of course came the release of *Pass the Dutchie*. a clever video and the number one spot.

Meanwhile, back at the grass roots, while the application was being processed, touring day workshops took place in Coventry and Corby, with a workshop in the day in which the musicians shared their skills and experience, and a gig in the evening.

These day workshops still take place. The most recent was in Saltley on March 12th, and it featured visiting bands from Newcastle.

Musical Youth now have three top twenty singles, but they still consider themselves to be a part of the music workshop, and they recently presented it with their gold disc. They have had difficulty recently, though, in giving the workshop regular support, because of their touring commitments, and because the number of gigs they can play in a year is strictly limited, because of their age.

Saltley Print and Media are still trying to set up a music base. They are committed to trying to establish a cooperative which involves a network of musicians and provides a place to earn some money, pass on your skills, record a tape, borrow a PA, but most of all a place to share your feelings with people who are about similar things to you.

They haven't found the capital yet, but in the future who knows?

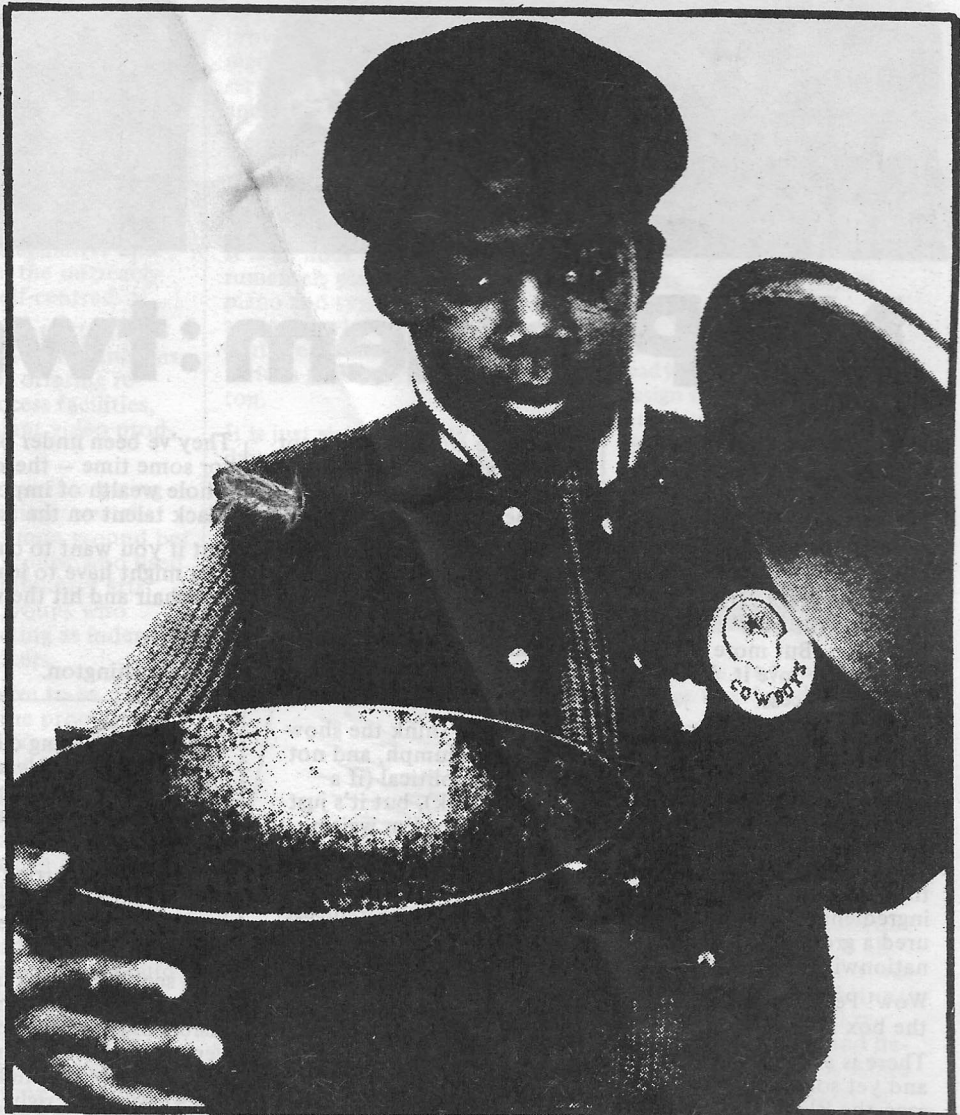
For information on Saltley Music Workshops contact Saltley Print & Media: 021 328 1954.

SALTLEY MUSIC WORKSHOP

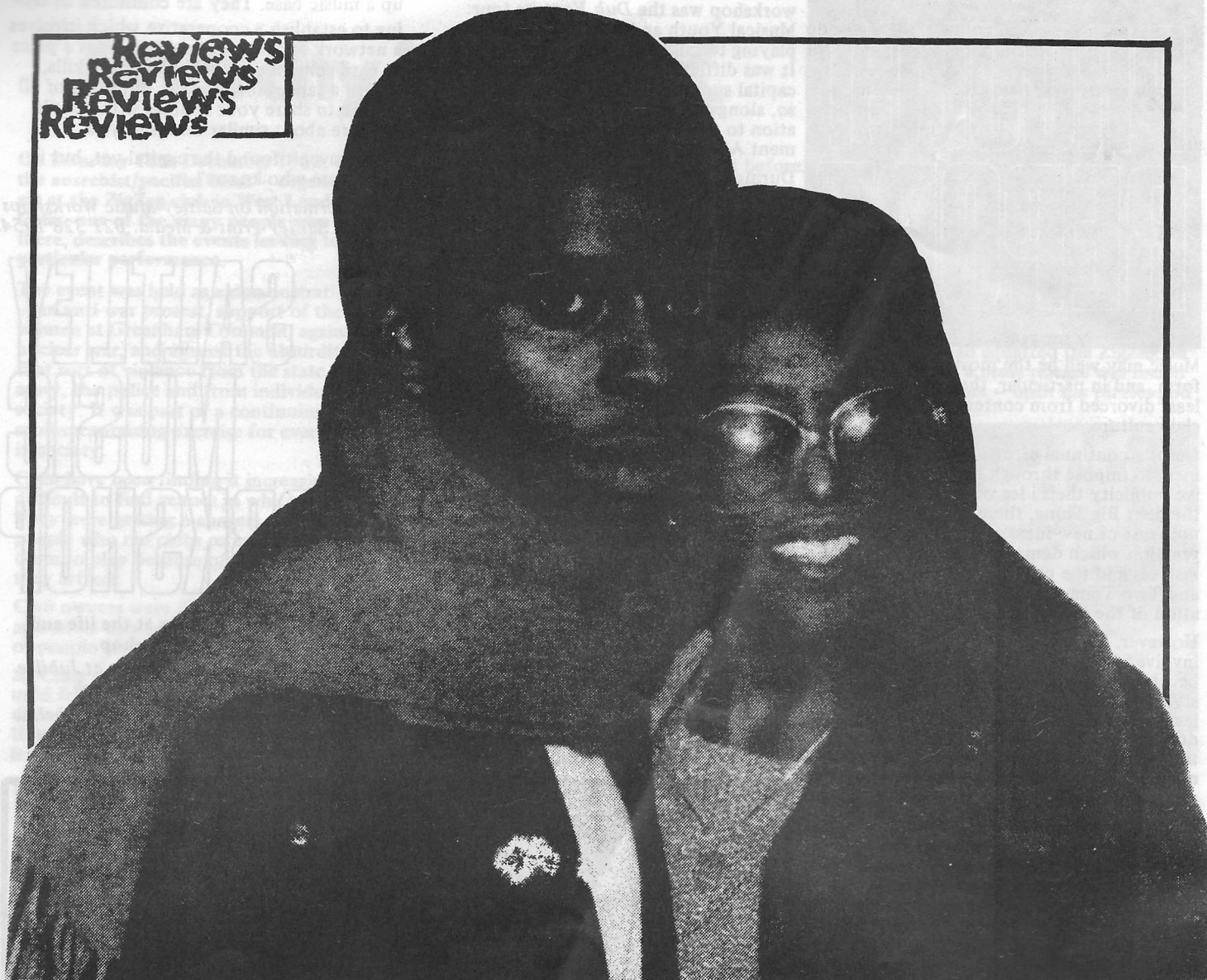
Cynthia Woodhouse looks at the life and times of Saltley Music Workshop.

Cynthia Woodhouse is a worker at Jubilee Community Arts in West Bromwich.

Cynthia Woodhouse is not pictured below Kelvin Grant of Musical Youth, and a dutchie are.



Reviews
Reviews
Reviews
Reviews



No Problem: two views

No Problem is broadcast on Channel 4 at 9.30pm on Friday evenings.

At last, a Black show, made by Blacks for Blacks. If you ask almost anyone (including the natives), 'Have you seen *No Problem*?' the answer is yes. But more than that — they love it. *No Problem* is a success.

Its direct, easy style, the naturalness of the acting and of course the sharp material, which is fresh and unlaboured (compare it to *The Fosters*, anyone remember that?) seem to be just the right balance of ingredients, and have captured a growing audience nationwide.

Wow! People, what a medium the box is!

There is all this appreciation and yet some of us who have seen the Black Theatre Cooperative perform in our local community centre to a tiny

90% white audience, and not comedy at that, but heavier, harder political works, we must be having some thoughts.

Why aren't they dealing here with more political material? Would a more political show have reached such heights of popularity? Would it have found its way into the little black box in the first place?

Personally, I think the show as it is is a triumph, and not totally nonpolitical (if a little laid-back), but it's just the beginning. I'm waiting to see where the gang will take us next.

With a foot in the broadcasters' door and credibility in black and white front rooms all over the isle, time is right to run down some hard comment. Take the characters out of the house and into the streets!

Farukh Dhondy, Romero Evans and co aren't new.

They've been under our noses for some time — there's a whole wealth of important Black talent on the Isle today.

But if you want to check it, you might have to leave your armchair and hit the streets....

Later.....

Alan Washington.

Let's get one thing clear from the start. *No Problem* is good. It's everything it's supposed to be — funny, lively, credible, punchy.

So why am I worried? I guess it isn't the programme itself that bothers me, so much as where it is.

You see, the danger is that we've come from being invisible only to land in tv's very own ghetto. I mean, who *actually* watches Channel 4? Nobody, right, except the 'minorities' who don't have anywhere else

where they're not insulted.

The 'majority', the Armchair Arthurs, they don't watch it. If they did then Channel 4's viewing figures wouldn't be so small that you have to hunt them with a magnifying glass.

So the danger is that we are talking to ourselves, and fooling ourselves into thinking the revolution has arrived. There's nothing new here; we've been talking to ourselves for years.

What we've got to do is use this as a starting point. It's a damn good programme and we should get behind the Black Theatre Cooperative and demand that it is shown on the main channel at nine o'clock.

Then the Armchair Arthurs will see it, and then we'll see some action. Let's get to it.

Delroy Wallace.

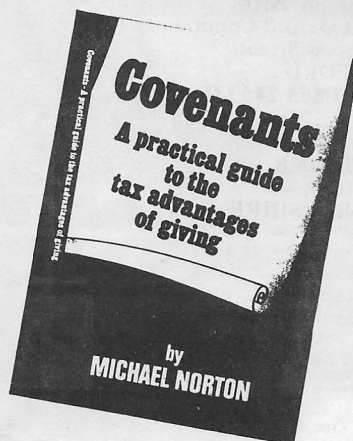
The Advantages of Giving

The Directory of Social Change has recently published two books which are probably just the sort of thing you don't want to read.

Unfortunately for you they are also two books you would be well advised to read, at least if you are part of a voluntary organisation living on grants and donations and trying to live better.

A Guide to the Benefits of Charitable Status doesn't sound like a 'good read', does it, and to be honest it isn't. But it doesn't set out to provide a thrill a minute, only to explain clearly and in reasonable detail all the benefits that are available when you're a charity. It also shows you how best to take advantage of them. It does this very well.

It covers grants and donations, lotteries and gaming, fundraising from the public as well as rate and tax relief, VAT, investment opportunities and company support. If you want to know about any of these things then it's going to be less fun than the new Marge Piercy and a lot more useful.



Covenants: a practical guide to the tax advantages of giving is the second book, and although the area it covers is considerably less general, it is in some ways even more useful. Covenants are still unknown territory for most community arts groups, and indeed for most small community charities of any sort, and they have enormous potential, not just as fundraising devices but as a way of building on and strengthening the community of interest that grows up around most projects.

The book details comprehensively the benefits of covenanting as a method of fundraising and suggests ways in which the idea can be sold to those potential donors.

Most importantly it is a *practical* guide, and it lists a selection of model deeds for use by different charities.

They are both written by Michael Norton.

The books are available at bookshops or directly from the Directory of Social Change at 9 Mansfield Place, London NW3 1HS.

Sue Tyler-Roberts.

'I Hate Socialists...'

The Community Based Video Conference was held on March 4th-6th at the Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool.

The conference was the first national conference for video groups, and attracted people who not only covered a wide geographical spread, but also a wide range of attitudes, experience and methods of working.

In short we were in the presence of the known, the unknown, the popular, the provincial, the imaginative and the mundane, the outreaching and the self-centred.

There were groups firmly based within a community as well as groups offering resource and access facilities, and independent video production units.

This led to some interesting discussions trying to establish some common ground between the groups who used video in a community arts process, and groups who were really acting as independent producers.

Similarities have to be discovered and the process is made more difficult by some people's lack of clarity as to what they are actually about. Taking a U-Matic camera onto a council estate occasionally doesn't *by itself* make you community based.

It was the first 'community' gathering I had been to for ages at which someone could say 'I hate socialists and I refuse to work with them', and the others in the room would just quietly nod. Is this a frightening example of the rise of the right?

There were however many valuable opportunities to watch and discuss work that had been produced, and opportunities also to explore new developments: new moves in Cable TV, the influence of Channel 4, the demise of the IBA, ACTT membership and so on.

The conference produced 2 potentially important initiatives. A group was set up to investigate the possibility of creating a national distribution network for community video tapes, and a women's video group was established.

Two future video conferences were also discussed: a conference to be held in Brighton in the Spring of 1984, and a community-based day to be organised at this year's Bracknell Video Festival.

Cynthia Woodhouse.

Woof

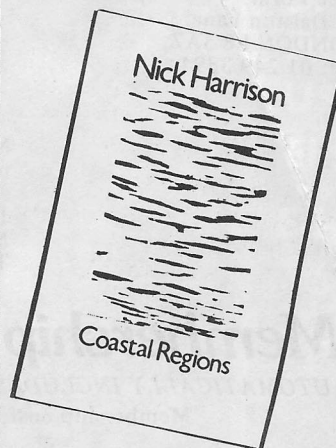
Mediumwave have quietly been developing a tape label for local and like-minded people. The idea is to service a local culture with the sort of provision only normally provided for the national media-culture, and through servicing it help it to prosper and grow.

Coastal Regions is the 4th tape they have released, with 3 more to come in April, and more to follow.

It is an hour of melodic instrumentals played on violin, piano and synthesiser, by someone who can be seen fairly regularly playing with various groups around Brixton.

It is just right for early Sunday morning, and not bad any other time either.

Moreton Blessing.



Coastal Regions costs £2 from Contagious Tapes, 3/4 Oval Mansions, Kennington Oval, London SE11.

Another Standard

Community Art Culture and Politics

The editorial group for this issue was:

Cilla Baynes
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Chris Humphrey
Hania Janiurek
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Small Ads

Small ads are free of charge to subscribers.

Next Issue

The details of the next issue have not quite been finalised as we go to press, but if all goes according to plan it will be a special, expanded *Another Standard* with a full report of the seminars and debates at the Friends & Allies Conference at Salisbury in April. It will be out in July.

Why don't you join the SHELTON TRUST

The Shelton Trust has worked energetically throughout the year to promote a better understanding, nationally, of the value and achievements of the Community Arts movement. Key to this has been the publication and distribution of the Community Arts Information Pack produced in partnership with the Council of Regional Arts Associations, and the regular publication of *Another Standard*, the community arts magazine.

The Trust has also sought to encourage community artists to look outside their own field for stronger links with existing institutions. Its joint enterprise with the Workers' Educational Association and the Arts Council of Great Britain, a conference entitled *Working People and the Arts*, was a much welcomed opportunity for people with shared concern but different experiences to learn from one another.

Regrettably the Trust did not have adequate finances to support any paid assistance for 1982/3. Development, therefore, has been dependent on the voluntary efforts of the Directors, already hard pressed with their own work. Naturally this has affected the level of work the Trust has been able to undertake and has forced the Trust to accept that some of its programme will take longer to achieve.

However this situation will now change with the news that the Trust has been successful in securing a grant of £6,000 from the Arts Council of Great Britain. A large proportion of this money will be spent in employing a part-time co-ordinator to service and develop the Trust's work.

As well as the co-ordinator, the future plans of the Trust include:

1. Active involvement in the planned national community arts conference to be held in late April, and the production of a conference report.
2. The organisation of a tape/slide conference in late March.
3. The continuing development of the only national community arts magazine, *Another Standard*, of which sales have increased quite considerably.
4. Further discussions with the WEA on a joint publication giving practical guidance on the partnership between community arts and those involved in adult education.
5. Discussions that are taking place with the TUC on producing a tape/slide information pack and furthering steps to encourage TUC members to become more involved with the community arts movement.

The Directors' meetings take place every two months in Birmingham, and are open to all members. For information about dates contact any director.

The *Another Standard* editorial group would be very happy to receive any news or articles from anywhere in the country. If you have anything to contribute, please send it to any of the people listed here.

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Membership Application

MEMBERSHIP AUTOMATICALLY INCLUDES SUBSCRIPTION TO ANOTHER STANDARD

Membership cost is £5 minimum.

NAME _____ GIVE A BRIEF INDICATION OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT/
INTEREST IN COMMUNITY ART _____

ADDRESS _____

I ENCLOSE A CHEQUE/P.O. FOR _____

RETURN TO: MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, THE OLD TIN SCHOOL, COLLYHURST ROAD, MANCHESTER M10 7RQ.