

# CAMERAWORK



Postcard of Windscale 1979

Mike Abrahams

**The Fashion Spread**  
**Blair Peach – No Cover Up**  
**Matchgirls' Strike – Labour History Museum**  
**Pictures from Windscale**  
**Postcards**  
**Photography and the Law**





# Fashion

Les nouveaux  
T-shirts-débardeurs  
ressemblent à tout  
sauf à la chemise  
des dockers :  
ils s'apparentent  
plutôt aux maillots  
de danseuses  
modernes avec leurs  
manches longues,  
leurs profonds  
décolletés, ou aux  
hauts de tutus  
avec leurs bretelles  
et leur corsage bustier.  
A gauche, T-shirt à  
manches longues en  
jersey de coton de  
Jackyrex, et sa jupe  
portefeuille en jersey  
de coton rouge  
réversible rose de  
Jackyrex. Gianni  
Versace pour  
Callaghan.  
Sandales Charles  
Jordan. A dr., T-shirt  
bustier en jersey de  
coton et sa jupe  
francée en tulle  
jersey. Dominique  
Pocher pour Guizot.  
Sandales Charles  
Jordan. Au centre,  
bustier à bretelles  
en jersey de coton  
et short assorti.  
Guizot. Coiffures  
Vaignton pour  
Jean-Louis David.  
Maquillage  
Lancaster. Teints  
hâles et unifiés avec  
Visage Bronzé. Photo  
prise à l'Hôtel  
Fontainebleau à  
Miami Beach. Tri-  
gal, pour tous les  
instants de votre  
vie. "Cabriole" le  
nouveau parfum  
d'Elizabeth Arden.



Guy Bourdin, French Vogue May 1978: To turn the page is not only to open and close the spectacle of the fashion spread but to cut up the figure with which we are spatially identified – to open and close her legs.

## Fashion photography as anonymous history

Fashion photography is traditionally regarded as the lightweight end of photographic practice. Its close relationship to the economic imperatives of turnover makes the fashion photograph the transitory image par excellence. For historians and critics concerned with isolating *unique* photographic images and according them enduring significance, the commercial sphere of photography – the domain of the everyday image – represents the debasement of the convention of such 'great' photographs. For most people, however, the commercial image represents the essence of their experience of photography.

Cultural analysis of the commercial photograph has habitually treated it as a departure from the naturalist and realist historic tradition, in which the 'unique' image is identified by excluding those characteristics most closely identified with the commercial world. Economic forces are seen as altering and negating the 'reality' of the photographic image. Market forces introduce the caption which can determine and distort what is seen in the picture. 'Silence' is converted into the 'speech' of the advertising caption or newspaper headline. Whenever photographic conventions hit the streets, they are encountered as 'diluted'. Commercial images, so the argument goes, are produced under constraint, compromised or distorted by their proximity to the technological division of labour and responsibility.

This view of the culture industry sees the destruction of the individuality of the images and the uniqueness of their production. We see the typical instead of the unique moment or event. We see stereotype and cliché where we want to seek the creative representation of human expression and emotion. The texture of mechanical reproduction seems alien and deadening; the image in currency is reduced to the commonplace of urban experience.

Given this prevalent critical and historical attitude, photo-

graphers are inclined to regard the economic and technological processes as a 'threat' to their domain – the taking of the photograph. This, the 'decisive moment', is seen as the most powerful point in the process, the point at which the 'real' world reproduces itself; it is more creative than the mass production processes which deplete and assimilate the image, stamping it with the uniformity and monotony of a commodity. Photographers produce images and see them as fuel for the sequence of formulae and stereotypes within the turnover of trends and fashions, and within the machinery of production.

Critical and historical tradition has thus made us see the creativity of the photographer and mass production as opposed to each other. This has prevented investigation of those features of photography produced by the combination of these processes. Although photography has its origins in the reproduction of nature by machine, fashion and advertising photography must be studied as a process of mechanical reproduction of the mechanical image.

The 'other' side of photography is the ability to reproduce a number of copies from a single moment. The picture is one of many on the streets, in magazines, television and film. Media technology is structured for the repetition and proliferation of images as commodities appearing and disappearing in and out of mass circulation. Images are seen in relation to one another, as stereotypes going in and out of currency, rather than as unique peep-holes into reality. Not only does the camera enable us to look at the world, it also establishes the conditions for the world to look on us. Image is not simply something seen; it is also something we 'wear'. The mass circulation of photographic images emphasises our awareness of self-image, and establishes a relationship between the particular and the typical.

Historians of photography have yet to do justice to this 'other' side of photography, possibly because it is too

familiar. Perhaps what is needed is what Siegfried Gideon calls 'anonymous history': an account of the effects of technology on personal experience.

But how does one look at photographic history and do justice to the processes which make the imagery typical and transitory, without selecting certain great images in their uniqueness? The answer might be found by looking at the sphere of photography most tied to the machinery of the media: advertising photography. Changes in the nature of recent advertising and fashion photography also necessitate such an analysis, as well as a re-appraisal of the caricatures of commercial photography.

The availability of photographs in the galleries of many major cities has enabled photographers to develop further areas of sponsorship in the Seventies, and has created a market for the Masters and for an established historical tradition, and yet the recent malaise of the realist/naturalist tradition has been accompanied by a greater inflexibility of its norms in the establishment of academic and economic sponsorship which has grown up around these genres.

Incessant re-iteration of the 'zero-point' of the photographic document has transformed it into a rhetoric of its own. The contemporary politically-committed social document produced for gallery exhibition tends to speak more of rhetorical nostalgia for its Thirties precursors, and for the innocence of style, than of its subject. This deathly quality of nostalgia, the event's *pastness* rather than its currency in our political perceptions pervades so many self-conscious servants of tradition.

However whilst the realist/naturalist genres are at a standstill, or are even regressing, there have been dramatic changes in the photography encountered in the streets – and particularly in the intimacy of the double-page spread.

## CAMERAWORK

is designed to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, views and information on photography and other forms of communication. By exploring the application, scope and content of photography, we intend to demystify the process. We see this as part of the struggle to learn, to describe and to share experiences and so contribute to the process by which we grow in capacity and power to control our lives.

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Guy Bourdin French Vogue May 1978: He organises his images around the divide of the double-page and the turn of the page.

### Helmut Newton: manipulating stereotypes

Many see the new representation of women in advertisements and especially in fashion photographs as a sort of masculine counter-offensive against the new feminist consciousness of sexual stereotyping. That some of the significant individual contributions to this recent change happen to be from women in no way contradicts the claim that we are seeing the development of the most perniciously sexist imagery yet encountered in the very core of sexual stereotyping, fashion photography.

Fashion photography in the Seventies has, in one sense, produced nothing particularly new, no recognisable ideal like Jean Shrimpton or Twiggy in the Sixties. No particular look or appearance seems to dominate. Models seem to be straight off an assembly line, representing a well established physical norm. Most conspicuous is the repression of the model's distinctive individuality. She is treated in her identity with her type, not as a particular kind of woman, but as a model.

Stereotyping appears to occur through suppression of the awareness of stereotype and by identification with the unique. The dynamics of fashion are embodied in the dualism of the world itself: fashion is what is general and typical, and yet it is also restricted and individual. The fashion photograph is on a threshold between two worlds: the consumer public, and a mythic elite created in the utopia of the photograph as well as in the reality of a social group maintained by the fashion industry. Recent fashion photography seems to convert the utopias into dystopias.

The Helmut Newton model is one of a type, presented with the cold distance of a fleshy automaton, an extension of the technology which manipulates her and converts her into an object. Her veneer, which is at one with the gloss of the image, is to be flicked past and consumed in a moment. When the models strike up stereotyped poses, it is their deadness and frigidity which is foregrounded. The suggestion that they are frozen from a narrative continuum emphasises their strangeness and their discontinuous, fragmented nature, like film stills isolated from the cinematic flow.

Some have interpreted the strange, unusual settings in the work of Guy Bourdin and Helmut Newton – accidents and suicides – as the intrusion of a 'real world' into fashion photography. I think quite the reverse is the case: it is because scenes of rape and death are commonplace in film and television that they can be treated with such distance in fashion photography. The aura of a particular kind of image, not the aura of the streets, is utilised. The artificiality of the image, its gloss and not its reality, is emphasised. It is the deathly aura of mediation which encases everything in gloss. Newton's harsh colours, particularly his use of red and blue, make an association with poor quality reproduction and thus invoke the limitations of the medium.

This emphasis upon the alien and artificial qualities of the picture makes a straightforward accusation of sexism problematic. All fashion photography, as the dominant currency of female images, could be seen as inherently sexist, manipulating exchanges between self and self-image. Yet this is conventionally suppressed

in the image of the moment, as it binds us to a model of femininity beyond existing norms, converting them into stereotypes. To recognise an image as a constraint, as a violation or repression of femininity, is to glimpse the demise of a stereotype going out of circulation, its descent hastened by its very mass circulation. Each ascendant, newer image promises to escape those constraints. Accordingly, fashion photography seeks to suppress any sense of the strangeness of sexual typification, the conversion of femininity into a static type or commodity. The sense of stereotype must be reserved for hindsight in the succession of female images.

Newton manipulates existing stereotypes; their alienness is accentuated, and yet they are almost eternal archetypes in their sexual dramas. The passive reclining woman offers no threat: she is completely malleable, a dummy made of flesh. The object of gratuitous sexual violence and violation, she offers no resistance, but because of this she becomes unreal, like de Sade's libertines. As the threat of personality diminishes, her image-like quality transports her beyond eroticism of the living to fetishism of the inanimate object. She fits into dominant stereotypes so completely that she ceases to connote a reality apart from the images which constitute her life. By mixing dummies with live models in the French *Vogue* of June 1977, Newton makes an unambiguous erotic response (from either sex) impossible. Instead, the picture sequence directs voyeuristic attention to the conversion point between object and flesh, and to their deathly reciprocity in the photographic act. While the photographs are undeniably erotic, the eroticism is attached to the process of media-

tion itself. Many of his more successful photographs hold a distanced engagement with the manipulative devices of fashion photography and with the process of mediation. Those alien features present in suppressed form in fashion photography and current images of women are exposed and foregrounded. The image is presented as alien: a threat rather than an invitation. Stereotypes are presented as falsity.

### Guy Bourdin: 'a trap for the gaze'

In the post-war period the growth of mass production and reproduction was greeted in some circles as a threat to individuality and to the uniqueness of human activity. The horrific spectre of the totality of industrial culture was the familiar expression of a fear of what seemed inevitable as a result of consumer culture: the false universalisation and homogenisation of human experience. Theodor Adorno saw the stamp of the machine everywhere, reducing everything to a 'sameness', reflecting and reinforcing a sense of alienation in all aspects of private life and experience. As mass-entertainment and advertising become more dominant, they increasingly level experience down to 'the lowest common denominator'. The threat of the culture industry is the production and reproduction of sameness in all spheres of cultural life. Adorno saw the media as part of a great machine serving to encompass, assimilate and absorb all opposition and all individual variation by acceding to the sameness of machine production.

Current cultural trends could be interpreted as posing quite the opposite threat – the loss of common cultural experience. The decentralisation of fringe cultures and the increase



Deborah Turbeville, Wallflower (Quartet 1978): her photographs are presented scratched, violated, and montaged together.

of minority opinions cannot be accounted for in the view which foresees the media industry triumphing in an identity and uniformity of cultural experience. For Marcuse, avant-garde art as oppositional culture is depleted by absorption and assimilation into mainstream 'affirmative culture'. While this may seem prophetic in view of the current state of art, indifference to oppositional art is the result not of a depletion or assimilation of its meanings, but of its isolation. It appears as one cultural ghetto amongst many, with its own diminishing media stake. It is not that the values of a minority culture are distorted and absorbed into the mainstream. They pose no threat at all.

The principle of negation itself, which avant-garde culture once represented, is now built in to all spheres of cultural activity. Even disco music, ostensibly the alignment of human expression – dance – with the rhythm of the machine, has its negation in groups like *Kraftwerk* for whom the machine pulse which 'animates' disco-dance is the object of morbid contemplation. It is not merely a 'progressive' extension of popular culture. What is incorporated is negation. This now guarantees a sort of all-round authenticity. I can enjoy it for itself, or for its parody of itself. Irony mediates these days – it is no escape.

Tolerance of mechanised cultural products has ascended to a higher level: an acceptance of the limitations of the medium in an engagement with the process of mediation. As Adorno and Horkheimer said: *The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products though they see through them.*<sup>1</sup>

They could not, however, have predicted the peculiar route to this triumph. From the vantage point of the Forties and Fifties it was difficult to imagine a fashion photographer complaining about censorship by the machinery which Adorno predicted would subsume cultural producers like Helmut Newton. The latter's complaints about English *Vogue* are echoed by fashion photographers beginning to talk about being 'given free rein' by magazines. When Guy Bourdin claims to be an artist, he is laying claim to a specific type of formal problem encountered with a particular kind of image in circulation. It is not so much that 'the double page is his canvas', but that the double page is *not* canvas is the basis of the claim.

His material is what canvas stands in anti-thesis to: the texture of mechanical reproduction. In Bourdin's work, the double-page is not the vehicle for communicating the image, it is a structure characteristic of a particular kind of encounter. He organises his images around the form of mechanical reproduction, around the divide of the double-page and the turn of the page. In the May 1978 French *Vogue* the female voyeur/spectator figure is divided by the centre-fold as she watches the almost symmetrical division of her reclining self-images. To turn the page is not only to open and close the spectacle of the fashion spread, but to cut up the figure with which we are spatially identified – to open and close her legs. The model is completely engulfed in the vertical divide as though by a mistake in binding, leaving the two legs isolated on facing pages.

At other times the double-page becomes its own mirror. In a March 1976 French *Vogue*



spread, a colour reproduction faces a black and white reproduction of almost the identical scene, as though frozen from successive moments. The process of reproduction itself is being reproduced. Within these more dramatic formal devices, spatial relationships are set up within the pictures which rebound upon the strangeness of our ordinary encounter with the double-page, the photograph and with the advertisement itself. We are re-directed from the object (the product) to the spatial ambiguities of its setting, which jar with the expectations built into encounters with photographs and advertisements. Bourdin enhances the spatial strangeness of the conventional spread, to accentuate the alienness of what is unfolded in that horizontal continuum and around the vertical division in the process of unfolding. This spread best exemplifies the division and alternation of shallow and deep spaces, which is used to juxtapose facade and depth, the frontality of the image with the three-dimensionality of setting. Bourdin plays upon a hesitation in the spatial and temporal expectations of the double-page, emphasising the alienness of the setting of both the product and the advertisement. Brechtian distancing and the formalist 'exposure of the device' have become mainstream rhetorical manoeuvres.

Bourdin's shoe advertisements provide a case in point. Without the manufacturer's name as caption, some would be unrecognisable either as advertisements or as having shoes as their subject. In a passing encounter with the image that the fashion magazine produces, it is profitable to exert the negative principle as a subversion of the neutrality of 'flicking through'.

neutrality of the product-image in the context of the cash exchange. Obsolete product-images have been revived as nostalgia for the mythical past of the product itself. There is an obsession with the conversion point between the currency and redundancy of the image.

In the same way, recent fashion trends have been exclusively nostalgic. Even current sci-fi and high-tech fashions come over as a nostalgia for older stereotypes of 'futurism', as a taming of images of technology which were once threatening. But recent forms of revivalism are not a specific attachment to a bygone age - they are more like Sixties nostalgias romanticising the peasantry, or other kinds of primitivism. This nostalgic undercurrent has come to dominate and has almost caught up with itself.

Nostalgic attachment to the immediate past becomes an attachment to the process of turnover, a narcissistic identification with the alien qualities of one's own past. That point of self-awareness at the juncture of the up-to-the-minute and the out-of-date becomes an identification with the very process of mediation that fashion represents.

The photography of Helmut Newton and Guy Bourdin reflects a self-awareness of fashion-photography and of its falsities. They convey the sense of an impenetrable veneer, resistant to the very movement of stereotypes. In the work of one of the best woman fashion-photographers, Deborah Turbeville, a different sense of the alienness of the image is represented as a sort of hesitation between self-images. In many ways her photographs are at variance with characteristics of her male counterparts. For example, her models are not chosen for their identity with

a fairly neutral type, but usually for their divergence from the type or image which they appear to represent. At best her work involves this hesitation between the image presented by the model and the image presented by the picture, although finally this sense is always communicated by the latter. Conveying this uncomfortable relationship with the model's self-presented image pushes her towards portraiture, or her models towards acting. However, she is clearly not satisfied with communicating the strangeness of the female image through the illustrative neutrality of the photograph. In her book *Wallflower*, her recent photographs are presented scratched, violated and montaged together.

In the foreword to this book she describes her photographs as: *like the women you see in them. A little out of balance with their surroundings, waiting anxiously for the right person to find them, and thinking perhaps that they are out of their time. They move forward clutching their past about them, as if the ground of the present may fall away . . . Perhaps they accede a little too easily to an automatic overlay of nostalgia resulting from the association of limited colour range with the faded photograph or with the technical qualities of early photography. At the moment her work seems unresolved, as she herself says: My pictures walk a tight-rope . . . I am not a fashion photographer, I am not a photojournalist, I am not a portraitist.*

Whatever one's opinion of the 'success' of her pictures, it is interesting that a photographer preoccupied with the kinds of self-image mass circulation produces should find the fashion spread the most accommodating site for her

exploration, however provisional she may feel this to be.

Whether the alienness of the recent fashion image is an extreme expression of the autonomy of fashion photography, whether this implies a distancing from the form of coercion which the fashion spread represents, whether it constitutes the elevation of the advertisement to a higher power and greater autonomy, or whether it is the beginning of a break-up of that structure of representation: these questions have implications far beyond fashion alone.

## Rosetta Brooks

*I would like to acknowledge the writings of John Stezaker, especially his ideas on stereotyping. I refer to *Archetype and Stereotype*, a paper delivered to the Photography Convention organised by the Psychology Department of Southampton University (to be published), and to *Fragments* published by the Photographers' Gallery.*

*Rosetta Brooks teaches at St. Martin's School of Art. She is currently writing two books, on fashion photography and on style in the seventies.*

### Footnotes

1. From 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception' in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, trans. John Cumming. Allen Lane 1973.

2. Lacan characterizes all pictures as 'traps for the gaze', but the phrase is used in the context of a discussion of the use of distorted images to 'catch' the eye and maintain the engagement of the gaze.



Helmut Newton sequence, French Vogue June 1977: the cold distance of a fleshy automaton, an extension of the technology which manipulates the model and converts her into an object.

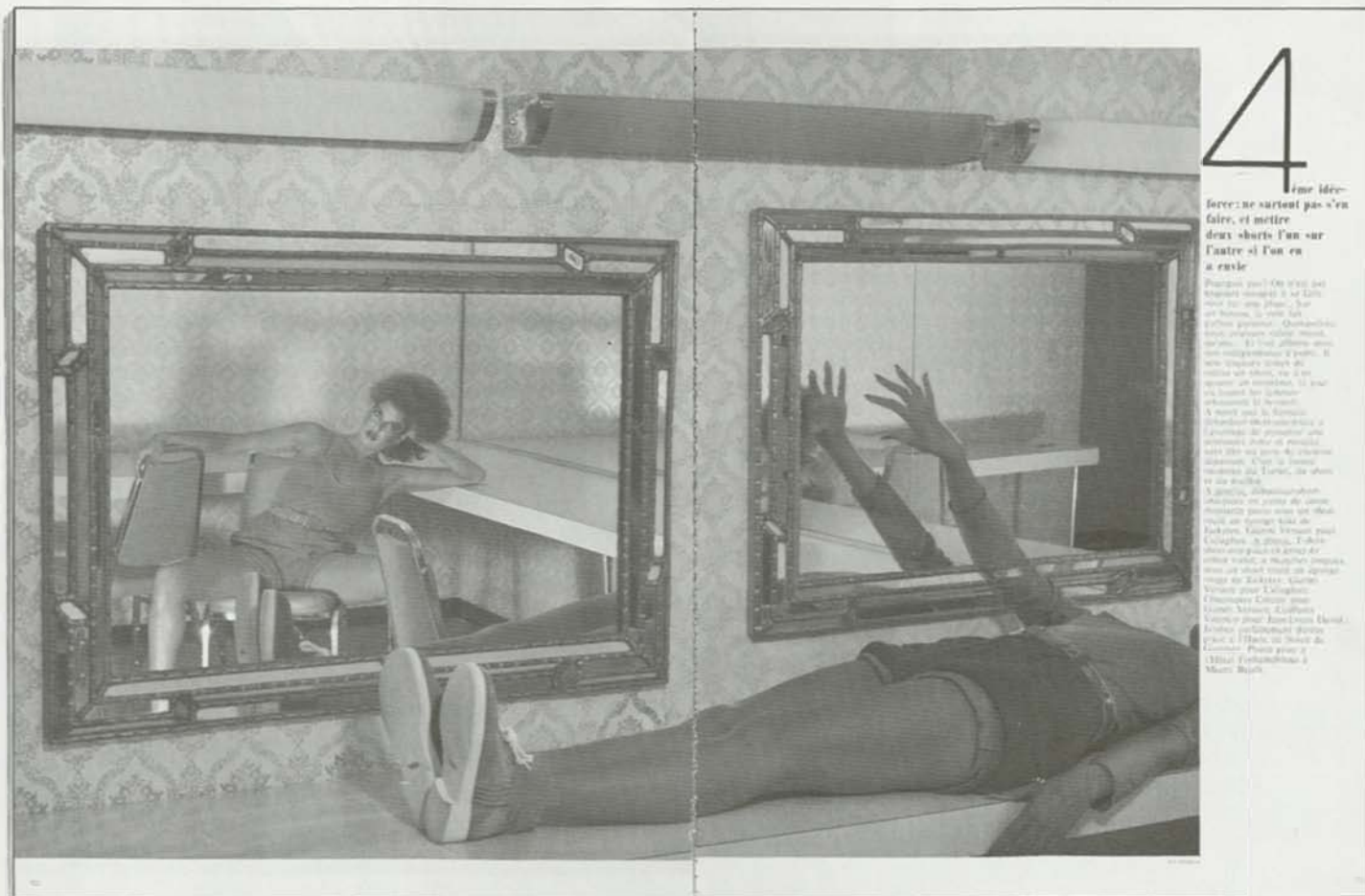


An arrest of vision is required at all costs - even at the expense of accentuating the alienness of clothing itself. Our sense of puzzlement seeks double confirmation which is provided by the product name.

A 'trap for the gaze'<sup>2</sup> may be the solution to the immediate pressures of the market, but the implications of an increasing dependence upon an enlarging and increasingly autonomous advertising industry are less easy to estimate. The new autonomy and independence from the product achieved by the product image seems to promise a fulfilment of the totalitarian ideal of propaganda for its own sake. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* Walter Benjamin saw fascism as the 'political consummation of *l'Art pour l'Art*', in an elevation of propaganda to a new level of aesthetic self-justification. The emancipation of the image from its caption, and of the product-image from the product, means that the advertising image has become the pure imperative, not divisible into form and content, the pure veneer, the absolute facade for and of itself.

## Deborah Turbeville: nostalgia, wallpaper, etc

This new autonomy of the product-image has created another market sector. The collecting of ephemera, the practice of surrounding oneself with old and sometimes not so old advertisements, is now almost a middle-class stereotype. A large business has established itself selling not so much old as 'fixed' brand images. Mass production exploits the borderline between consuming and collecting, between the connoisseurial attention to qualities and the sheer



Guy Bourdin French Vogue May 1978: the alternation of deep and shallow spaces to juxtapose facade and depth . . . we are re-directed from the object (the product) to the spatial ambiguities of its setting.



# WHO KILLED BLAIR PEACH?

The death of Blair Peach in Southall in April 1979 marked a watershed in the growing concern over the changing role and image of the police force. Public concern, already roused by the increasing evidence of corruption, racism and brutality within the police force, was faced with the larger question of police accountability, of 'who polices the police?'

This concern accompanies growing debate over the nature of democracy in Britain today. 'Public opinion' still trusts in the existence of democratic accountability despite what Stuart Hall calls 'a deep and decisive movement towards a more disciplinary and authoritarian kind of society'. This movement is clearly visible not only in the emergence of the police as a militant ideological force but also in government policy and plans for new legislation. The 'law and order' issue cannot be seen as separate from Conservative economic policy which creates economic instability and social tensions while claiming to preserve a status quo.

In this climate the media leads us to believe that all demonstrations, far from being essential to the expression of differing opinions, are dangerous disturbances of the peace, and that those who attend them should 'keep off the streets of London'. This attitude underlies official indifference to the urgent questions raised by the events of Southall and their aftermath. The exhibition from which these photographs are taken shows how it is vital that we examine all the implications of the question Who killed Blair Peach?

This exhibition has been put together by people in East London associated with the Friends of Blair Peach Committee. The exhibition is unashamedly polemical in tone and propagandist in intention. We hope that it will bring many more people to an understanding of, and support for, the demands which this campaign formulated within a week of the police riot in Southall on the 23rd April 1979 and which we continue to press for today. These were, in brief:

1. A full public enquiry into the events in Southall on April 23rd, including the full circumstances surrounding the death of Blair Peach.
2. The disbanding of the Special Patrol Group.

Subsequently the campaign has been concerned to widen its demands to include a more general enquiry into the rising incidence of unexplained deaths in police custody, which has been one of the more worrying trends of the 1970's.

The exhibition integrates photographs and texts to try to give a picture of the police operation in Southall on that day, the particular tactics of the Special Patrol Group in the 'mopping up' operation in which Blair Peach died, and eye-witness accounts of the severity and brutality of the attack on Southall. There is

one large panel, taken from the *Morning Star*, which examines in depth the manipulation of charges by the police to ensure that very few of the 342 people charged after Southall were able to elect to go for trial by jury. The exhibition gives figures detailing the travesties of justice which the Magistrates' Court at Barnet put through on the nod. There is a series of photographs which convey the very real distress and grief occasioned by Blair Peach's murder, both in Southall and within the wide anti-racist movement of which Blair was a part. A detailed chronology of the important dates connected with Blair Peach's death is given, from which one can see exactly how the police were able quite cynically to prolong the inquest - and the burial itself - in the hope of the matter fading from public memory. Other sections of the exhibition detail some of the more well known recent deaths of other people at the hands of the police and call for a wider campaign to bring more public accountability into police affairs; a final section suggests how people may take the campaign further.

The title of the exhibition, 'Who Killed Blair Peach?', continues to represent for us the principal, though not exclusive, theme of the campaign. This is not to follow the path of martyrology, but neither do we wish to allow the



Blair Peach's funeral on June 13th

John Sturrock/Report

murder of a widely-loved individual political militant to disappear into the abstractions of 'inevitability' or hard-edged political 'realism'. It will be through the hard-fought public campaign to have Blair's murder fully investigated within the context of a public inquiry that the complicated manoeuvres, subterfuges, prevarications and fabrications of the police and the legal authorities will be exposed. Already the campaign has pushed against, and finally overturned, the Coroner's ruling supported by the High Court, that a Coroner's jury was not necessary. The commissioning of the independent

pathologist's report, which defined the wholly illegal nature of the murder weapon, the publicising of the miscellaneous and very nasty weaponry found in the SPG lockers, the continual pressure on the press - all these have helped spotlight the mendacity of the police public relations campaign. In doing so, with such intensity, we feel these things have brought about public concern, and have also stimulated concern with many other disquieting cases. It is surely no coincidence that the whole question of deaths in police custody emerged to become a major political issue, following on from the most blatant of all police cover-ups - the failure to make any prosecutions in the case of Blair Peach who was murdered in front of dozens of eye-witnesses.

Since April last year, the Friends of Blair Peach Committee has sent speakers to dozens of meetings and organised many meetings itself as well as social and fund-raising events. It helped organise the highly successful, but little publicised, national picket of police stations on October 10th, the night before the inquest finally re-opened, which involved over 10,000 people around the country. It works closely with the Southall Defence Campaign and stands in full solidarity with all the brothers and sisters arrested and charged on April 23rd.

Yet the campaign still has far to go. The inquest will not finally re-open until probably the beginning of February, with a jury that will probably look as though it had just come straight from the New Year's Honour List. The Southall Trials will carry on well into 1980 and need solidarity and support. The exhibition will, we hope, play an important part in raising people's awareness of the enormity the state offensive on April 23rd 1979, and make them active in the campaign to re-write and re-visualise the Southall riot so that it goes into history as a failed attempt to defeat a popular and courageous anti-racist and anti-fascist initiative.

**Ken Worpole**  
Friends of Blair Peach  
Committee

'Who Killed Blair Peach?' was compiled and designed by Graham Birkin, Neil Martinson and Ken Worpole and is an HMPW Touring Exhibition.



Commemoration march through Southall in memory of Blair Peach

G. M. Cookson/Socialist Challenge





Southall, April 23rd 1979

John Sturrock/Report

## Chronology of events following Blair Peach's death at Southall 1979

- April 23** Anti-racist demonstration at Southall. Over 700 people are arrested of whom 342 are later charged. Blair Peach is killed in an SPG 'mopping up' operation, struck on the head by an unidentified instrument.
- April 24** Deputy Assistant Commissioner Powis says, 'This is a very serious matter. A man has died. We are treating this as a murder enquiry.' Prime Minister Callaghan blames much of the violence on 'outsiders'.
- April 25** Home Secretary Merlyn Rees refuses the widespread call for a public enquiry into the events at Southall.
- April 26** The Blair Peach inquest opens and is adjourned until July 17th at the request of the Metropolitan Police.
- April 28** Commemoration march through Southall in memory of Blair Peach by 10,000 people. (Police continue to disallow release of body for burial).
- May 25** 147 MPs support motion calling for a public enquiry. Some five weeks have passed. As yet the police have still not searched the SPG lockers for possible weapons which might have caused Blair Peach's death.
- June 6** Blair Peach's family release their own independent pathologist's report into the cause of death. Death is ascribed to one severe blow by something like a 'lead-filled rubber cosh'. Press assumes therefore it was not a policeman until . . .
- June 7** Daily Mirror front page scoop: 'RIOT COP IN DEATH QUIZ'. The police announce that they have been holding a Barnes SPG officer for questioning. It seems the inquiry is about to produce a conclusion.
- June 8** The police officer held for four days is released.
- June 13** Blair Peach is buried in East London Cemetery following a funeral procession of over 10,000 people.
- June 14** At a press conference Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir David McNee defends the SPG from recent 'ill-founded criticism'. He tells a black reporter who had expressed the concern which many ethnic groups feel about the SPG, 'If you keep off the streets of London and behave yourselves you won't have the SPG to worry about.'
- July 7** The Morning Star leaks extracts from the Commission for Racial Equality report describing 'undisciplined and uncontrolled clubbing of fleeing civilians.'
- July 17** The inquest re-opens and adjourns until October at request of the Metropolitan Police who haven't finished their enquiries. The coroner says he wants to hear about general police behaviour on that day and other injuries to demonstrators. Some twelve weeks have passed. As yet no identity parades have been held.
- September 10** Main trials of 342 people arrested at Southall begin at Barnet Magistrates Court.
- October 3** Sir Thomas Hetherington, the Director of Public Prosecutions, announces that, due to insufficient evidence, there are to be no prosecutions in the Blair Peach case.
- October 10** Nationwide torchlit picket of police stations on the eve of Blair Peach inquest. Over 10,000 people involved.
- October 11** Inquest re-opens.
- October 12** Inquest adjourned when Blair Peach's family apply to the High Court for a jury.
- November 15** The High Court rejects the application for a jury.
- November 22** Police reopen internal inquiry after anonymous call providing evidence of SPG cover up.
- December 14** In the Appeal Court Lord Denning rules that the coroner's inquest will have a jury.



Southall, April 23rd 1979

John Sturrock/Report



The cover of the first **Photography/Politics** annual declares its guiding principles: an expanded definition of both photography and politics. Next to an image of a Hackney garment worker is placed a blow-up of one of the guides which annotate photographs in fashion magazines. Both images are thus montaged together: the substitution of worker for model, of work for display, produces the 'third effect' underlined by the caption *Garment worker, whose wages don't allow her to buy what she makes*. The primary location for this meaning to do its counter-ideological work is as part of the exhibition **Women - Work in Hackney** by the Hackney Flashers Collective, touring community centres, libraries, schools and factories in the area since 1976. As part of a cover for a photography annual called **Photography/Politics**, however, it is intended to be an example of how the editors see the relationships between the two terms of their title. These relationships are of crucial importance to current political practice: what has **Photography/Politics** to tell us about them?

Firstly, that 'political photography' should go beyond assumptions about the effectivity of the single image, no matter how powerful, to working critically with the verbal/display contexts in which images are reproduced. As well, it expands the arena of political engagement from the usual subjects of photo-journalism (events recognisably 'political'), arguing that not only is *personal* life political but so, too, is *work* itself. The cover pinpoints, by image and text, a specific instance of the organisation and social relations of production under capitalism, a contradiction which results in the exploitation of the woman pictured and of all others in similar situations.

**Photography/Politics** aims to be a theoretical and historical handbook for the practice of a socialist photography. In this respect, it is more useful than any other English publication I have seen, bringing together types of analyses and information otherwise available only in diverse sources. It is organised into three sections: theoretical, historical and examples of current practice.

The first section is headed 'Against the Dominant Ideology' and employs, mostly, the methods of Marxist structuralism. Sylvia Harvey's introductory essay sets out the complexities of revisions of the base and superstructure metaphor within recent theories of ideology. Gen Doy's study of the role of photography during the 1871 Paris Commune is detailed and scholarly, but also alert to the usages of photographs. Records of the Communards' pride in demolishing such symbols of reaction as Thiers' house and the Vendome column were used a few weeks later as evidence for their execution. Photographs of destroyed civic buildings were used to portray the Communards as vandals, threatening private property. Photographers such as Appert made a brisk trade in montaged recreations of events discrediting the Communards, especially the comparatively rare executions performed by them, and in cartes-de-visite of some of the 25-40,000 Communards executed by the returning government.

In two articles on the illustrated weekly, **Picture Post**, Stuart Hall brings out its remarkable 'transparency' in relation to the realities of the war period and Jo Spence explores the changes in ads directed at women - shifting from distinct class and gender stereotypes to a less class specific, double role (mother and worker) during the war, followed by a reversion to the distinctions as women were eased out of the labour force after the war. An image which uses the techniques of advertising against the techniques of monopoly capitalism - John Heartfield's famous photomontage of Hitler's salute transformed into a hand receiving money from an industrialist (literalising the slogan 'Millions Stand Behind Me') - is subjected to a detailed analysis in a welcome translation of Eckhard Siepmann's essay. This section ends with a long essay in which Judith Williamson deconstructs a series of ads which use images of families, showing the family to be a key site on which bourgeois ideology displaces class contradictions. All of these essays are usefully tied to examples, all foreground class and gender (although not race), thus they rarely lapse into the theoreticism which mars much recent counter-ideological thinking.

The real originality of the book is the middle section. This is the first attempt to set out a history of socialist photography. It concentrates on the international worker photographer movement between the wars, presenting the results of recent research into worker photographer organisations in Germany, Holland, Belgium, the United States, Scotland and England. Evident throughout is the guiding hand of the Workers' International Relief, set up by Willi Munzenberg at Lenin's instigation in 1921 and organised through Communist parties in each country. Initially seeking aid in the Russian famine, the agency developed to provide food,

# PHOTOGRAPHY/ POLITICS: ONE



Front cover **Photography/Politics: One**

clothing and shelter for workers in many countries. It also coordinated cultural work in all media by establishing and supporting organisations for writing, theatre, dance, music, newspaper and other publishing, art schools and clubs, and for film and photography. This work passed through three phases: an emphasis on worker-produced and controlled agit-prop during the twenties but especially the early thirties, a shift to alliances with professionals and intellectuals after 1935 in Popular Fronts against Fascism, and a submergence into official anti-Fascism during the war. Within this framework, it was specific to class struggles in each country, that of Germany being perhaps the best-known, and thoroughly explored here by Körner and Stüber. Solid work is also done on the U.S. and Dutch movements by Russell Campbell and Bert Hogenkamp, while Douglas Allan, in his short piece on the movement in Scotland, makes the point that in some cases it is already too late to recover information from former activists. Terry Dennett's article on the English (Workers') Film and Photo League draws on recently recovered archives to show groups active in Central and East London, Hackney and Islington, producing photographs, films, slide shows and even 'film slide talkies' on work and living conditions in their areas, local and international politics, and disseminating films etc. from Europe, especially Russia. A valuable compilation of the League's films (soon to be available from the B.F.I.'s National Film Archive) by Victoria Wegg-Prosser completes the section.

Research such as this is essential to current political work, not only in that it establishes traditions which loosen the stranglehold of modernism on young artists, but also in that, by studying the successes and failures of our predecessors, we can learn much for oppositional practice. One obvious lesson is the effectivity of applying an unrepentantly working class perspective to producing material on concrete situations with and for specific, and perhaps relatively small, groups within the class. Another is the value of intra-class organisation, across job, geographic and ethnic boundaries. Willi Munzenberg's words, critically transposed, are still relevant today:

*Photography has become an indispensable and outstanding means of propaganda in the revolutionary class struggle . . . Much more important, in the end, is the political effect which is achieved by the juxtaposition of several pictures, by captions and accompanying texts . . . The revolutionary workers of all countries have to realize these facts very clearly. They have to fight the class enemy with all means, have to beat him on all fronts. Just as the workers in the Soviet Union have learnt to make their own*

complete, co-ordinating fashion story. Simpson have Gordon Clarke. Today's confident, stylish look sewn up. And summed up.

Main picture: Her long skirt and gilet in book pink 'Complene'. Small, medium or large. £81.00.

Centre picture: Her long skirt and tube-top in red or black 'Complene'. Small or medium. £57.00. His two-piece suit in black or navy pure cotton velvet. From 'Trend' department. £95.00.

Far left: Her gilet coat in navy/white check and toning skirt in navy/white stripe. Both in wool. Worn with shirt in white viscose. All small, medium or large. £99.50 for the three pieces. His navy cotton corduroy jacket, grey wool trousers and three-piece suit from 'Trend' department. £125.00.

*machine-tools, to invent things themselves to be put to the service of peaceful socialist construction, and just as workers in capitalist countries have learnt to write their own newspapers, so the proletarian amateur photographers have to learn to master the camera and use it correctly in international class struggle. (Der Arbeiter-Fotograf, 1931.)*

W.I.R.-inspired cultural organisations existed in many other countries - France, Japan and Australia, for example - and **Photography/Politics: Two** aims to include material on these. It would be of great interest to survey also other left cultural work of the period (for example, the Artists International Association, discussed by Tony Rickaby in **History Workshop Journal**, no.6) and to set such work against the aestheticised, modernist, good-times-triumphant version of the thirties recently embalmed in the Hayward Gallery.

The third section deals with 'Left Photography Today' - only partially, the editors apparently having already collected enough material for another annual on this topic alone. The outstanding feature of this section is that it is presented by practitioners; it lacks the distancing effects of art critical surveying and is thus useful for those working, or intending to work, in similar or related ways. Liz Heron's report on the Hackney Flashers Collective is an honest account of the practical and theoretical struggles of the group over the best ways to effectively present imagery which challenged the oppression of women both at work and through such regulators of the relationships between family and work as child-care provision. Similarly, the interview with the Film and Poster Collective maps out the development of their posters from single-image and short text to the complex formats they have recently tended to use. They end by citing Gramsci: 'Creating a new culture does not only mean one's own individual "original" discoveries. It also, and most particularly, means the diffusion in a critical form of truths already discovered, their "socialisation" as it were, and even making them the basis of vital action, an element of coordination and intellectual and moral order'.

While the relationship of socialist photography to socialist political organisation was a key element in the history section, political parties made no appearance in the theoretical section and are referred to in only two articles in this section. MINDA discuss their photomontages for CARF, the newspaper of the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, especially their exposures of National Front leaders as Nazis and their closeness to Thatcherism. Robert Golden reports on his posters for **Socialist Worker** and on the series of children's books he did with Sarah Cox, **The People Working**. These two

articles are also the only ones whose main subject is racism and how to fight it. A further two articles show frankly what it is like to work for the local state. Nick Hedges details the stereotypes used in ads for the charity Shelter; and Trisha Ziff gives a useful account of her work as a photographer in the Southwark Social Services Department. In contrast, I am puzzled by the inclusion of the mutual admiration notes of John Berger and Jean Mohr, and the presumption with which they treat their favourite subjects: women and peasants.

**Photography/Politics** concludes with essays by two critic-photographers. John Tagg displays this nexus in a series of diary-like fragments, working notes on the problems of photographic representation, which range from the brilliant to the banal, from a subtle materialism to a very nearly sexist Barthesian speculativeness. Both self-indulgent and courageous, this text reveals much about the kinds of thought processes which underlie the polished surfaces of most published critical writing. Allan Sekula's 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary' organises a similar range of concerns into a cogent dismissal of modernism ('Only formalism can unite all the photographs in the world in one room, mount them behind glass, and sell them') and an equally intense interrogation of documentary 'realism'. He calls for a 'truly critical social documentary' which will 'frame the crime, the trial and the system of justice and its official myths', exemplifying the beginnings of this by describing the work of a small group of mainly young U.S. photographers/film-makers/video artists: Martha Rosler, Jon Jost, Brian Connell, Phillip Steinmetz, Fred Lonidier, Chauncey Hare and himself. All focus on aspects of working life seen in the context of power relations within particular industries. Displayed with extensive analytical captioning, the work is returned for use within the political struggles of those who are the subjects of the photographs. It aims to 'document monopoly capitalism's inability to deliver the conditions of a fully human life', an art of 'resistance aimed ultimately at socialist transformation'.

These remarks indicate the direction in which **Photography/Politics** points, the model of photographic practice which it proposes. It shows that there have been, and are, substantial achievements. It also reflects a core contradiction of current interventionist photography: the tensions between individual work for the working class and collective work produced within the class. In this sense, the history section of the book mounts a critique of much current work. Some of the important work being done within working class political organisations and community structures is included, but there is much more being done, here, in the U.S., Germany and Australia, for example, which could form the focus of the next annual.

Finally, **Photography/Politics**, by occupying a space overlapping with the concerns of this magazine, poses some sharp questions. It was put together, and some of the articles written, by people who were instrumental in founding the Half Moon Photography Workshop, in building up its range of activities and in publishing **Camerawork**. They were obliged to resign, or were sacked, in August 1977, when the collective split for personal, political and ideological reasons. As a non-participant, I cannot comment on this affair. Nonetheless, part of the significance of **Photography/Politics** is that its future does not depend on Arts Council funding. Its total commitment to expanded definitions of photography and politics is a function of this independence. **Camerawork** has published issues (for example on Lewisham and Northern Ireland), and the Half Moon Gallery has mounted exhibitions, within a similar commitment. But not always. If every issue was overtly 'political' subsidies would dry up.

**Photography/Politics** throws into relief the fact that **Camerawork** seeks to address a broad audience with a wide range of liberal/left opinions. The dangers here are those of 'wishy-washy liberalism', directionless ineffectuality, of merely reflecting this diversity rather than seeking to focus it. The advantage of this is that a variety of subjects can be tackled, at different levels, and a large audience or set of audiences reached. But it is not a question of some topics being naturally 'political', and others 'not', rather of a committed political attitude across a variety of subjects, from photographic archives to photo-journalist action, from kids participation to sexual politics. That commitment should, or could, be contingent on the political vagaries of Arts Council funding is a grotesque reflection of the ways this society is organised.

**Terry Smith**

**PHOTOGRAPHY/POLITICS ONE** is available for £4.95 (postage 60p, overseas postage £1.00) from P.D.C., 27 Clerkenwell Close, EC1, or **Photography Workshop**, 152 Upper Street, London N1.



# Pictured History:

## Match-girls' strike 1888



Matchgirls on strike outside Bryant & May's, Bow, July 1888

*The value of photographs to labour history is strikingly illustrated here: the media distorts the conditions which led to the famous strike, the photographs point to the actual conditions. The media misreports the 'girls' as healthy and happy in the factories and fails to point out that half of the work of the industry, the making of matchboxes, was done at home in appalling and dangerous conditions for next to nothing. Photographs made this fact undeniable. Historians who fear photographs are denying themselves a key resource; photographers who ignore the ways history is constructed are limiting the effectiveness of their work.*

All of the images on these pages are products of the depression of the 1880s. Cassell's *Saturday Journal* for December 10, 1887 illustrates comely girls busily working in open spaces, attractive appendices to the processes of match-making. The text is equally distorting; in breathless style it details the growth of Bryant & May's as if it were a natural flowering into modern technology from the primitive rubbing together of two sticks. It lauds the large, scientifically ventilated factory buildings, sets out the simple, almost casual nature of the work, claims that the girls are paid between 12 and 14 shillings a week, and praises them as 'very industrious and remarkably well behaved', adding that 'nearly all the girls look strong and healthy'.

Two years earlier these same girls had struck against the lowering of their wages and the undermining of their health, especially the loss of their teeth from inhaling phosphorus fumes. This led Tom Mann to say of Bryant & May's: 'Their working girls are most miserably paid, getting only some 8s. per week . . . And that company, during the first six months of its existence, actually paid over £330,000 to shareholders, who had not done a single stroke of work towards producing it.'<sup>1</sup> In July 1888, four girls who had given information on their conditions to social reformer Annie Besant were dismissed. The result was the first step in the 'new unionism' — all the girls walked out.

factories, Bryant & May's systematically increased its domination of the industry until the depression of the 1880s. Its response was not to lay off workers but the other classic manoeuvre, to reduce pay. When that was resisted, it achieved the same end by stepping up its system of fines. Eleven shillings a week was the theoretically conceivable maximum for a girl working at full speed in optimum conditions. But these conditions rarely obtained, and fines further cut average pay down to a few shillings a week. As well, the work was dangerous: 'phossy jaw' (phosphorus necrosis) became common, spreading pain, inflammation and abscesses from the teeth throughout the jaw and face. Bryant & May's were more concerned to prevent this than the usual small garret factories, but even they responded in the same way when the girls affected could no longer work quickly: they would be sacked. Photographs showing the interiors of match factories do not seem to be available, but medical photographs of 'phossy jaw' are, and they are appalling.

The East End provided capitalists with a huge pool of labour ripe for the sweating, especially that of single girls and mothers with dependants. Bryant & May's drew on this by dividing their production between matchmaking in the factories and matchbox making as 'outwork'. The photographs show the conditions under which thousands of women and their families assembled the parts provided by the factories. Paid at a lesser rate than the factory girls, they worked a sixteen hour day at a maximum of ¼d per hour. They had to provide extra materials themselves, and to take the bundles of boxes to the factory to receive the pay. Many were sacked matchmakers, many were the only breadwinners in their family. Their desperate struggle for subsistence was a constant warning to those in factory jobs.

How much of this can be 'read' from these photographs? The information I have just given is based on evidence presented at various enquiries and observations made by various investigators; the analysis is based on the work of those who have researched the subject, especially Reg

Beer.<sup>2</sup> Little of it is stated in the photographs, but, in another sense, much more is made clear. The photographs do not state that the women pictured worked sixteen hours daily at ¼d per hour. They show something more important: that is, *what it was like to work at that job*, for those hours, at that rate. Historians often seem more comfortable with facts *about* experience than with facts *of* experience — for many of them, photographs and other visual material qualify as neither. Rebutting this requires that we go over some old and obvious ground about the nature of photography.

**'They left work there and then. The discharged one was taken back but this did not pacify them. A hundred of them marched to Fleet Street yesterday afternoon, and sent a deputation to see Mrs Besant. They expressed their determination to hold out. There is no organisation amongst them, but they seem to stick together well.'**  
The Star, July 6, 1888.

Photographs are records of what the camera pointed at. They are records of momentary appearances, and relate to reality only to the degree that the recorded surface itself does. The camera records only a limited field of appearance, and thus a photograph is a selection from amongst all possible appearances; its relation to reality is, therefore, only as strong as the selection. Being a selection, a photograph is a *reading* of appearances: we have to ask why the photographer was there at that time, which conventions of photography she was operating, which ideologies were influencing her, what was the context of use of the photograph? As well, appearances can be, and often are, actively constructed — things and people are arranged, posed, juxtapositions faked — just as elements from different times and places can be combined and rephotographed. It is possible to photograph an appearance in a variety of ways, to alter the image drastically in printing it and to change it still further by the addition of other images and texts when it is reproduced or displayed. These are some of the limits within which a photographer arrives at meaning; they are also some of the ways in which meaning is manipulated for the viewer.

How does this bear on the logical status of photographs as evidence? Because photographs record what was before the camera at a particular moment, they are renderings of instances which, strictly speaking, cannot stand for any other instances. In being so easily manipulable, doubt can be raised about the degree to which they stand for even the instance ostensibly 'caught' by the camera. Thus the demand for extra-photographic authentication, by verbal and written

documents and statements, implying that they are somehow less subject to partiality and manipulation. For all these reasons, historians tend to use photographs as illustrations rather than evidence, and almost never think visually in their efforts to reconstruct history.

But this caution becomes self-defeating as collections of unofficial, people's memorabilia — such as that at the National Museum of Labour History — continue to grow, making more and more photographs available to researchers, teachers, activist publishers and others. The point is that photographs are not only records of what the camera was pointed at; they are also records of *how* the camera was pointed and how the subsequent print was made. We can, in nearly every case, decipher the technical and ideological operations which went into achieving the image and into reproducing/displaying it. Rules of evidence for photographs will obviously differ from those applicable to written documents, but they are nonetheless rules, with the same logical status. No-one operating such rules takes seriously the claim that photographs are unproblematic representations of reality, truth or whatever. They are partial selections, always for a purpose, always in context. Like written documents, official statements, works of art, that is, like any communicative form. All are constructions, but all can, with proper analysis, be deconstructed.

**'The pity is that the match girls have not been suffered to take their own course, but have been egged on to strike by irresponsible advisers. No effort has been spared by these pests of the modern industrial world, the Social Democrats, to bring the quarrel to a head.'**  
The Times, July 14, 1888.

There are, I think, some further reasons why historians tend to distrust photographs. Most writers, especially when looking at early photographs, have attempted to account for the peculiar power of the images by pointing to their ambiguity, their susceptibility to readings beyond those perhaps intended by the photographer. Both Walter Benjamin and John Berger, for example, stress the sense of the subject 'projecting through' the image: the viewer's disturbing awareness that the subject was aware of being photographed, has paused for a moment to be recorded. It is as if the act of photography has disturbed what it aimed to record, changing it from what it was — it has interrupted normal social relationships and communicative exchanges. Yet, at the same time, both photographer and subject know that

*text continued on page 10*

**'If a woman can by honest work, earn a little money at home in her spare time (at matchboxes), do you see any objection to it?'**  
The Chief General Inspector, Local Government Board, Poplar Union Enquiry, 1906.

Why did they see mutual self-defence as worth risking their jobs for? Why did they, ignored by male organisers of predominantly male unions, feel the need to fight for the establishment of their own union? And why at Bryant & May's, recognised by all sides as one of the better employers in the industry?

By rationalising production in specially-built



# Pictures from the National M

The National Museum of Labour History was opened in 1975 in Limehouse Town Hall. Sponsored by the Trades Union Congress and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, it is the official repository of a large range and variety of items relevant to the history of the labour movement. It houses banners, books, newspapers, posters, badges, ornaments, pamphlets, documents and photographs. Some of these are on permanent display, others form part of the exhibition programmes and are used in lectures, still others are part of its reference library. The photo-library contains over two thousand catalogue items to date: 190 of these will be published in *Women at Work*



devoted his energies with considerable success towards the improvement of the match trade... floors and high roofs, and are scientifically a week. They are paid by piecework, and their earnings amount to from twelve to... To the last-mentioned fact... -teen shillings a week. They work for... a day, nam...

Matchbox making at Bow, Illustrated London News, 1871



Cardboard box making, East End, London. From 'Sweated Industries', an exhibition by



Home matchbox maker, East End, London, early 1890s



Matchgirls at home, East End, London, early 1890s



# Museum of Labour History

1830-1918 (Duckworth, 1980). The Museum publishes a newsletter, Visual History, and pamphlets such as Reg Beer's *The Matchgirls' Strike 1888*, on which this article was based. Recently refused an Arts Council grant (on the grounds that trade union banners were not 'art'), the Museum needs your support as much as it invites your use. It is located at Limehouse Town Hall, Commercial Road, London E14. 01-555 3229.

The Labour History Museum has recently published the *Match Girls Strike Register* which gives their full names, addresses and further details. Available for £2.00 from the Labour History Museum.



the Daily News, Queens Hall, London, May 1906



MATCH CUTTING.

HOW IT IS DONE: Dec 10 1887

XI - AT BRYANT AND MAY'S MATCH FACTORY.

WHEN it is stated that Messrs. Bryant and May produce a million and a quarter boxes of wooden

suffocating fumes, is now completely eclipsed by the modern patent safety and paraffin matches. Messrs. Bryant and May's factories in Fairfield Road, Bow, occupy some ten acres of ground. The works comprise three separate establishments, each of which is similar in plan, and in each of which the process goes on in the same way.

composition. Each of the girls is provided with a knife, which is attached to a block by a hinge. With this knife they divide the double matches before placing them in the boxes. Force of habit enables them to take up exactly the right quantity of matches to fill two boxes. These are placed all together on the knife and cut.

Cassell's Saturday Journal, December 10th 1887. Public relations puff for Bryant & May's



Home matchbox maker, East End, London, early 1890s



recording 'normality' is the aim of the exercise, so both, in different ways and in different degrees, temporarily contract to achieve it. The subject normally lives this normality; for the occasion of the photograph, she composes herself to 'represent' it. But unless the subject is an actor or a model, the representation is never complete, and often the subject will withhold something from the representation, will refuse to comply, to be 'typical'. Examples abound: August Sander's pictures of workers and peasants are often cited because his project was to record 'objectively' as many social types as possible.<sup>3</sup> Usually, the relationship is described in terms of psychological effect, as if a person-to-person, viewer-to-subject communication were occurring, but one displaced by the fact of the photograph. The undeniable presence of the subject of history as another person (right there, staring at me, knowing I am looking) can be too intrusive for those used to dealing with the abstract character of words as documents – it changes the relationship from eavesdropping to voyeurism. At the same time, the object of history (descriptions of 'reality', of 'what actually happened') becomes elusively absent. It is as if the evidence itself were at once both accepting and rejecting its interpreter. Too much . . . back to the British Library.

(At Bryant & May's, Bow) 'The hour for commencing work is 6.30 in summer and 8 in winter; work concludes at 6 pm. Half an hour is allowed for breakfast and an hour for dinner. This long day of work is performed by young girls, who have to stand the whole of the time. A typical case is that of a girl of 16, a piece-worker; she earns 4s. a week, and lives with her sister, employed by the same firm, who 'earns good money, as much as 8s. or 9s. a week.' Out of the earnings 2s. is paid for the rent of one room; the child lives on only bread-and-butter and tea, alike for breakfast and dinner. The splendid salary of 4s. is subject to deductions in the shape of fines; if the feet are dirty, or the ground under the bench is left untidy, a fine of 3d. is inflicted; for putting 'burns' – matches that have caught fire during the work – on the bench 1s. has been forfeited, and one unhappy girl was once fined 2s. 6d. for some unknown crime. If a girl leaves four or five matches on her bench when she goes for a fresh 'frame' she is fined 3d., and in some departments a fine of 3d. is inflicted for talking.' Annie Besant, 'White Slavery in London' The Link, June 23, 1888.

But the issue is not just formal and psychological, it is also ideological. If we ask what are the key contexts of use for the photograph under capitalism, the answer must be: as advertising, as record (by, for example, the police), as illustration (by, for example, newspapers) and as art . . . in this order, both quantitatively and in terms of ideological effect. All these are directed mostly against those with little power, and are circulated through communication systems dominated by the bourgeoisie and the state. In contrast, there are at least two other different contexts of use broadly speaking: the amateur snapshot and reformist/oppositional photography. Attempts to control the first by the control of processing mostly succeed in containing it within family settings, recording events, formalised relationships. But there is always the potential, and sometimes the actuality, of critical usage – for example, the Worker Photographers' movement in the 1930s. This shades into reformist/oppositional work, which often has to take on the conventions of dominant contexts of use. For example, 'social documentary' photography often draws on the conventions of record (as 'disclosure'), of the illustration (as 'exposure') and of art ('beauty amid squalor'). Lewis Hine's work for the U.S. National Child Labour Committee is a classic instance. Reformist photography is obliged to operate these conventions, otherwise it cannot be read by those whose exercise of power it is seeking to redirect. The photographs of the matchbox workers are part of this tendency, the most famous contemporary example of which was Jacob Riis' disclosure/exposure of housing conditions in Lower Manhattan, *How the Other Half Lives*.

None of the photographs reproduced on the preceding pages are candid snaps of unaware subjects; all are compositions aimed at producing specific responses. The two single figures (bottom left and bottom right) are unusually expressive, printed in relatively high contrast rather than the diffuse lighting or the spotlighting favoured in the period. They are close-ups of the specific effects of matchbox making on a single woman and her child, using the conventions of stage melodrama, the 'police gazette' shock picture. The 'Matchgirls at Home' (bottom centre) is organised like a Pre-Raphaelite painting of the 'deserving poor': two women silhouetted against the glowing window, 'noble' postures and Sunday-best clothes contrasting sharply with the slavish work. Their poverty is emphasised in the disarray on the right, where the child is an element of the chaos of their thinly-stocked kitchen cupboard and

table. 'Cardboard box making' (top centre) shows child exploitation, but may well have sought a positive response: the woman is signified as a 'broodhen', the maternal centre of a 'family factory', with a certain warmth of observation which recognises her personal dignity as well as her struggle which is so clearly marked in the disfigured children.

How are we to account for these differences? We have only fragments of information about the specific situations which inform each picture. But each one relates to the concern of the middle-class London reformers to do something about the 'lot' of the East End poor. As images of destitution, the first two photographs depend on a sense of the poor as 'other', nearly sub-human, living in impossible condi-

have been taken by or for the latter, which set up a factory in the mid-1880s, mechanising matchbox making and paying a higher rate than Bryant & May's. Its hopes of improving the situation may well be expressed in aspects of this photograph. In practice, however, the reverse occurred – its initiative undercut prices, causing employers to lower rates of pay still further.

None of the photographs refer to the other side of middle-class charity: the fear that these lower classes might be forced into rising up in protest, as they did in the riots of 1886. Nor do they visually declare the parallel fear of the rise of unionism, of organised action on a class basis. The drawings and text in *Cassell's Saturday Journal* and similar illustrated weeklies do react to this fear, not overtly, but in their strenuous



Matchgirls demonstration, July 1888



Union of Women matchmakers, July 1889. Annie Besant (President) and Herbert Burrows (Treasurer)

tions yet breeding like savages, without hope or religion, ignorant of the duties of family life, subject to prostitution – the 'vicious, criminal classes'. The stacked matchboxes serve less as a pointer to the cause of the woman's collapse than as the background to a personal tragedy: the death of her child, whose bruised, cold feet poke out of the rude blanket below the table. Viewers would have been alert to such readings; they are typical of Victorian narrative – on the stage, in song, in stories, illustrated newspaper and in paintings such as Luke Fildes's *Applicants for Admission to a Charity Ward*, 1874. The other two photographers, with their intimations of the

'Imagine a time-reversal: that a riot such as Lewisham occurred over a century ago, and the only reporters there were from the Illustrated London News. We would still be having academic arguments over it – was it a large or small demonstration, were the police violent or not, were most of the demonstrators black or white? But with a textual argument about why, and a textual and photographic account of what happened, you've got a very good case. Nowadays, you would not study Lewisham or Grunwick, nor present your study, without using photographs. But historians of the later nineteenth century, the turn of this century, don't do this – and there are some superb photographs available.'

Terry McCarthy, Curator, National Museum of Labour History, interview, 1979.

dignity of the women, reflect the reformist efforts of middle-class charity, paralleling crusades such as Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* 1851-62 and institutions such as the Lord Mayor's Fund and the Salvation Army. The fourth photograph, in fact, may well

efforts to depict the girls as healthy and dutiful, model lower middle-class workers for bosses so benevolent that any thoughts of strike action would be foreign and unnatural.

It is not surprising that employers' views were presented in the established print and illustrated media, whereas the reformers turned to photography in their campaigns to alleviate the plight of the matchgirls. But these relationships are not necessarily fixed: a large number of low-priced illustrated newspapers were sold, like the *Illustrated Times*, with more direct drawings; Annie Besant organised publicity for the matchgirls in a variety of ways, from questions in parliament to her ½d paper *Link*; Margaret Harkness' descriptions of life and work in the East End are as detailed, typical and as compelling as any of the photographs.<sup>4</sup> More important than the views of outside observers, however, were the actions of the matchgirls themselves, the effects they sought in the strikes of 1885 and 1888, and in their march on the House of Commons in 1871.

In response to this march the *Illustrated London News* published a sketch and story on matchbox making. This is an interesting case of reality intruding to such an extent that a contradiction is created. The drawing of the extended family confined in a single room, haggard parents and scrambling children all bound to the job, is a graphic indictment of this kind of life and work. By implication, it explains why a tax on matches would be inhuman: there being no question of the manufacturer absorbing the tax by taking a profit cut, its immediate effect would be on these barely-subsisting workers, reducing still further their meagre earnings and throwing many of them into unemployment and starvation. By further implication, it points to

why the matchgirls took such an unprecedented step as marching on parliament. The text supports the withdrawal of the proposed tax, but ignores the brutality with which the police treated the marchers and blocks the extension of criticism to the employers responsible for the workers' conditions by attempting to defend these conditions. 'Our illustration, from a sketch taken by our Artist, in the dwelling of a humble family at Bow, represents children busied at this useful task, which they are commonly able to begin at less than five years of age . . . The only thing painful in their toil is that the sandpaper is apt to make the soft skin of their little fingers sore.' That is, it is doing the same ideological work for the bourgeoisie in the aftermath of the 1871 protest as did the other journals in the period leading up to the 1888 strike.

The 1888 strike is the most famous in which the matchgirls were involved, but it was one of many, part of a growing consciousness on their part. It was triggered, as I have said, by Bryant & May's instant reaction to Annie Besant's investigations: to forbid all talk to outsiders and to sack those who did talk. Their subsequent walk-out was the first by any group of British workers on an issue of solidarity. It pointed to the different style of dispute developed by the 'new' unions – mass, industry-wide combinations of relatively unskilled workers – prefiguring the celebrated 1889 dockers' strike. Importantly, it was a strike initiated, coordinated and negotiated by women workers, as the photograph of the strike committee shows. This, and other photographs of girls assembling and demonstrating, as well as documents such as the strike fund records, indicate a large group of mostly young, illiterate, single women who had created between themselves a network of mutual support strong enough to bring them off work, to coordinate a large strike, to win it and to go on to form one of the first unions of unskilled women workers.

(At John Baker's, Three Cold Colts Lane, Bethnal Green) 'The air, especially near where the boys work, feels loaded with phosphorus. It is a very objectionable place. Mary Ann Prancer, seems about 14. Does not know how old she is. Lives in master's house and works partly as servant and partly in here box making. Does that for a living and a shilling a week to clothe herself. Works here and in the house till about 10 o'clock. Never was at school in her life. Does not know a letter. Never went to a church or a chapel. Never heard of 'England' or 'London' or 'the sea' or 'ships'. Never heard of God. Does not know what He does. Does not know whether it is better for her to be good or bad. Note: this girl, though with no outward sign of stupidity, but on the contrary nice looking, seemed, as would be gathered from her answers, sunk in a state of mindless, hopeless ignorance, and to have no ideas whatever beyond her round of work, her 1s. a week, and her food and clothing. She has a mother and a home, but for some reason which I could not make out, does not even have the chance of going there. It is hard to imagine how anyone, born in possession of reason, can have been kept so utterly out of reach of learning anything beyond what her animal senses might teach.'

Evidence gathered for Children's Employment Commission, First Report 1863.

Other immediate effects included the forcing of an enquiry into sweated labour in London (1889) and the establishment of similar unions (for example, the London Gasworkers' Union by Eleanor Marx-Aveling and Will Thorne in 1889). But 'phoshy jaw' continued to ravage factory match girls, and little was done about the core structural exploitation of the industry: homework. This was reduced only by the mechanisation of matchbox production, driving home matchbox makers either into starvation or the plethora of other sweated labour which abounded then in East London – and still does.

## Terry Smith

### NOTES:

1. 'What a Compulsory 8 Hour Working Day means to the workers', 1886, *Reprints in Labour History*, no. 2, Pluto 1972, 25-6.
2. *The Matchgirls' Strike 1888: the struggle against sweated labour in London's East End*, National Museum of Labour History Pamphlet no. 2, 1979. Similarly, the inspiration for this article was an interview given by Terry McCarthy, Curator of the Museum, to the editors of *Camerawork* in June 1979. Fatima Rahman, Photo-Librarian of the Museum, has provided valuable assistance.
3. See, for example, Walter Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', *One-Way Street*, New Left Books, 1979; John Berger, *New Society*, March 1979.
4. H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, *The City; images and realities*, London 1973, ch. 24 in volume 2; John Law (pseudonym of Margaret Harkness), *Out of Work*, 1888, and *In Darkest London*, 1889; and William J. Fishman, *The Streets of East London*, Duckworth 1979.



# Nuclear Wastes

At Windscale the spent fuel rods from the thirty nuclear power stations in Britain are reprocessed so that the uranium (for nuclear power stations) and the plutonium (for bombs) are recovered. However, during reprocessing, volumes of very dangerous and long-lived (i.e. exceeding 250,000 years) radioactive wastes are formed. The government is still seeking methods of dealing with these highly active wastes. Because of the dangers connected with reprocessing (including the recovery of plutonium for bombs for Third World countries), the United States, which has by far the largest number of reactors in the world, has stopped reprocessing for civil reactors. Instead it stores its spent fuel rods at large storage sites.

The Cockcroft Towers were derided as an expensive folly when they were installed, but a few months later, in October 1957, during the disastrous fire in which thousands of curies of

radioactivity were released, the chimney filters kept the discharge down to manageable proportions. They thus averted a major catastrophe whereby an enormous amount of fumes and gases would have entered the atmosphere.

One of the problems with nuclear power is that large amounts of radioactive materials must be transported up and down the country between each of the many stages in the nuclear cycle. Every year 2,000 spent fuel rods are dealt with at Windscale, so that at least one container holding five tons of waste is on the move every day. Wastes from the nuclear power stations at Breakwell and Sizewell in East Anglia are sent through London every week on their way north to Windscale. After reprocessing there, both the uranium and plutonium go to Springfields in Lancashire.

It is conceivable that an accident or sabotage might occur which would release vast amounts of

radioactive particles into the atmosphere. If this happened in London, for example, it would render huge areas of the city uninhabitable for the next hundred years.

Medium level waste from Windscale is pumped into the Irish Sea. This waste contains a high proportion of extremely dangerous alpha emitters, including plutonium. No-one knows what the final effect of these radioactive wastes will be, or what effect they will have on the food and fish, or where they will be carried by shifting sands, tides and currents.

The amounts of radioactive pathogens released are within international limits (so called); there is, however, a great deal of argument over the safety of these limits. One thing is certain: Britain dumps thousands of times more waste into its coastal waters than any other European country. These facts were brought to the attention of Justice Parker at the Windscale

Inquiry and yet were virtually ignored in his report. Many countries refuse to have anything to do with reprocessing plants because of the associated problems of medium level waste. In fact only two such plants operate for civilian nuclear waste in the West: Cap le Hague in France, and Windscale.

The Royal Commission Report on Nuclear Power and the Environment comments on nuclear waste:-

*We are agreed that it would be irresponsible and morally wrong to commit future generations to the consequences of fission power on a massive scale unless it has been demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that at least one method exists for the safe isolation of these wastes for the indefinite future.*

Pictures by Mike Abrahams



Truck carrying waste at the Windscale Nuclear Reprocessing Plant. The Cockcroft Towers are on the right.



Containers carrying nuclear waste at the Windscale rail yard.



Pipes in concrete protection carrying radioactive water to the Irish Sea.



# Wish you were here

## A look at postcards

The history of picture postcards began with the cartes-de-visite which became very popular in the 1860's. These were personal souvenirs to give friends. Originally they were portraits of the senders and their families, but pictures of the Royal Family and other notables were gradually introduced. Eventually they depicted members of the working class, as long as they were recognisable 'characters' such as Irish farm labourers or London cab drivers.

In the past postcards were also used to record and comment on inventions, feats of skill and miracles. Today newspapers, magazines and television provide all these images. The postcard's social function has been relegated to that of collector's item or holiday memento – or has it? There are signs that individuals and groups are finding new uses for them, similar to those mentioned below – personal and political statements.



Group portrait sent home by timber worker, 1910.

Manchester Studies Archive

Thanks to Martin Parr whose research and postcards we've used.

## Making your own postcards

Printing your own postcards is probably the most economical form of self-publication, and the most democratic – anyone with £100 can do it. If you have an enlarger and print drier you can produce a run of 500 postcards for less than £20.

### Doing it all yourself

If you want to do everything yourself, which in some cases you may think desirable (you may not be able to find a printer to print your cards if the pictures or text have even a shadow of illegality), you will be treading a well worn path. The earliest postcards were all printed from photographic negatives onto bromide paper.

Several manufacturers make paper in rolls. The standard size is 3½" × 250 feet, costing around £14. Kentmere paper is cheaper than the 'big two', but they add a £2.20 service charge on special orders, so it works out around the same price. Double weight paper is really necessary to give sufficient substance to the cards. You should get about 500 cards from one roll, so, with chemicals, it would cost you approximately 3p a card.

In the past, cards were printed by contact from glass plates, and a caption was either scratched through a dense part of the emulsion or written onto a thin part with Indian ink. Although it's still possible to print your own postcards by putting a negative into the enlarger itself and enlarging it, it's easier to get a copy negative of your picture made the same size as the final card, and then make contact prints. This has several advantages: the paper will be held flat by the sheet of glass used to make the contact print, and there will be no focussing problems. The enlarger, used as a light source, can be opened to full aperture, and the printing time is therefore cut down. Furthermore, whilst a negative may require shading and burning in, this is impractical for a run of 500.

To get a copy negative made, you have first to make a perfect print of your negative the size you want it on the card, or slightly larger. The print should be shaded and burned in if necessary, and also spotted. It must then be copied onto sheet film. Although it is possible to do this yourself, it is probably better to take it to a laboratory to do it for you. It will cost approximately £3. It is important to make clear that you want the negative to make contact prints from. Take care to

specify the size of the negative you need. It will probably come back as a piece of film cut from a 10" × 8" sheet. Mask off the area that you don't want to print (i.e. the border) with black tape, and tape the negative to a sheet of glass. The sheet of glass is then hinged to the baseboard of the enlarger that you're using. Carpet tape is good for this.

The unexposed roll of paper will rest on one side of the easel, and the exposed end of the roll on the other. An improvised roll-box will ensure that neither end gets fogged by stray light from the enlarger. It need not be too elaborate as long as it keeps the light out. The paper needs to be prevented from moving from side to side across the easel; this is best done by small pieces of card to act as registration stops. Lengthwise registration is controlled by how far you slide the paper between exposures. This can be controlled by making small pencil marks on the paper, spacing them the same distance apart as the width of the postcard.

Development, fixing, washing and drying will be complicated by the fact that you will have a length of paper 250 feet long. The best solution is to use a row of buckets full of chemicals, and wash the length of paper in the bath. It would also help to tear the strip up into ten foot long pieces. There should be no problem drying the strip if a rotary dryer is used. After printing, drying and cutting to size, you may want to put information on the back of the card. If you choose to get a rubber stamp made, it may add a lot to the cost of the card: a postcard size stamp could well cost £20. An alternative is the ubiquitous John Bull Printing Outfit, though this does tend to look rather amateur. Some duplicators will accept small sheets of card.

### Getting a printer to do it for you

If a printer produces postcards for you, the price will vary considerably, depending on how much of the work you do yourself, and on the printer's costs. Most printers' presses take a plate considerably larger than a postcard; consequently they put more than one image on each plate – often as many as eight. Unless you have eight images that you want to have printed, you can either team up with someone else printing postcards, or have one or more of your images twice on the same plate. A few printers, like



In 1894 the GPO cut the postage rate from 1d to ½d and this provided a great incentive for postcard firms. It has been estimated that 880 million postcards were sent in the year of 1914 alone. They were used for advertising, to express political feelings (as with the Suffragette cards), and to depict local events. Postcards of local disasters were a useful way of conveying news to distant friends and relatives at a time when there were no news photographs.



Postcards were used to record and comment on inventions, feats of skill and miracles. Today newspapers, magazines and television provide all these images. The postcard's social function has been relegated to that of collector's item or holiday memento – or has it? There are signs that individuals and groups are finding new uses for them, similar to those mentioned above – personal and political statements.

Walkerprint in London, specialise in postcards, and will produce individual cards. Leeds Postcards is an organisation that brings together people who need short runs of one postcard. If you have only one picture to be reproduced, they may be useful.

Most printers will quote a fixed price for 'camera ready artwork', which means they expect an image from which they can make a plate directly. If a photograph is being printed, this presents problems. A printing plate can reproduce only two tones – black and white. In order to produce shades of grey, it is necessary to make a halftone from the photograph. This is a process by which the image is split up into millions of tiny dots, some of them solid black, and the rest of them a clear white. For each photograph on the plate, you can expect to pay a further sum of approximately £3.

For a set of cards, then, most printers will request two artworks – check this with your printer. One, for the front of the sheet, should show only the position of each image (the actual photographs go separately for the half-tone); the other should show the text for each picture, and perhaps your name and address. You are bound by law to print the name of the person publishing the cards on the back. Information on the back might be typeset, which costs about £1 per hundred words, or typed on a typewriter. The photographs should be numbered on the reverse, and the artwork for the front of the cards should carry numbers in corresponding positions to indicate where each picture should appear. The prints for reproduction should be as closely matched for density and contrast as possible. This makes the job of the negative maker and printer much easier. If you produce perfectly matched prints, it should be possible to save money by pasting the prints down in position on the plate. This saves the printer time, as he can make one or two halftones instead of six or eight. Again, check with your printer before you do this.

### What you'll have to pay

We obtained quotes from two printers, and the bill for printing our postcards from Expression, who print Camerawork. These three figures give an idea of the spread of prices.

Tyneside Free Press quoted for eight cards each 5¼" × 4" with a print run of 125 sheets. Since there are eight images per card, this would

give either 125 copies of each of eight cards, or 1000 copies of one card (or any combination). Their price was £48, but a further 125 sheets (another 1000 cards) would cost only £8: the more cards you print the cheaper each card becomes. This price included making halftones and printing information on the back, but did not include pasting up the artwork. The quote was for black and white only – extra colours would cost more.

Walkerprint quoted for a 5¼" × 4" black and white card, for a single image on the front, with a caption and an amount of other information on the back. It included typesetting and artwork: you would supply them with a bromide print and typescript of what you want on the reverse, and they do all the rest. 500 copies would be £34.50, 1000 copies £46.00, and 2000 copies would be £73.60.

Expression printed six cards for us, each 4¼" × 6", 1000 copies of each image. They did all the artwork, and charged £256.50 for the six.

All these prices included VAT but not delivery, and work out remarkably similar: they all cost between 4p and 5p per card. A local printer would be likely to charge about the same, though it's worth shopping around.

### Distribution

Persuading your local newsagent to buy your cards may prove difficult. Many dealers will insist on sale or return, so be prepared to do a lot of footslogging to collect your money and unsold stock. Don't forget that your retailer may want to take as much as 50% of the retail price, so a card that sells for 8p in the shops will just about pay for itself. You may be more successful with Arts Centres, galleries and alternative bookshops.

Few distributors are willing to take on anything but commercial postcards. If you find one who is, please write and let us know.

**Richard Platt**

Walkerprint – 46 Newman Street, London W1P 4LD

Tyneside Free Workshop – 5 Charlotte Square, Newcastle upon Tyne

Expression Printers – 5 Kingsbury Road, London N1 4AZ

Leeds Postcards – 13 Claremont Grove, Leeds 3.



## Postcards as intervention

Robert Frank took a photograph in Hoover Dam, Nevada in 1955. It shows three postcards on a wire metal stand. The idealised imagery of the top two cards is destroyed by the subject matter of the bottom card. The top card is a general view of the landscape; the middle one a view of the Dam, and the bottom card is the mushroom cloud of a hydrogen bomb that was tested in the Nevada desert. Frank found an image that corresponded perfectly to his vision of an estranged America. The fact that the images on the cards are rendered meaningless by their stacking in the stand (they cancel each other out) creates a picture of how Americans see America. It is a photograph that looks at the country through its own image of itself. It is a cruel shock to find a picture of the weapon of ultimate destruction for sale as the memento of a visit to Nevada.

My own cards attempt to produce a similar shock by means of photomontage – joining images together within one picture.

In 'Apartheid, South Africa' I spliced together two images so that the end result is not realistic. It did not 'happen' like that, but is that not what really does happen under apartheid? The montage takes place in two ways. The top image is of a woman sitting on a 'Europeans Only' bench (from a photograph by Ernest Cole in *House of Bondage*), and the bottom image is of a black being ravaged by dogs. Are they her dogs? She just looks away. This is the first method of montage. The second takes place within the camera. The South African state painted 'Europeans Only' on the bench so the bench itself becomes a sign of apartheid. The black figure underneath is another representation of Apartheid. The montage shows the meaning of the signal painted on the bench.

Each card is created in this way. Two images are cut together within the same space to create a third meaning. The background is either plain white with the image in black on top of it, or black from which white images emerge. Referring to film editing, Eisenstein wrote, 'By the combination of two 'depictables' is achieved the representation of something that is graphically undepictable'. These cards are editing two images

not next to each other to be seen one after another, but fused together on the same plane. The 'undepictable' must come from the single card.

By posting one of these cards, the senders are saying not that they have experienced the events depicted, but rather that the card is a specific critical statement which can be communicated through the post. The postcards are larger than normal so that they can be displayed as complete images and not as mementos. They attempt to infiltrate a public medium not with the message 'Wish you were here', but with the message 'If we are not here we are nevertheless implicated'.

I have had problems distributing my postcards as many shops find it difficult to display them in a way that enables people to handle them. The possibility exists for socialist artists and photographers to set up display and distribution facilities for political postcards. The sexist cards of Sam Haskins and David Hamilton are widely available in many newsagents not merely because of their subject matter but also because the manufacturers have presented a complete display system to the shops.

Without large financial resources, it is still possible to set up postcard display and distribution in a professional manner. The cards could be changed regularly and the photographers could use their work to intervene in and comment on political struggles (without editorial control) while they are still taking place. The value of the postcard form is that it contains none of the mystification of art. The cards have no financial value beyond their price; they exist within a context that is not the domain of an élite. Artists and photographers should not be squeamish about presenting their images of world events as commodities. White-walled galleries and specialist papers have their uses, but their isolation can be broken down only by our images also appearing independently in the High Street. Postcards are one way of bringing this about.

### Peter Kennard

'Apartheid, South Africa' is one card from a set of six depicting sensory deprivation in Ireland, mining conditions in Yorkshire, the Junta in Chile, Dioxin poisoning in Seveso, and psychiatric repression in Moscow. The cards are available from 13 Lidfield Road, London N16.



Apartheid, South Africa

Peter Kennard



Producing one's own postcards is a way of taking complete control over how photographs are used, and ensuring that they are widely seen. Paul Trevor produced a set of six postcards on Brick Lane, using them to 'communicate the politics of everyday life'. Over the last year he has sold 10,000. Again the only problem has been one of distribution, with mainstream shops unwilling to sell them.



This card by Richard Greenhill comes from a set of eight produced to accompany our touring exhibitions.



Trackwomen on the Baltimore and Ohio, 1943. One of many cards produced by Helaine Victoria Press, Indiana, USA.

Women's groups have found that postcards are a way of communicating feminist ideas – See Red Women's Workshop have produced a set commenting on domestic labour. Postcards are also an effective way of putting into circulation rarely seen images of the role women have played in history.

## VISUAL DISPLAY UNITS



Postcards have again become a valuable means of commenting on contemporary politics and social issues. Groups who usually work with words are finding that picture postcards are a valuable way of publicising and emphasising ideas and information. The above card is one of several graphic images published by Leeds Postcards. This card was sponsored by Hazards Bulletin, and the text on the back comments on the hazards of Visual Display Units.

Pete Smith



Photographers frequently encounter legal problems in the course of their work, such as being confronted by the police at a demonstration, or having work reproduced in a magazine without permission or acknowledgement.

This is the first of a series of articles about the law and the way it affects the professional photographer. The subject of the next article will be the use of photographs. The articles are intended as a guideline to the relevant law, but are no substitute for advice from a practising solicitor. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but it is often better than no knowledge at all.

## TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS

Where and when can a photographer be prevented from taking photographs? Can the police stop you photographing the USAF base at Ruislip from the adjoining A40? Can a film star's agent prevent publication of photographs of him or her sunbathing in the nude on a private yacht?

The answer will depend on whether the photographer is on his own property or on property belonging to someone else. This initial distinction is crucial. The material question is where the photographer – not the subject – is standing. Two situations must be considered separately.

## ON THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S PROPERTY

Anyone on their own property enjoys the basic freedom to photograph anything – subject to the restrictions outlined below.

### 1. Privacy

The English courts have never acknowledged that an individual enjoys a right to privacy. For this reason alone the star's agent would be unable to prevent publication of prints in *New Style*, for example.

Publication in the US might, however, be restrained on the grounds that it constituted invasion of the star's privacy, which is protected by the American constitution. In this way US rock stars and others have successfully claimed royalties arising from the successful exploitation of photographs of themselves taken lawfully by the photographer who owns the copyright.

This right to protect your image stems from the right of privacy. It has never been upheld by an English court, which explains why model release forms are in general use in the US, but not here. The subject of a photograph might be able to restrain publication by alleging that the photograph was libellous – but it would be a long shot.

### 2. Copyright

Copyright law gives no protection to the subject of a photograph. The only subject matter which would be technically protected is other copyrighted material, e.g. a dress design in a shop window. However, the plagiarist in the street photographing the dress unlawfully is not guilty of a criminal offence. The designer's only remedy is to sue for damages for breach of copyright – an archaic and impractical option.

The copyright in the design of a building, or a piece of sculpture or similar work displayed in a public place, is not infringed by photographing it.

### 3. Breach of Confidence

The publication of photographs of a confidential nature might possibly be restrained on the grounds that permission was granted to the photographer only on the understanding that the subject matter was confidential, e.g. photographs of a public inquiry or of an historic manuscript. It is debatable whether the photographer could insist upon publication on the grounds of public interest.

Alternatively, the owner might get an injunction to restrain publication of photographs of the historic manuscript on the grounds that the subject was confidential and that to photograph it would constitute a Trespass to his Goods (remember the Lord's Prayer). This is a remote legal possibility.

## ON OTHERS' PROPERTY

### 1. Private Property

When not on their own property, photographers are subject to the directions of the landowner as well as to the laws of Parliament and the courts. Landowners can bar access to their property completely, provided that they, too, comply with these laws (e.g. Race Relations Act 1976). Any photographer who ventures on to private land without permission is trespassing. They may also be trespassing if they obtained permission to enter by deception or fraud. 'Trespassers will be prosecuted' is not strictly true, because trespass is not a crime. The actual remedy of the landowner is to sue the trespasser in the civil courts for damages.

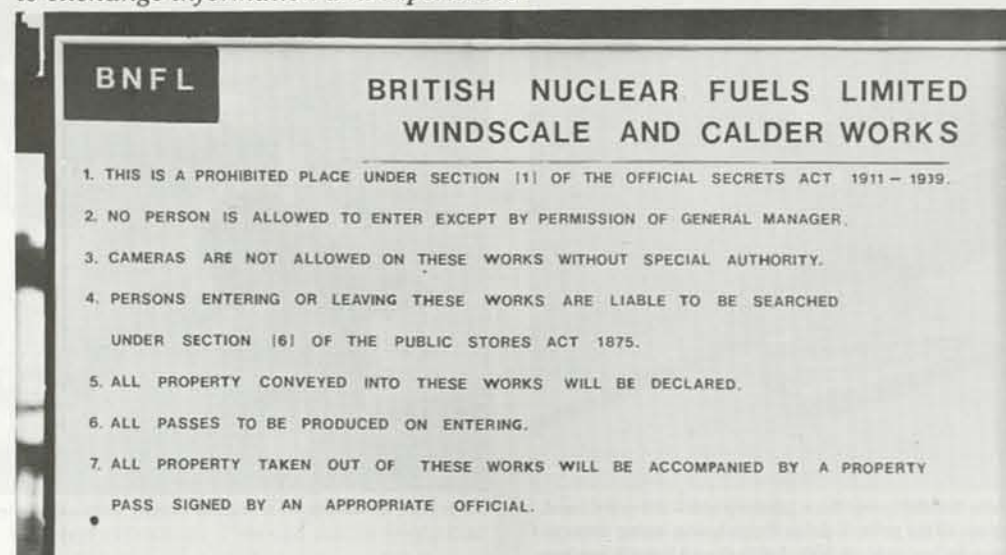
A more effective measure would be to summon the police. If directed by a police officer to leave, the errant photographer must



Press photographer Peter Johns being arrested at the National Abortion Campaign rally in Trafalgar Square, 28th October 1979, after being denied the usual access to the speakers platform. More and more customary 'rights' are being abolished as police invoke their wide powers through long-unused laws and new legislation, especially catch-all terms like 'obstruction'.  
Mike Abrahams

# PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE LAW

*Many complicated laws place the photographer in a confusing and ambiguous position. Whether or not they challenge existing power structures in their work, photographers often find the Law used to maintain their position of insecurity and exploitation and their inability to work freely. More often, however, ignorance of the legal rights photographers do have is used by police and organisations to obstruct, intimidate, and prevent them working. Over the past ten years, police co-operation has turned into close supervision or outright harassment as the police increasingly feel a need to promote a favourable public image. As part of a series on photography and the law, Adrian Barr-Smith of Artlaw sets out some basic information vital to a full knowledge of working conditions. Areas of concern we hope to debate in future issues include photographers' rights on copyright, use and reproduction of their work, the rights of the subject of a photograph, the use of photography for surveillance and political control, and the use and abuse of the Law in obstructing photographers at work. We would like to hear of your photographic encounters with the Law. We will be running a column providing the opportunity to exchange information and experiences.*



Chris Schwarz was arrested while photographing Windscale, 30th November 1979.



Photographer as pest: Ron Galela wears protective gear after Marlon Brando, championing the rights of the subject of the photograph, broke Galela's jaw.

comply with the request or risk arrest and being charged with obstructing the officer in the execution of their duty.

If they comply with the request, but nevertheless return on subsequent occasions only to be asked by the landowner each time to leave, then an injunction can be sought to bar the photographer from entering in the future. If they then attempt to enter, they can be arrested for contempt of court.

Alternatively, a landowner can impose conditions of entry; theatre managements, for example, invariably prohibit the use of cameras by the audience. However, any member of the audience who uses a camera has not committed a criminal offence, but has breached one of the conditions of admission. The management could insist upon their leaving, since the conditional right of entry given by their ticket has been revoked. The management may not seize the camera or film, although they may summon the police if the photographer refuses to leave when requested.

In an action brought by Granada magnate Lord Bernstein, the courts ruled that aerial photography does not constitute a trespass. A photographer is free to photograph anything from the air provided the plane operator or charterer is a UK citizen and they do not fall foul of the Official Secrets Acts (see below).

### 2. Courts

Anyone who photographs judge, juror, witness, accused or litigant in court is guilty of contempt of court. This offence is punishable by fine or even imprisonment. The warnings given to the press by the judge in the Jeremy Thorpe case show how seriously this offence is still regarded.

'In court' includes the courthouse, the precincts of the building, and anyone entering or leaving the precinct of the courthouse. This definition may be interpreted leniently or rigidly depending on the inclination of the judge. But there is slim chance of **Circuit Eleven Miami** happening at the Old Bailey!

### 3. Government Property

It is an offence under the Official Secrets Act to approach, enter, inspect, pass over or be in the neighbourhood of a prohibited place for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State. In effect, this offence applies to anyone in the vicinity of the prohibited place for any purpose which has not previously been authorised. In one interesting decision it was decided that 'purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State' included nuclear disarmament protesters who approached a military airfield with a view to occupying and reclaiming it for civilian use. They were not allowed to argue that their intended action would be beneficial, not prejudicial, to the State.

'Prohibited place' is defined at length and includes:

- any naval or airforce establishment, factory, mine, camp, arsenal, ship or aircraft belonging to the Crown or to the relevant government department.
- any military or Post Office telephone or telegraph or radio station.
- any site used by the Crown, its agent, or contracting party on its behalf, for building, repairing, or storing military hardware.
- any of the following places previously proscribed by the Government as a 'prohibited place':
  - Place belonging to or used for the purposes of the Crown.
  - Railway, road, canal or other channel of communication by land or water.
  - Gas, water, electricity or other public works.
  - Site used for building, repairing or storing military hardware.

The definition is deliberately all-embracing. Automatically included are all Ministry of Defence and Post Office Telecommunications establishments, and the USAF base at Ruislip, under (iii).

Other places which can be proscribed by the Government include property of the Atomic Energy Authority, British Nuclear Fuels, the Civil Aviation Authority and Air Traffic Control, British Airways, British Rail and the British Waterways Board. The Royal Parks and the Queen's residences are not included (unless she or her family happen to be staying there).

It is interesting that within the vicinity of a prohibited place the police or HM forces can arrest anyone who 'obstructs, knowingly misleads or otherwise interferes with or impedes' them. These wide powers of arrest are additional to those granted them in other circumstances.

In addition to the prohibitions on movement, the Official Secrets Act also makes it an offence to take photographs 'intended or calculated to, or which might be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy'.

The defendants in the ABC trial were initially charged under this section (Section 1), but the charges were dropped after the judge had



# Information

## The Pinhole Camera

The Half Moon Photography Workshop is organising an exhibition of pinhole photographs and cameras, to be shown in the new gallery on Roman Road, Bethnal Green.

Pinhole cameras are black boxes which form images on the inside by allowing light to pass through a tiny hole pierced in the opposite wall.

The pinhole camera is firmly rooted in photographic history, and the exhibition will reflect this. In addition to a historical overview, there will be a section on the commercial use of pinhole cameras, a walk-in pinhole camera, and an open submission of pinhole pictures. This last heading is probably the one most relevant to readers of *Camerawork*, since we are now looking for pictures which we could use in the exhibition.

tion. If you are taking pinhole photographs yourself, or have any that you think we might be interested in showing, please let us know as soon as possible.

If you send us any pinhole pictures, please remember to pack them carefully, and put your name and address on the back of each picture. If you want the pictures returned to you, please enclose a stamped return address label.

## Women's Camerawork

*Camerawork* is planning to devote an issue to women and/in/using photography. Since we feel that the main problem for women lies in getting their work used we have decided to devote a large part of the issue to showing current work. Ideas, outlines for articles and photographs should reach us by Monday March 31st. Or phone Shirley on 980 8798 (days) or Jenny 607 7915 (evenings & weekends) if you'd like to discuss your work or ideas.

printed a photograph by Bo Bojesen of supposed Protestants lined up against the wall by the army with a comment. The area in the photograph is King Street/College Square East in Belfast, and unless you had definite information on it, I would be inclined to rate that crowd as mixed or Catholic, and the incident as a not very good example of the point you were trying to put across.

Elsewhere you describe the middle class as happy and loyal. Loyal, on the whole, yes, but happy no. There has been evidence to suggest that those living outside the trouble areas are more heavily affected psychologically than those living within a defined 'ghetto'. Moreover there has been quite sufficient violent death, injury, general intimidation and nasty incidents to affect every corner of society here. Chris Steele-Perkins was right about nearly all working class Catholic families being traumatically affected by the violence within the context of his essay, but within the context of the whole issue it seemed like a case of blatant bias.

Despite the image in the press, the war here is not a war of bombs and bullets, with sides drawn up clearly and obviously. Nearly all the time it is our division into unique groupings which do not have very many distinguishing marks. Along with this, there are a lot of words, silence and tension. That is largely why the army (as individuals) curiously mix restraint (for an army) with viciousness.

Your article 'Camera on Patrol' was superb in the questions it raised. And, by the way, in 1969 the chief of the RUC dismissed photographs as inadmissible evidence when they applied to police collusion with Loyalists at Burntollet.

You used the 1971 census on the back of the magazine, but there are 1978 figures available. They are not as sensational, but still point to discrimination.

You didn't suggest D. Murphy's book *A Place Apart*, which is a strange work in many ways, but is excellent in putting across the different viewpoints in a human fashion. In it one man, George, says "Remember this: it may be something a stranger doesn't notice but it's true. Everybody in Northern Ireland - everybody - has been branded by our experiences since '69. If you meet people who tell you the Troubles have never bothered them, they're liars".

I found your issue on Lewisham excellent - from a broad, undogmatic, slightly leftist approach you were able to accommodate a wide range of opinions which *spoke for themselves*. Your comments were kept separate and were just a necessary frame. However, Lewisham was one day in which a number of issues were concentrated and called to question. The situation here is almost the opposite. There are the basic issues, but then ten years have engendered a welter of others, as well as numerous subtle twists and turns. That is why you should have stuck like a limpet to your title.

WJ, Belfast. (Name and address withheld on request).

\*Edited

endeavouring to persuade another to do so. All these subsidiary acts would be regarded as offences in their own right. 'Preparatory' acts covers a wide range of activity. It has included a wife who approached a foreign embassy with a view to her husband supplying information. By analogy it would include a photographer merely having a loaded camera anywhere in the car in circumstances where to take a photograph would be an offence.

## SEIZURE OF FILM

Photographers often have their film or camera seized. However, even a police officer is legally entitled to take possession of a camera only after arresting the photographer, e.g. for obstructing a public highway. If there is no substance to the charge, the accused can bring a charge for

## CORRECTION TO PAGE 9:

Labour History Museum telephone number should read 01-515 3229.

# CAMERAWORK

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If you have any comments to make, or articles, letters or prints you would like to contribute, we would be glad to hear from you. Please also send any information of your experiences with photography and the law. Please make sure it reaches us as soon as possible.

## Back Issues

*Camerawork* has become a collector's item! Are you missing any issues? Copies of the following issues are available from us priced 40p each for numbers 4-6 and 60p for number 8 onwards. Add 15p per copy p&p.

**Camerawork 4** Includes *Play Males* by Margaret Walters and *Black Stereotyping* by Ifriqiyah Film Collective.

**Camerawork 5** Interviews with Barry Lane (ACGB Photography Officer) and Bill Gaskins (ACGB Photography Committee Chairperson); on photographic printing, and the *Side Gallery*.

**Camerawork 6** *Paul Strand* by John Berger, *Kids and Photography*, and more.

**Camerawork 8** Analysis of national press coverage of the National Front

march through Lewisham, August 1977.

**Camerawork 10** *Ways of Remembering* by John Berger, *On Photomontage*, *DIY Touring Exhibitions*, and *Danny Lyon* interviewed.

**Camerawork 11** *Mass Observation* - one of the earliest documentary photographic projects.

**Camerawork 12** *Portraits* issue. A look at the various methods and uses of photographic portraiture.

**Camerawork 13** *Photography in the Community: Portable Darkroom/Photo-Kit, DIY tape-slide shows, the Brick Lane community photographed.*

**Camerawork 14** *Northern Ireland Issue*. On the occupation of Northern Ireland by British Troops.

**Camerawork 15** *John A Walker on Advertising, Larry Herman's Clydeside, Photography without Electricity and Through the Lens Fantasy.*

**Camerawork 16** *Manchester Studies Unit* - a people's history in photographs; Japanese photography; press coverage of Nicaragua analysed; *Camera Obscura*; critique of *Camerawork 8*.

# BLOCK

"Block" is the result of an initiative taken by a group of artists and art historians who believe that there is a need for a journal devoted to the theory, analysis and criticism of art, design and the mass media.

Our primary concern is to address the problem of the social, economic and

ideological dimensions of the arts in societies past and present. Although we appreciate that the direction of this journal will be partly determined by contributions, our intention is to stimulate debate around specific issues - which could include: Art & Design Historiography and Education; Visual Propaganda; Women and Art; Film and Television.

Subscription	Inland	Overseas	Airmail
Private, annual	£3.50	£4.00	£6.50
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Subscriptions should be sent to Block, Art History Office, Middlesex Polytechnic, Cat Hill, Cockfosters, East Barnet, Hertfordshire EN4 8HU

Cheques should be made out to Middlesex Polytechnic.

Contributions to the journal will be welcomed but the editors cannot accept any responsibility for loss or damage.

Block will be published three times a year.

described them as 'oppressive'. The other section under which they were charged and ultimately convicted, Section 2, is currently under review by the Government. It deals with the communication of certain photographs as discussed above.

It must be proved that the photographer's purpose was 'prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State'. As in the nuclear disarmament case this is not difficult. 'Might be . . . indirectly useful to an enemy' is a catch-all phrase, and potential enemies, for example the IRA or perhaps the Patriotic Front, are included.

Wide definitions of the offences under these Acts have been specifically extended to include anyone attempting to commit or doing any act preparatory to commission of an offence, or aiding and abetting, soliciting, inciting, or

wrongful arrest. Certain other officials, such as immigration or customs officers, are vested with statutory powers of arrest restricted to specific offences.

Once arrested, the photographer will be relieved of all possessions. A camera may be opened - just to check the film is there! However, the camera and film must be returned unless required as evidence.

Private individuals are not entitled to insist that the photographer hand over a camera unless they have arrested the photographer by exercising their right of citizen's arrest.

However, in practice the photographer's rights are not clear-cut. Imagine the lone photographer insisting on his or her rights when surrounded by four 'security consultants' intent on seizing a camera! If the photographer resists,

the would-be seizers may redouble their efforts. And if in the heat of the moment the photographer consents to the seizure of the camera, he or she cannot later complain that the seizure was unlawful. If a photographer refuses to part with camera or film, to a steward or bouncer for example, he or she may be threatened. If so, he or she may sue the assailant for damages for assault. And if the film is removed from the camera and exposed without permission he or she may bring an action for criminal damage to the film.

## Adrian Barr-Smith

Adrian Barr-Smith is Director of Artlaw Services Ltd. For information and help on Artlaw matters contact Artlaw at 358 Strand, London WC2. 01-240 0610.



# New HMPW Touring Shows



## The Teds

Chris Steele-Perkins

An exhibition with photographs by Chris Steele-Perkins and text by Richard Smith.



## Bringing it all Back Home

Derry Street August 1979 Peter Marlow

In August 1979 issue 14 of Camerawork looked at Reporting on Northern Ireland. Further to this the HMPW has now organised a large exhibition Bringing it all Back Home. This examines various aspects of the social reality of life in Northern Ireland today, the role of the media and the ways in which information gathering, surveillance and crowd control (all techniques developed in the 'Six Counties') relate back to recent events in Britain.