MEAN FIELDS:
NEW AGE TRAVELLERS, THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE AND THATCHERISM

by

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Preface

In this work my aim has been to consider the history and treatment of the new Travellers in the media and by the agents of social control from a perspective within the sociology of deviance. Most of the research for this study was conducted between 1996 and 1998, in a mix of interviews with Travellers and informants of all kinds, documentary research and some participant observation at sites and festivals in the south-west and north of England.

There are many people I wish to thank and acknowledge. First, I wish to thank those new Travellers, members of their support group, and other specialists who agreed to talk to me. I hope they will find my account of their lives and the events I represent a fair and truthful one. I would like also like to thank Professor Terence Morris for getting me started on this long road, Professor Paul Rock for helping me along, and especially Professor David Downes, whose advice, assistance, patience and encouragement helped see this work through to a conclusion.

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Abstract

High crime rates and disorder are often thought typical of vagrant groups. But is this because of their greater criminal activity and propensity for anarchy, or is it because their marginal position makes them vulnerable to selective processing by the authorities? Differences which can be readily observed are important in the examination of a group's alleged deviance, and often lead to their being held responsible for social ills. Such folk devils are characteristic of many societies, and those who most effectively fill the role are often among most culturally remote from the ideals of the group holding power.

This thesis is concerned with the so-called New Age Travellers, and examines how between 1984 and1994 they filled the role of folk devils in Britain. Their differing behaviour, practices, appearance and mobility were in opposition to the ideals of the Thatcher government, and their high visibility and ease of identification assisted their processing and labelling as deviants. By publicly vilifying them, the government could justify harsh measures against them, and order was seen to be maintained. The locus of most Traveller incidents in the countryside of the southern England, a bedrock of conservative values, intensified pressure on the primary site of the ideals of Thatcherism and its conception of England. The type and extent of measures taken against the Travellers is shown to be related to the 'authoritarian populism' of the Thatcher government.

The Travellers were a heterogeneous group, and their composition evolved steadily during the research period, yet they remained among the most marginal, powerless and least able to mobilise popular support in society. But despite the frequent hardships, being 'on the road' was found to provide a functional alternative to previously existing circumstances, and offered the potential for change in the lives of those concerned.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Field

1. Topic Outline

During the late 1970s there was a sudden and visible increase in the numbers of people taking up a nomadic lifestyle, as a new type of travelling community, popularly known as the 'New Age' or 'hippy' travellers began to evolve[1], making a living at the varied festivals and events held around the country. The new Travellers differed from the more established travelling communities such as Gypsies, show people and seasonal agricultural labourers in several ways: they had a much shorter history; they were not defined as a distinct ethnic group under the Race Relations Act; adult Travellers had not been born into a travelling lifestyle, but had freely adopted it, and they did not necessarily follow traditional routes of travel. Many were young, university educated and strongly politicised, and in spite of their mobility, they often retained extremely elastic ties with settled society, sometimes preferring to return for shorter or longer spells as the need arose. Their appearance also distinguished them from other traditional travellers, from the choice of transport such as old buses, ambulances and other large exotically painted vehicles, to their strange hippy clothes and 'new age' beliefs.

As with any group of nomads, numbers of new Travellers have been difficult to estimate.[2] One problem is that the National Census, which helps central and local government, health authorities and other organisations to plan services such as future housing needs, does not specifically include the category of Travellers or Gypsies. It has therefore been left to interested parties to make informed guesses. Kenrick and Clark (2000:120) suggest that during the mid-1980s, anything from 5000 to as many as 50,000 were involved, not including those who spent the winter in houses. By 1994, there were an estimated 2000 live-in vehicles, together with around 8000 year-round new Travellers (The Guardian, 22.4.94). However, the Travellers' Itinerant Trust, and Friends and Families of Travellers estimated double this, while the Save the Children Fund estimated up to 50,000 on the road (Clark, 1997:129).

Estimates of mobile populations have always varied, largely because of the difficulties of counting a population about whom little is known, as well as their mobility from area to area, and the elastic nature of some Travellers' relations with the settled community. Clearly there were substantial numbers involved, but a point which needs to be emphasised early in this study is that despite similar numbers being involved before 1984, there were only infrequent mentions of them to be found in the media, usually in local press accounts of drug offences and breaches of the peace at local fairs and festivals. In terms of the category and degree of seriousness, offences were usually small and complaints usually revolved around bad security and poor organisation, especially at the free festivals (Clarke, 1982). The Labour government of the time was aware of the difficulties, and in one occasion in 1975 actually stepped in to sponsor and co-operate with the staging of a free festival at

Watchfield in southern England.

However, by 1984 official official attitudes had radically altered, and police began to regularly evict, detain and arrest Travellers, despite the infrequent and relatively trivial nature of their offences. Sensational press accounts focussed on incidents of confrontations with police and rural residents, and pollution of the countryside, allegedly by dirty, unkempt parasites, who rejected the work ethic, embraced the drug culture, were nomadic and who, unlike other itinerants, travelled in large numbers. Critical letters were written to the press, speeches were made in parliament denouncing Travellers in such terms as 'brigands', 'vermin', and a threat to the fabric of society, while the police came under increasing pressure to challenge, evict and arrest them wherever they appeared. There were calls for more severe penalties, the introduction of new criminal offences, and demands that Travellers should be made to pay for their alleged transgressions, often through heavy fines, the loss of their homes, or even prison. In the national media and in political discourse, at first they were labelled the 'Peace Convoy' or 'Hippy Convoy', and later the 'New Age' Travellers. At the same time a familiar vocabulary of ostracism and clearly defined narrative of deviance became attached to them, which quickly acquired a moral dimension, as if the objects of discussion were folk devils mounting a vigorous challenge to the orthodoxy of the time.

The exaggerated reaction was reflected in the rhetoric and legislative measures taken by the Tory government. These expressed a shift away from a discourse of redistribution in favour of Travelling communities and festivals, exemplified by legislation such as the 1968 Caravan Sites Act[3], the establishing of the Festival Welfare Services committee (FWS)[4] in 1972, and the government-sponsored site for a rock music festival at Watchfield in 1975, to the introduction of a clutch of repressive measures. These include the Public Order Act of 1986[5], the Environmental Protection Act of 1990[6], the Town and Country Planning Act of 1990[7], the Planning and Compensation Act of 1991[8], and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994. The introduction of the 1994 Act made civil trespass[9] a criminal offence, and caused nearly 3,000 families to be left without sites[10], as the new Travellers searched for a dwindling number of legal parking places. The disappearance of local authority facilities, the introduction of new offences, increased police powers, as well as the harassment and aggression from police and public, gradually criminalised a way of life, through making it almost impossible to pursue through a lack of legal, suitable or available stopping places.

While the new Travellers were frequently represented as deviant and that major legislation was required to combat some perceived but unstated danger, there is little evidence that they were collectively responsible for any serious or collective criminal activity. The nature and severity of Traveller offences was relatively minor, usually involving trespass, relatively light damage to land, and offences relating to vehicles. Moreover, there were rarely any victims involved in Traveller incidents. This is not to suggest that the new Travellers were always innocent victims of discrimination. People were certainly inconvenienced by the presence of Travellers, and there were sometimes confrontations, fights, vandalism and destruction of property. However, the strength of the reaction in most sections of the media

is shown here to have been wildly out of proportion to the putative threat, as evidenced by periodic 'storms' of headlines, articles and editorials designed to create fear and loathing of this new folk devil between 1984 and 1994.

Closer examination of these periods of intense media and official interest shows that two separate periods can be identified; between 1984-6, and again around 1992-4. These coincided with periods of intense social stress, precipitated by high unemployment, the erosion of welfare benefits, and increasing levels of crime and disorder, particularly in the English countryside, all of which might have been equally deserving of press outrage, yet rarely found expression. Instead of advocating a change in the government or its economic and social policies, there was a feeling that something had to be done about the Travellers, a feeling which was created and sustained by certain sections of society; the government, newspaper editors, farmers and landowners who claimed their behaviour conflicted with the fundamental values of the rest of society. It was as if there was a need to put up a smokescreen, a need to scapegoat someone or something in order to distract attention from the real cause, which if uncovered, might be so unpalatable that the institutions of society itself might need to undergo a radical transformation in order for equilibrium to be restored. Expressed in this way, it seems possible that it should be those same institutions interested in maintaining the status quo which scapegoated the new Travellers, and blamed them for the ills of the time. Yet in spite of their alleged deviance and notoriety[11], there is a scarcity of literature examining the changing reaction to the Travellers, and it is this which provides the motivation for the present study, which may be summarised as an enquiry into the processes which led to their 'becoming deviant' between 1984 and 1994.

2. Background, Context and Origins of the New Travellers

The origins of the new Travellers of the 1980s and 90s can be traced to the 'alternative' and underground politics and culture of the late 1970s, in particular the squatting movement of a decade earlier, when tenants' groups, student unions, and other collective organisations joined forces with trades' unions to draw attention to the plight of the unemployed who were gradually increasing in number.[12] Although some squatters and protesters were politically motivated in the sense of aiming to gain more involvement with official decisions, others were more intent on cultivating an alternative way of life outside society, with as little engagement in it as possible. This was part of a widespread interest in collectivism of all kinds, which extended to communal living, often in squatted houses and other properties. This was usually part of a broader trend towards the development of alternative lifestyles, sensitivity to ecological issues, pacifism, nuclear disarmament, demands for the legalisation of drugs, especially 'soft' drugs such as cannabis, and involvement in non-profit making work projects.[13]

However, some of those involved were less concerned with challenging or changing society than with 'dropping out' of it altogether, either through a general sense of disenchantment with the 'material' world, or due to the growing seriousness of material problems such as rising unemployment, strikes, steep inflation, the disruption of public services, and increasing levels of crime and violence. They believed that life away from the

city was more authentic, healthier and safer than life in urban squats, and it was against this background that alternative communities began to flourish. The more established of these were often based around religious beliefs or some shared purpose, such as the Findhorn community in Scotland whose origins go back to 1962.[14] However, an increasing number of secular communities were also being established, for example Tipi / Teepee Valley or 'Talley Valley', established in 1976 in Dyfed, South Wales, where a group bought a piece of derelict land and established a long-term, self-sustaining and ecologically sound community.

The rallying point for a burgeoning counter-culture was provided by the growing number of pop festivals in the early 1970s, for example those at Hyde Park in 1969 and the Isle of Wight in 1970, which attracted crowds of over 200,000. Music was one of the most important means of communication for the counter-cultural movement, as it was able to express ideas and messages of cultural and political significance, and as such it was considered not just as a form of entertainment, but as part of a revolutionary strategy. The underground journal 'International Times' put it succinctly:

The mood is for us to fight politics with music, because rock is now a media. Sure, it's basically recreation, but because we've now applied new rules to the way in way it's run, it's also a weapon. Let's use it. (International Times Number 59, 1969)

Clarke (1982) shows how the festival scene expanded throughout the 1970s, and how a dichotomy emerged between profit-making ventures and those planned on an improvised, non-profit basis, often by and for those who disagreed with the commercial nature of large-scale events. These smaller, free festivals were around one-tenth of the size and scale of the large festivals, and their non-commercial nature placed emphasis on mutual aid, co-operation, DIY and self-sufficiency, fused with idealistic political ideas on freedom, collectivism and pacifism. They were also less focused on music, and had a pronounced ecological dimension, often characterised by oriental and spiritual interests, mixed with new age beliefs about living in harmony with the environment. Festival attractions were an eclectic mixture, featuring for example, unorthodox healing techniques, shamanistic drumming and tarot cards, along with more established summer activities, like circus acts, fun-fair rides, arts and crafts activities, which were sometimes paid for 'in kind' instead of with money. The popularity of the commercial and free festivals led to the revival of the Albion Fairs in the east of England in the early 1970s. These were events aimed at reviving traditional rural festivals, and went under such exotic and 'new age' festival names such as Albion, Sun, Moon, Faerie, and Tree Fairs.

These fairs are a manifestation of the more prosperous and established middle-class aspects of the counter-culture... their aim is to provide a market place for the handicraft products of those who retreated from conventional employment in the late 1960s and early 1970s into a rural existence... making pottery, furniture, leather goods, musical instruments, etc. In addition the fairs contain a wide variety of 'traditional' (i.e. ancient) entertainments: busking, mumming, Morris dancing, folk music and a variety of circus-style acts... alternative technology and a commitment to natural ways features strongly... music is acoustic and not

amplified, and folk heavily predominates over rock. (Clarke, 1982:153)

By the mid-70s there was a full diary of festivals between June and September, composed of large-scale commercial events, smaller but more numerous free festivals, and the revived Albion Fairs, which together offered the possibility of living on the road semi-permanently. Indeed, some years before the mid-1980s when terms such as 'peace convoy' and 'New Age' Travellers appeared in the media, festival-goers were often referred to as 'tipi people' (after a style of tent-dwelling used by a commune based in Dyfed, South Wales) whether they dwelt in tents or not. The free festivals in particular offered varied and open possibilities of earning a living, for example as stage crew, musicians, entertainers, cooks, craftspeople and so on. As with the larger festivals, music was often the main feature, but a lack of electricity for amplification meant that instruments were generally acoustic, e.g. didgeridoos, violins, guitars and mandolins, which were often supported by voices, chanting and the beating of any type of percussion, such as drums, bongos, barrels etc.[15] These tended to give the free festival its characteristic sound and atmosphere, and its simplicity and D-I-Y ethic attracted a network of several thousand new Travellers who had chosen to spend the whole year making a living through the festivals. Groups, or tribes as they were sometimes known, would move around a festival circuit in the summer, and wintering in remote upland areas, or else returning to long-term city squats, such as those in Hackney (London) and Argyle Street in Norwich, where bus and trucks lined the streets over winter. It was from these 'communes on wheels' that a new lifestyle began to emerge, with the festival circuit providing the initial impetus for travelling.[16]

The annual event at Stonehenge over the summer solstice was the most important event in the year for the new Travellers, and took place every year from 1974 to 1984 for a fortnight of activities in the days prior to the summer solstice (Earle, 1994:7). In previous years, only a few vehicles had been noted, and many of those attending spent several days at the festival before returning to their permanent dwellings in the town and city. But the event gradually became a focal point for a small summer circuit of 'free', i.e. non-commercial festivals, and the convoy of vehicles became popularly known as the 'Hippy Convoy' (Martin, 1998:738). Despite their novelty, the new Travellers still attracted little public or media interest. There were sometimes problems at the sites of major events, and problems relating to breaches of the peace and drug dealing. But keen to avoid difficulties, the Labour government generally co-operated with the organisers, setting up the Festival Welfare Services (see Footnote 4, p.29) and in 1975 actively collaborated with local authorities and others to sponsor a successful free festival at Watchfield (Clarke, 1982:135).

However, the tolerant, patrician attitude of the authorities towards festivals and 'alternative' culture was about to change. In 1979 a Conservative government was returned to power with a radical manifesto of social authoritarianism and economic liberalism, which was commonly referred to as 'monetarism'. While the 'old' left had favoured economic regulation but moral *laissez-faire,* the 'new' right favoured economic freedom tempered by strict moral controls. The result was that from the beginning of the 1980s through until the 1990s the dominant political discourse was expressed through a combination of neo-liberal individualism, and what has been described as a neo-conservative authoritarian nostalgia for

a moral golden age - popularly referred to as an age of 'Victorian values' . (Marshall, 1986)

The early years of Thatcher's time as Prime Minister[17] witnessed a further polarisation of British society, expressed through a growing wave of protests, strikes and civil disobedience. This was also a time of increasing Cold War tension, and Thatcher sought closer political and military alliances with the United States which led to the stationing of nuclear-tipped American cruise missiles at military bases, principally at the USAF base Greenham Common and at RAF Molesworth, which from 1981 sparked a wave of protests and the siting of long-term peace camps outside the perimeter fences. Such opposition was frequently portrayed by the government and a predominantly right-wing media as proof of the rising tide of disorder, crime and violence into which Britain appeared to be sinking, and proof that strong measures were required to defeat it. The chief means by which Thatcher sought to bring a 'correction' and defeat her enemies was through the imposition of tougher policing and stricter punishments, as a lesson to those she called 'the enemy within', after the American equivalent of 'domestic subversives'. These included longer sentences and restricted parole, the expansion of British prisons, and the development of Special Claims Control Units to investigate those illegally claiming State benefits; the 'scroungers'. To justify and bolster the government's actions against her enemies, Thatcher presented a vision of what Britain should become, with attempts to define "what the nation is" and "who the people are" (Hall, 1988:71).

This vision had implications for many groups, as Thatcher's adversarial style repeatedly set the government against "enemies without" (Thatcher quoted in Young, 1993:372), in other words the I.R.A., the Argentines, the Soviet Union and the European Community, while the "enemies within" were the trades' unions, and any groups attempting to practise consensus politics, such as peace campaigners and pacifists. In this crusade against enemies at home and abroad, Thatcher believed her work to be underpinned by a moral authority (Hall, 1988:85; Letwin, 1993; Young, op.cit.). It was seen as part of a "great moral drama" (Young, 1993:353) and a "conflict between good and evil" (Thatcher quoted in Young, op.cit.:352)., and despite initial reservations from some Tory back-benchers, sometimes known as 'the wets', the majority of the Conservative Party were behind their leader, who also garnered powerful support from most national daily newspapers, as well as large swathes of the electorate, to which three consecutive electoral victories attest. What Stuart Hall has called the "hegemonic project" of Thatcherism (Hall, 1988) held a supremely influential position in Britain during the next ten years, and even after Thatcher's resignation in 1990 there was little change in the government's strategy, with similar policies being delivered by John Major's government in the key areas of law, order and the economy.

3. Occasions and Incidents

While the expression 'Thatcherite' was being applied (often pejoratively) from 1979 to followers of the Conservative Prime Minister, the term 'Thatcherism' to describe such a radical and anti-consensus position only began to be heard after the British General Election of 1983 (Thorne, 1993). In June of that year Thatcher was re-elected with a

sufficient majority to allow her government to impose its radical, anti-consensus policies. The result was to have serious consequences for the new Travellers, particularly for those in the rural areas of the Home Counties and the south-east, a solid, Tory 'bedrock' area of support and also the site of several cruise missile bases.

The stationing of American missiles at British bases during the cold war played an important role in the way in which the new Travellers first came to public attention. In the late 1970s and early 1980s a number of round-the-clock vigils were mounted outside the sites where weapons were held. In 1981 such a 'peace camp' had been set up at Greenham Common in Cambridgeshire, and in summer 1982, following their eviction from the Stonehenge People's Festival, around 500 new Travellers in around 150 buses vans and cars made their way to Greenham. Despite the police attempting to stop them, a site was set up and a small celebration held, which became known as the 'Counter-Cruise Carnival' (McKay, 1996:58). The conspicuous event in the unlikely setting drew media and political attention to both groups, during what was a particularly sensitive period for international relations, with Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands and increasing Cold War tension.

Both groups shared much in common; the estrangement from settled society, a broadly similar political outlook and similar ways of life, and during the early 1980s groups of new Travellers were frequent visitors to what became around 20 peace camps[18], but in 1983 police began to take tougher action against the camps and festivals. Earle et al. (1994) note how official harassment grew throughout the year, with greater numbers of police, a more aggressive attitude, the carrying out of drug searches, moving Travellers on, burning possessions, and in some cases using helicopters to 'manage' evictions. However, the free festival at Stonehenge over the summer solstice continued to be the highlight of the Traveller year, and in 1984 there were several thousand on site for approximately one month, with around 30,000 on the day of the solstice. Policing there was low-profile, and given the size of the crowd, passed off with few incidents (op.cit.:13). Yet this was the last time the festival would take place, as new, more aggressive methods of policing began to be widely implemented.

Soon afterwards at a small event at Nostell Priory in Yorkshire, all 360 participants were arrested by police, who damaged Travellers' vehicles and burnt their tents. But there were still few reports of what was taking place until 1985, when two incidents received wide coverage and launched the new Travellers into the public consciousness. The first was on February 5th. 1985 at R.A.F. Molesworth, Cambridgeshire, where supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (C.N.D.) were evicted by combined forces from the Cambridgeshire police, military police, and around 1500 soldiers.[19] It was following the eviction at Molesworth that the 'peace camp' became known as the 'peace convoy', as many from the site joined up with other new Travellers on their way to the Stonehenge for the annual celebrations, and where on June 1st. 1985, relations between police and Travellers finally broke down. The location was the Savernake Forest in Wiltshire. Unusually, the Wiltshire police had crossed into the neighbouring county of Hampshire, and were armed and waiting for Travellers to assemble. By the end of May, Travellers were held back by a four-and-a-half mile exclusion zone which prohibited entry to the area around the stones.

Following a tense stand off, riot police moved in to make arrests as Travellers tried to move away into a nearby bean field. There, some 150 vans and buses were attacked and many were destroyed. Police made over 500 arrests, the largest single civil arrest in British history. It became known as the 'Battle of the Beanfield'.

Tension continued to grow between new Travellers and the authorities, and on June 9th. 1986 there was another high-profile, though much more peaceful eviction at Stoney Cross, Hampshire, where from mid-May a convoy of new Travellers had been on the move in the area of Wiltshire, Somerset, and Dorset, staying only as long as it took the authorities to obtain court orders for eviction. The location was a renown local beauty spot in the New Forest, and campers were advised to leave as the new Travellers were alleged to be a health hazard (Heatherington, 2000). When the eviction was enforced, the police made some 64 arrests for minor offences, and impounded many vehicles (Heatherington, 2000:3).

Later the same month, prior to the introduction of measures tightening up the trespass laws in the Public Order Act (1986), Mrs Thatcher promised to find ways to make life as difficult as possible for such things as "hippy convoys" and the Home Secretary Douglas Hurd made a statement to the House of Commons denouncing Travellers as "medieval brigands" (Hansard, 3.6.86:378). Reflecting the government's concern over the Travellers' movements around Stonehenge, Section 1 of the new Act established a 4 mile radius exclusion zone around Stonehenge, reinforced with razor wire, road blocks, police dogs, helicopters with searchlights, and thousands of police. Other sections, notably Section 13, (popularly known as the 'Hippy Clause') gave powers to the police to harass Travellers in any location by continually moving them on. Exclusion zones of between 5 and 15 miles were put in place around other popular Traveller destinations, and with the miles of razor wire, the deployment of thousands of police officers road blocks, dogs and helicopters, to keep the Travellers out of Stonehenge, the commercial and fully legal event at Glastonbury became the focal point of the year, and press interest disappeared through the late 1980s.

When a new youth culture known as 'acid house' emerged around 1987,[20] the press once again found stories of new threats, conflict and disorder to report. Featuring loud, high energy electronic dance music, gatherings known as parties or 'raves' were held in large illegal venues such as warehouses or similar disused buildings and open spaces around the country. This was quite a separate development to the earlier pop and free festivals. A different subculture was involved in their planning and promotion, as well as among those attending them. But like the Travellers, their events were often held in affluent areas of the Home Counties which were some of the staunchest and safest Conservative seats in the country, and where a premium was attached to the natural beauty of the countryside.

However, in May 1992 an unexpected alliance between the two groups was to occur after Avon and Somerset Police prevented a Travellers' festival taking place near Chipping Sodbury, which left hundreds who had been expecting a festival with nowhere to go. The Travellers then went to Castlemorton, where hundreds of ravers were setting up a small village for a 'rave' party on the common, with sound systems and other facilities to keep the party going day and night for several days. Despite the substantial estimated presence of

between 20-50,000, unlike at other major traveller events policing was comparatively low-profile; there was no eviction, and only 100 arrests, mostly for drug offences (Baxter, 1992:227). But the history of the new Travellers and ravers, their oppositional stance, and residents' complaints about noise, litter, and drugs on a recreational beauty spot, a Special Site of Scientific Interest, and in an area where there had been complaints throughout the year by farmers about Travellers' dogs worrying livestock, all served to guarantee high levels of public outrage, a return to the Parliamentary agenda and the front pages of the press.

Shortly afterwards on July 29th at Kerry in Powys, Wales, the question of social security benefits for Travellers was raised, when officers from the local DHSS went to distribute benefits to Travellers who had congregated there, and by the autumn of 1992 two major Traveller issues were attracting public controversy and opprobrium; the 'invasion' and despoiling of public areas such as Castlemorton, and Travellers receiving social security benefits.

Later in 1992 and into the following year there were similar events which received similar amounts of attention and coverage, and faced with demands from their own back-benches to prevent further recurrences, the government sought to regulate the situation through the rule of law and the processes of criminal justice, drawing up a new Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to assuage public opinion and ostensibly combat a wave of crime and public disorder in country areas. A central part of the Bill provided for a significant increase in police powers, enabling the control and dispersal of various forms of 'collective trespass' and nuisance on land, which in turn gave greater powers to evict and to remove trespassers such as "squatters", "New Age Travellers", and "unauthorised campers" who were cited by name.[21] It also gave police the right to remove disruptive trespassers, and to stop and turn away vehicles and pedestrians heading for the site of a trespassory assembly. However, one of the most contentious elements involved the repeal of Section 80 of the provisions of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, which had imposed a duty on local authorities to provide sites for Gypsies, and which had been exploited by other travelling communities including the new Travellers. When the Bill was enacted in 1994, it became almost impossible to pursue a travelling way of life without breaking the law, and a nomadic lifestyle which had once been supported by the government, effectively became a criminal activity.

4. Writing on Vagrancy and the New Travellers

In times when almost everyone has a settled address and a postcode as proof of existence, lack of it is sometimes interpreted as a sign of deviance and possible criminal tendencies. Yet it has not always been this way; since the earliest times vagrancy has been a characteristic feature of society, especially during periods of social disruption, caused for example, by famine, disease and war. Even during periods of increased prosperity there have always been residual numbers of itinerants, made up of Gypsies, peddlers, tinkers and others whose occupation required mobility, and whose mystery and elusiveness have frequently provoked the curiosity of an eclectic group of authors, poets and researchers.

The earliest accounts originate in the dark ages, but it was in the mid-Victorian period that

the volume of literature began to increase substantially. Philanthropists and missionaries delved into the nation's underbelly, describing their experiences among the natives as if descending into an abyss, in which the vagrant was presented as disordered, savage, wretched and fallen; physically, mentally, economically and morally. But the tone of such writing clearly reveals the religious faith and motivation of the authors, perhaps most notably in the early works of Booth (1901) and Smart (1935), who emphasise the negative moral and spiritual aspects of vagrancy and other 'sins', and the salvation which the individual could attain with the help of God. Among other notable early works are those by Henry Mayhew, whose interviews with wandering 'street folk' and 'criminal classes' for the 'Morning Chronicle' in the 1840s and 50s are found in his encyclopaedic *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-61). Mayhew characterised groups of vagrants as 'wandering tribes', employing a term which became common currency in anthropology at the time, to distinguish between settled or 'civilised' people and nomadic or 'uncivilised' people. For Mayhew, nomadism was the definitive feature of these social groups, which he, like many others, believed was synonymous with primitive, savage and uncivilised, disordered behaviour, regardless of the nomads' ability (imagined or otherwise) to deceive or rob. Such simplistic assumptions were characteristic of a growing sedentarist prejudice against the nomad, and is an aspect of this study which is explored in Chapter Two.

Later in the 20th century as investigative techniques evolved, the range of writing expanded to include journalism, as well as related genres based on authors' personal observations and experience. Such accounts are often in a narrative style which resembles storytelling, for example some works by Orwell (1933, 1937), O'Connor (1963) and Sandford (1971). However, in spite of a broader investigative base, they were rarely reflective or objective enough to avoid a zealousness on the part of the authors who frequently saw their subjects as 'reformed sinners', and it was not until the 1960s that more objective sociological research on vagrants and travellers appeared. This was usually characterised by a 'micro' or 'macro' approach. The 'micro' approach can be subdivided into two sub-categories; one which quantified, categorised and labelled vagrants and their problems, defining them in medical terms and one which studied vagrants in terms of their social pathology, e.g. Laidlaw (1966), Edwards et al. (1966), and Crossley and Denmark (1969). But such studies still tended to focus on vagrancy as a problem which was intrinsically individual, and consequently looking for a 'cure' involved an examination of personal details and characteristics; of physical and mental problems, alcoholism, fecklessness as well as moral careers, which together could be put forward to explain their vagrant condition.

The 'micro' approach is contrasted with a broader, 'macro' approach, whose explanations were influenced by the Marxist sociology of the 1970s, proposing that detailed empirical information specific to individual cases was not vital to an understanding the 'causes' of vagrancy. Instead, major structural factors such as poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and institutionalisation under advanced capitalism were put forward to explain wandering, whether voluntary or otherwise. This has perhaps been the most influential set of explanations in recent years and in response, welfarist social policy of the time sought to reduce the impact of negative social forces by actively assisting travelling communities with

the introduction of the Caravan Sites Act (1968), an Act which sought, albeit with very limited success, to help meet travellers' needs. However, the position of Gypsies and 'masterless men' was quite different to the new Travellers who appeared on Britain's roads in the mid-1970s. These were largely ignored until the late 1980s when a small number of articles and later books began to appear, approaching the scene from a variety of perspectives such as health care, social anthropology, human geography, ethnography and sociology.

Some of the first articles to receive critical attention made textual / semiotic studies of the Travellers, most notably those by Heatherington (1992, 1996, 2000), who has extensively examined their early association with Stonehenge as well as issues of consumption, lifestyle and identity. In contrast, a related strain of writing has emphasised the internal variety within the scene, and connected it to wider social movements and conflicts, for example Rojek (1988), Martin (1998, 2002) and Bennett (1999). Similarly, McKay (1996) has focused on the role of music festivals in the movement towards environmental politics and other forms of direct action campaigning. These became a significant aspect of local and national politics during the early-mid 1990s, for example the well-publicised campaign against the M11 motorway at Newbury .

Studies of new Travellers in relation to identity, new social movements and environmental politics have been complemented by studies into their social organisation and interaction. For example, in the mid-1990s several popular biographies and ethnographies appeared, such as Lowe and Shaw (1993) which includes a chapter of eye-witness accounts of the new Traveller lifestyle; Earle et al. (1994) which documents the travelling scene through until the early 1990s, and Dearling (1997, 1998) who also writes about various quotidian aspects of the scene in the same decade.

One of the most far reaching pieces of legislation enacted against new Travellers and others was the introduction of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994. In his study, Murdoch (1999) has examined its effects on the lifestyle, and in Clark and Murdoch (2000) the authors provide an update of the scene with analyses of how Travellers currently see themselves, how they relate to other travellers, and also how they see their future. Finally, several other analyses focus primarily on the political, social and environmental difficulties faced by Gypsies and other traditional travellers in the mid-1990s, and link them to those faced by the new Travellers, for example work by Acton (1997, 1998), Hawes and Perez (1995), Kenrick and Clark (2000).

5. Theoretical Aspects of the Study

What most if not all the above-mentioned accounts have in common is that they reveal the extent to which nomadism has periodically been seen as a challenge and threat to sedentary society. In the case of the new Travellers, accounts highlight their nomadic 'otherness' and how this contributed to their being regarded as symbolically and physically 'out of place' in the countryside of southern England.

In Chapters Two and Three of this discussion it is shown how Britain has become a profoundly sedentary society, in the sense that legislation, attitudes and practices have served to marginalise the nomad[22] . Although this process could be identified taking place as early as the 1600s it accelerated considerably in the nineteenth century, when Travellers of all kinds came to require a social legitimacy which could only be earned through traditional kinds of occupation, or membership of a particular ethnic group whose way of life was shown to be nomadic. This 'requirement' has persisted throughout the twentieth century and into the 1980s, when on being unable to claim either in the eyes of the authorities, the new Travellers suffered a double denial of legitimacy, and hence were rendered potentially more vulnerable to social ostracism, marginality and legal challenges to their way of life. In this way, the potential for a moral panic over their actions and behaviour was heightened, particularly when their presence in predominantly Tory-supporting areas of English countryside could be used to deflect attention from failing economic policies, and firm action against them used to reassure their supporters. Thus, the study of how the Travellers came to be seen as deviant is firmly located within the sociology of deviance and draws on the theory of sedentarism to show how sedentarist practices combined to create the conditions for a moral panic in the 1980s.

Analysis of the processes which brought this moral panic about necessarily takes into account how an act of deviancy comes to be defined as such. The study of criminal behaviour during the past 60 years has shown how an act such as vagrancy is clearly not deviant per se, but that it has to be defined and treated as such by the authorities. As Fuller and Myers first observed long ago in 1941, social problems are what people think they are - there is an objective and verifiable situation, but also a subjective awareness of it and a definition by certain people that the situation is inimical to their interests, and that something should be done about it. Lemert (1951) developed this approach, arguing that delinquency is in fact a social construction of behaviour and actions. He put forward the view that social control and not behaviour was the key to understanding deviations. In his view, social control becomes a 'cause' rather than an effect of deviation. Thus, it is not deviance which leads to social control, but social control which leads to deviance.

Pioneering research into how public concern is generated and expressed over deviance was carried out by Becker (1963) and Gusfield (1963) in their respective studies of the Marijuana Tax Act and the Prohibition Laws in the Unite States They observed how a 'symbolic crusade' starts, consisting of publicity and the actions of certain interest groups, and how this results in what Becker calls "moral enterprise", leading to:

... the creation of a new fragment of the moral constitution of society. (Becker, 1963:145)

This 'crusade' leads to the creation of new rules, which effectively renders deviant those who do not conform:

... social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infractions constitute deviance, and by applying these rules to particular persons, and labelling them as outsiders.

(Becker, 1963:210)

In this view, deviance is not a quality of the act a person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to the offender. It is therefore the audience, not the actor, which is the crucial variable. This radical view of crime in which audiences label a particular act as deviant was developed further by Cohen (1972) in his widely publicised and influential work on community disorder and disturbances. He observed how, instead of seeing the breakdown of order within society as a product of social relations within the community, a folk devil is generated and blamed as the source of the trouble. This process may result from some fear in the larger society about social change, anxiety about the future, unemployment etc. A new term is invented to describe the folk devil, a label which then comes to represent a crisis of some kind, and oversensitivity in the community leads to intolerance and overreaction, which is described by Cohen as a 'moral panic'. This, rather than the community's problematic social relations, becomes the focus of hostility, before it is punished or removed, and a return to normality established. These concerns have frequently been over the behaviour of young people in the community. This involves looking back to a time when youth was well behaved and respectful, an imaginary 'golden age' where social stability and strong moral discipline acted as a deterrent for delinquency and disorder. In this way, new types of shocking behaviour are contrasted with the standards of twenty years ago, when things were 'not as bad'.

But Pearson (1983) shows how, when investigating twenty years ago, the exact same process can be seen in operation, as the youth of the time were seen to be rowdy, undisciplined and with too much money, unlike their counterparts of twenty years before that. Moreover, the anxieties are shown to be the same; immorality, lack of parental control, too much free time, resulting in deviant behaviour, crime, a threat to the national character and work ethic. In fact, scares or panics about youth are shown by to have been commonly recurring since the 19th century. These insights are useful as they expose the dubiousness of claims about a dramatic rise in crime by young people. At the core, Pearson argues, the type of complaints and the social responses to them provide a standard way of discussing and understanding social change and discontinuity. They start locally and become a matter of national importance, from the site of tension and social anxieties to a full blown political crisis. Recurrent representations of rowdy youths as animalistic and subhuman paves the way for more coercive state apparatus and harsher sentencing policies.

Concern about and protection of young people has repeatedly figured in moral panics around youth activity (Thompson, 1998:43), and the need to protect young people from drugs and drug dealers has been repeatedly enunciated in media coverage of the new Travellers. Attempting to understand the dynamics of social change is rarely seen as a priority. Instead, media coverage involves the deployment of a variety of strategies which often have more in common with the demands of popular entertainment than those of investigation and analysis. For example, their application of negative labels to the new Travellers, such as 'vermin', 'brigands' and 'scum', rather than for example, 'peaceful protesters', 'festival-goers having muddy fun' or even 'deserving homeless people' became common currency in the 1980s and 90s. However, providing such a vocabulary and

weaving it into a narrative which condemned the Travellers had the effect of mobilising potential participants, creating an amplification not of the original behaviour, but of the kind behaviour described in the press. This was then used to justify tough legislative action against them, and reassured the public that there was strong government and leadership.

Moreover, it has been widely observed by Cohen (1980) and others that the kind of exaggerated, disproportionate response or panic over such kinds of behaviour is frequently said to be about "not just this" by those involved in its promotion, but about things other than the apparent focus of attention. In the case of the Tory government in the 1980s and 90s, it had the effect of diverting public attention away from the failure of its policies by raising the "wrong things" into "sensational focus", hiding and mystifying the deeper causes" (Hall et al., 1978:viii). At a time of economic recession, rising crime and homelessness, it is asserted here that the government was able to mobilise support through the 'creation' of the new Travellers, generating a moral panic over their behaviour, and justifying an authoritarian response against those with whom it disagreed.

There are clear comparisons here with Cohen's study of the mods and rockers incidents at seaside resorts in the spring and summer of the mid-1960s - the hysteria and media sensationalism, the local resistance, with the dominant image being the threat of invasion and moral pollution. In some ways the presence of the new Travellers was more threatening - they involved the encampment in a locality for more than a weekend of people with a clear commitment to values, beliefs and practices which were often regarded by locals as depraved. But there is little evidence that they were collectively responsible for any serious criminal activity, or were anything more than a symbolic threat. In this analysis, the Travellers' demonic status was earned not by their existence, but by the strength and type of attention which was placed on them by the press and politicians.

Cohen further noted how the sociology of law and the sociology of collective behaviour provides a useful framework for the systematic analysis of moral panics. Central to this analysis is the concept of social typing, and the gradual process(es) which lead to the development and labelling of social types. It is informed by the interactionist or transactional approach to deviance and has been developed by theorists such as Blumer (1957) and Turner (1964). The main focus of the transactional approach is on how society labels rule breakers as belonging to certain kinds of deviant groups, and how the use of any one label or term to describe a group implies they share a distinctive common culture. The new Travellers were subjected to a series of stereotypes by the media, government, and other opinion formers who defined them as problematic; they were cast as aliens, and were therefore undeserving, dirty, dishonest and immoral. Compounding this, they were nomadic, and they travelled in large numbers.

But despite all the negative images and rhetoric which attached themselves to the Travellers, the group was far from having a distinctive common culture, being subject to considerable internal differentiation, and changing over time. To illustrate this, I propose a threefold typology showing the variable and sometimes interrelated factors which led individuals to become Travellers. They are based on the results of interviews and participant

observation, and are briefly outlined as follows. Those who had freely elected the traveller lifestyle in the 1970s and early 1980s and formed the bulk of the early part of the movement, tended to be well-educated young men and women from middle-class family backgrounds, with a strong sense of responsibility to the environment, and coherent ideas about living independently and healthily outside society. They were often politically motivated and displayed an impressive degree of organisation, choosing a way of life which they thought would offer a better quality and more ethical way of living, and in some cases had given up homes and jobs to go on the road. These were found to be typical of those new Travellers labelled here as 'Pioneers'.

The 'Pioneers' are contrasted with those in the non-organised part of the traveller movement, which was constituted mostly by younger men from urban areas, who had gone on the road in the late 1980s from urban areas, often due to difficult economic conditions sparked by unemployment and alterations in social security entitlements. They constituted a different generation of Travellers, and had different motivations, attitudes and values to the earlier group. These were distinctive features of those labelled here as 'Refugees'. Both sets of findings regarding 'Pioneers' and 'Refugees' largely confirm existing research, most notably by Rojek (1988), Heatherington (2000), and Martin (1998). However, these and other studies largely ignore the importance of a third Traveller type. These were a distinctive class of younger males from urban areas who often had special needs which the social services had failed to meet. Without families or attractive work prospects, many were vulnerable and needed support and sheltered accommodation after leaving a protected institutional environment, such as a prison, mental hospital or the armed forces. Challenging behaviour, alcoholism / drug problems, and few prospects for stable employment were also found to be characteristic of those in this group. But the prevailing guidelines and legislation affecting the housing of 'vulnerable' clients allowed their needs to pass ignored. This, and the unaffordable and unsuitable nature of accommodation for such groups meant that at the time, satisfactory settled accommodation was unavailable, and the pavements and 'cardboard cities' of the inner-cities provided initial refuge, before harassment and eviction by the authorities led them to flee to the countryside.

Although some new Traveller 'Refugees' began to approximate to 'Pioneers' in terms of lifestyle, attitudes and values, those of the third group, labelled here as 'Outcasts' did not. In fact many became increasingly unable to deal with their situation until some major crisis developed and their status as Travellers came to an end, perhaps through arrest or an inability to cope through emotional or physical breakdown. It is argued that the behaviour of 'Outcasts' represented an amplification of the kinds of behaviour which had been alleged and exaggerated in earlier media and Parliamentary accounts. Evidence is based on interviews together with some published accounts and much circumstantial evidence concerning vulnerable groups in urban areas. These points are developed more fully in Chapter Five.

6. Aims and Methods

There is little available sociological literature offering an analysis of the 'becoming deviant' of

the new Travellers, in particular the shift towards a spiralling amplification in the press and Parliament of what were relatively minor offences, and the enacting of repressive legislation which made it almost impossible to pursue the lifestyle legally. Issues of how their presence and behaviour came to be seen as problematic on a grand scale and requiring major legal prescription are virtually ignored, even though traveller transgressions were usually victimless crimes which involved trespass (a civil offence until 1994 when it became a criminal offence), damage to land, and offences relating to vehicles. This study aims to remedy the deficit, through offering an approach to analysing the phenomenon from within the sociology of deviance and the study of moral panics. It analyses the social conditions and processes which contributed to the Travellers' emergence, from the first incidents of Traveller harassment, to the 'coda' of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994. At a time of national disunity, it is shown how the facts, the damage, and cost were exaggerated, in order to direct public insecurity away from failing government policies to another issue; that of identifying and tackling an 'enemy within' in southern rural areas where conservative values enjoyed a bedrock of support.

The study analyses perceptions of Travellers as a 'problem' and how these were created and shaped by particular social processes. It also shows how they came to be identified and controlled; what stages or processes this reaction went through, and so on. The study also asks broader, theoretical questions, such as why a particular rule exists at all, what are the processes and procedures involved in identifying someone as deviant; what are the effects of this application, both for the society and the individual, as well as behavioural, empirical questions, such as how they see themselves and each other, and what led individuals to abandon a settled life in favour of an itinerant one. To achieve these objectives, data was gathered in a variety of ways, starting from the basic requirement that ideally, the researcher should be involved in the ongoing, daily world of the people being studied. As Goffman put it:

... any group of persons - prisoners, primitives, pilots or patients - develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful and reasonable and normal, once you get close to it, and ... a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject.

(Goffman, 1961:ix-x)

It would be clearly impossible to describe all the qualities of the social phenomena under discussion, therefore such a study inevitably involves giving a selected perspective. As Weber argued many years ago, one cannot say everything about the complex reality with which one is dealing:

All the analysis of infinite reality which the finite human mind can conduct, rests on the tacit assumption that only a finite portion of this reality constitutes the object of scientific investigation, and that it is 'important' only in the sense of being worthy of being known.

(Weber, 1949:72)

Following Weber's advice, I have aimed to illuminate and analyse the varied circumstances

of groups of new Travellers while maintaining an objective distance. As Gouldner (1973) writes in his critique of an article by Becker (1967) on academic bias:

Isn't it the sociologist's job to look at human situations in ways enabling them to see things not ordinarily seen by the participants in them?

Gouldner suggests that this can only be achieved as an 'outsider' who maintains a close but objective distance between the observer and the subject matter. This implies a need to avoid becoming too closely involved, in case subjects' attitudes, values and beliefs are acquired and internalised - a need to avoid what is sometimes called 'going native'. This assumes that sociologists are different to 'the natives', while equally emphasising that the struggle for the objective reporting of a truth has nothing to do with remaining imperialist. However, sociological training does make the researcher alert to different ways of gathering information, interpreting facts and assessing evidence, so that s/he is hopefully equipped to arrive at a more rounded and complete point of view. Perhaps more importantly, the researcher also has time to interpret and reflect on it in a way which is not always available to the subjects themselves.

In carrying out any piece of research, the decision to go about it in a particular way is never a simple issue. Faced with data from such disparate sources and with the problem of analysing something as nebulous as a recent or contemporary phenomenon, it was initially difficult to decide on the best method of organising the data. One possibility would have been to interview a number of Travellers longitudinally, i.e. repeatedly over a number of years between 1984 and 1994, however, the practical aspect of this project could not begin until some time after the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 had been enacted. Moreover, given the historical nature of the research topic, the possibility of direct participation in, or observation of the research setting in many of the circumstances described in this study, was not available. Given these limitations, I decided that a workable, effective design would be to interview long-term and ex-Travellers about their present and past experiences on the road, in an attempt to reveal to what extent, if any, the reality I was able to experience differed from the views expressed in Parliament and the press.

Interviewing involved gathering mainly qualitative data between 1997 and 1999 over three phases which involved shorter, more informal interviews, conversations and observations, as well as a series of longer interviews with more experienced travellers, and others with professional knowledge and experience of the new Traveller lifestyle, such as health workers. The main aims were firstly to discover the expressed initial motives / circumstances which had led individuals to go on the road, and secondly to observe shifts in the scene over time, as expressed by those involved it, as well as experience something of living on the road at first hand.

Initially, I decided to make a small and essentially exploratory study, proposing to short-interview a sample of six respondents of equal numbers of male and female new Travellers from two different sites in the south-west. The initial interviews were largely non-standardised, allowing respondents to lead the conversation, and included open-ended

questions to maximise time spent with respondents. This was then used as a basis for a more detailed and focussed interview schedule, in order to better illuminate respondents' lives. The longer interview proved an important tool here, giving an opportunity to see the lifeworld of the respondents, the content and pattern of their daily experience, as McCracken observes (1988:9). As the kind of information sought and volunteered could be of a sensitive and complicated nature, a less standardised approach seemed more appropriate, as this could be more personalised and also allowed more spontaneity. It also gave my informants a chance to lead the discussion, which in turn facilitated a 'gateway' to a range of issues, such as attitudes to other new Travellers, the police and settled society, what they believed had started the official hostility, how the situation could be improved, and so on. It also allowed these objectives to be accomplished without committing to prolonged and repeated involvement with the respondents, which could not in any case have been carried out in an authentic manner, given the somewhat historical nature of the investigation, and the fact that the laws and the scene had changed since the research period in question.

Decisions about the composition of the interview sample were initially quite open-ended, in the sense that I did not have a clear theory which I wanted to test, but simply wished to obtain as much first-hand data as possible, taking into account the aims mentioned above. These were not given to respondents, as I wanted to maximise the possibilities of their giving spontaneous and unstudied responses. However, I soon became more aware of the internal variation among Travellers, both at the time and over time, and considerations over how to proceed and who to interview next were more informed by theoretical sampling, in the sense that I wanted to sample those who would contribute most to the development of a theory regarding the changing composition of the Traveller group. I therefore aimed to interview a broader sample of current or former Travellers of varied ages and who had spent varying amounts of time living on the road, as well as carry out longer interviews where possible, i.e. where time, circumstances, and the availability of subjects allowed. While I had proposed to interview a total of around fifteen subjects, I quickly realised further interviews would be necessary, and finally some thirty were carried out, of which five were longer interviews, tape recorded and with relevant sections transcribed. These details were supplemented by informally observing and chatting to others who were in the vicinity (details of sample size and composition in terms of gender, ethnicity[23] and age, as well as details of themes pursued etc. are included in the Appendices.

By the time I was ready to start interviews and participant observation in the mid-1990s, the enacting of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act had forced many new Travellers to leave Britain for countries such as Spain, Portugal and Ireland, which were still more tolerant of itinerants. At the time I was working in Spain for part of the year[24] , and on one occasion two eccentrically painted vans parked up on an area of waste land close to my home there, whom I managed to interview informally after a rather unexpected (on their part) introduction.

Paradoxically, it was rather more difficult to come across Travellers who were 'on the road' in England. I was unsure of where to start, and given their reputation in the press, not a little

unwary. I realised that a 'gatekeeper' would be useful, to assist my introduction to what I imagined could be a closed and defensive group, especially given recent changes in the law, as well as police surveillance which had included centres set up in some counties to monitor their movements etc.[25] Around the same time I noticed a picture in the 'Big Issue' magazine of the veteran activist, editor, festival organiser and long-term Traveller, Sid Rawle. Keen to meet him, I contacted the relevant journalist explaining my interests, and a few days later she rang back with his details, urging me to call him. After an introductory phone call, I was invited to his farm, near Coleford in Monmouthshire, and outside there were perhaps half a dozen trailers and tents where a group of Travellers were staying. The contact with Rawle led to further contacts with others in the area and further afield, and in this way contacts began to 'snowball'.

At the same time I wanted to discover something of the realities of living day-to-day on the road by experiencing it at first hand. This was also facilitated by staying over at Rawle's on two occasions, as well as some short stays on sites with those whom I had met through Rawle. All interviews, whether with Travellers or non-Travellers were carried out in respondents' own homes/sites. This proved to be a suitable option for all parties, as they could relax on their own territory (in the case of the Travellers this was usually a trailer), which made me feel I was more likely to obtain authentic and reliable information, as well as being able to observe clues about how daily lives were lived.

Lofland and Lofland suggest that when negotiating access to a research setting it is necessary to be 'armed with connections, accounts, knowledge and courtesy' (1984:25). This was confirmed while carrying out this study, and apart from the company of a 'gatekeeper' I went alone to meet informants, usually taking along something to eat and drink, as it was suggested this was common practice when anyone went visiting on site. I usually went 'armed' with a fruit cake and a bottle of something sweet and alcoholic, which in the chilly outdoors was immensely restoring, and even though respondents were often a little wary of my motives and curious about my interest in the field, I was unfailingly made welcome by all those I met.

As most contexts were outdoors in chilly weather, I went along attired in warm, weatherproof clothing, which was practical, hard-wearing, inconspicuous, and made no concessions to 'designer' fashion. This was in case I needed to join in the manifold tasks of life on-site, as well as generally fitting in with the attire of others present. When introduced to a group, I would sit and take part in the conversation which ensued following the arrival of my 'gatekeeper'. Then, tea and biscuits usually appeared, and I would listen and show interest in group matters, offering to help if at all possible in anything which was taking place or about to take place. Invariably there was curiosity about my own interests, and topics such as the injustice of the law, the poor media coverage and local attitudes were among the most commonly raised. This generally reassured those present that I was not from the police or some other official agency, and generally set in motion a discussion which, apart from being involving and offering the latest stories to be exchanged and commented upon, also offered opportunities for digression into other topical matters.

During interviews I allowed conversation to flow naturally, until I felt I had gained a rapport with respondents and that they would not mind being interviewed more formally, i.e. if I took notes or tape-recorded the interview. With practice I found I could refine the kinds of probes I made during interviews, which generally led to more useful pieces of information. However, my initial slowness to access or recognise the value of pursuing certain lines of enquiry meant that I was left with quite a lot of unusable material from the earlier interviews. However, all respondents appeared to enjoy the experience, as if they had been designated of sufficient interest to warrant special attention, and there were only five refusals during the research period. Of these, three were male and two female. When approached, they either refused to talk or moved away.

In most types of research of this nature there are some individuals or sections of the population with whom one spends more time than others, and I was aware that my early contacts with some new Travellers could bias my contacts unduly, as well as create an unconscious empathy with those who had shown me hospitality, introduced me to their families and friends etc. Attempting to avoid this, I made a conscious effort to seek out Travellers on my own while on site. This turned out to be easier than expected, as talking is a major way in which time is passed. It was conducive towards gathering information, and informants were free to talk at length and without interruption. Having a car also helped, as this meant I could offer a free trip to town for shopping etc., which also offered an opportunity to get more information from passenger(s), in what was a more private zone on my own territory, allowing whoever was present to speak in confidence without being overheard by anyone else.

To find out if they had considered alternative viewpoints or were simply repeating stock opinions, at times during interview I deliberately challenged respondents' views and argued with them, as well as listening and observing to gather information. For example, Sid Rawle was a passionate defender of individual, liberal values, to whom I repeatedly put the view that rather than selfishly dropping out of society and 'doing one's own thing', as many Travellers had done, more could and should be done to engage with society to improve the lot of those less fortunate, through collective political action, a point of view he found as difficult to agree with as he did to ignore. In fact it was only through challenging some of the interviewees that I was able to gain some insight into their reasoning, politics and motivation concerning their lifestyle, or indeed the very lack of these, and it is these and other findings which served as the basis for the threefold typology of new Travellers which is described in Chapter 5.

The fact that I was an 'unknown' figure and not connected to any kind of agency also helped promote informality, and I believe, candour in interviews. A related issue with such interviews is of course to know how much is accurate and how much is merely nostalgic fiction, in what are at times highly personal testimonies. As other researchers have noted, for example Heatherington (2000) and Martin (1998), when people have taken to the road for a variety of different reasons, they enter a world of shifting identities, often with the aim of cultivating a new one, and there is a strong sense in which findings are more relative, complex and less straightforward than some memories were able to allow. One means of

overcoming this was to aim to interview others who were removed from daily involvement with Travellers, such as health workers, and the editor of a support group publication in order to gain different perspectives and insights into the scene. These were relatively easy to obtain, as my involvement in the field had already made me aware of those who may be able to help. Others who I approached through support groups and organisations were always willing and eager to share their views, and appreciated the involvement of others with similar interests. This provided an opportunity to find out if the Travellers' views were corroborated by those with professional experience of the field.

While on site, interviewing and observation were frequently intermixed, and the boundaries were sometimes blurred between overt and covert observation, as I had few opportunities to be alone. The Whyte method (Whyte, 1955) of nipping into the toilet, or in this case the bushes, to jot down observations was occasionally used, and most notes were written up after the field journey ended. While shorter interviews lasted around thirty minutes, the longer ones lasted up to three hours, although the longer the sessions went on, the more conversation tended to stray from the main topics of interest, especially in group interviews. However, this in itself was sometimes revealing. For example, on several different occasions conversation turned without any prompting to the conduct of others on site, how drink and drug use was bringing unwanted attention to the group, and I came away from the session feeling that I would have been unable to get a similar insights into collective attitudes using one-to-one interviews.

Although it was not difficult to find Travellers who had lived the kind of experiences which conform to the categories of 'Pioneers' and 'Refugees' it was almost impossible to find anyone who admitted to a way of life which matched the 'Outcast' description, even though the 'type' was remembered - and not fondly - by everyone I spoke to. This may have been because of feelings of shame, or simply a selective memory which allowed them to blank what had been a difficult time in their lives, which was in itself revealing.

In contrast to interviews set up with new Travellers, those conducted with professionals such as doctors and health care respondents were much more straightforward to prepare and carry out, in the sense that it was possible to go without a 'gatekeeper' straight into an interview situation, apart from a brief introduction. Thus, initial contact was made over the phone, together with a brief introduction to the kind of work I was doing, and a request for an appointment.

However, there were several aspects of the study which, with hindsight, might have been handled differently. For example, when I first got involved with the scene in the mid-1990s following the introduction of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, there were relatively few Travellers still pursuing the way of life, and numbers continued to decline throughout the research period, which was one of several substantial changes in the evolution of the scene. Therefore, with a study of this nature it would seem to be particularly important to get involved as early as possible, in order to begin observing and recording it before the 'actors' move on and disappear from view.

There was also the issue of finding/choosing respondents, and how it may have been of

use, for example, by interviewing Travellers based in other parts of Britain, such as the north of England and Scotland, in order to discover more about their encounters with local communities and reactions to them away from the Tory heartlands of the south-east. Similarly with the Travellers in countries such as Holland and Spain, where Gypsies and other travelling groups are not marginalised the way they are in Britain. Comparison with these and other groups may have served to put the southern English context into sharper relief, further illustrating the distinctiveness of the prevailing attitudes shown towards the presence of new Travellers during the research period.

As well as the question of collecting material, there is the issue of how the material is dealt with; the more I became aware of people's own lives through personal histories, stories and involvement with the lifestyle, the more I became aware of how much this might have been given greater foregrounding, even to the point of elaborating the study entirely in terms of Travellers own words, instead of preparing a primarily event-led account which focusses more on the exaggerated media reporting. However, although giving the study a different focus with more quotes and a broader base of respondents might have provided more 'thick description', and allowed the participants to tell their own stories in their own words, it would to some extent have neglected to show how their activities are influenced and constrained by social factors. Moreover, unlike for example drug addiction, the new Traveller phenomenon was not just a type of deviant behaviour, but was identifiable by a series of historical events.

In quoting the words of interviewees, ministers, and others such as policemen and politicians, it is hoped that near perfect comprehension can be achieved - if possible - without much more detail about timing, context and much else. My purpose throughout has been to convey points, rather than some total reality. Thus, although data includes observational field notes and formal and informal interviews, reference is made to appropriate statistical sources throughout. On this point it would have been useful to obtain more quantitative data concerning offences committed by Travellers, especially as some evidence is presented in Chapter Six that in comparison with the measures taken against them, their offences were few and the degree of seriousness was small. However, several phone calls to Wiltshire Constabulary and others referred me to a London office who claimed no data were available on Traveller offences, which in itself may suggest that there was no special interest in creating a separate category of crime.[26]

Other data analysed in this study includes various documentary sources, which are broadly described as follows: historical / legal commentary on vagrants and vagrancy; historical / legal commentary on new Travellers, to post-Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994; Hansard debates on travelling communities since 1968; media reports and articles on new Travellers; commentary on social and environmental change in the English countryside, particularly in the southern counties; publications and ephemera of Traveller support groups and organisations.

7. Plan of Study

Having reviewed the study and the areas to be analysed, the following chapter addresses the issues of movement and nomadism, and the way in which vagrant travellers have been regarded by settled society in history. Analysis shows how the act of vagrancy cannot be said to be a deviant act *per se*, but has been responded to in a variety of ways by the national authorities, local authorities and communities at different times and different places throughout history. The major variables are shown to be the political and economic interests of the ruling group, and the demands of an increasingly sedentary society and spatialised environment. This theme is developed more fully in Chapter Three, where an analysis is presented of the changing nature and role of the English countryside and the range of demands placed on it in the twentieth century. The conflicting social relations and the resulting tension which racked the southern region during the 1980s and 90s are examined in detail, and shown to be a key determinant in understanding the responses of the Tory government to the new Travellers. The next chapter shows how the media represented the Traveller way of life, and contributed to the first wave of Traveller panic in the mid-1980s and again in the early 1990s. It shows how many sections of the press used a historically familiar battery of images to excite public interest and prejudice. This is contrasted in Chapter Five with the varied accounts from those on the road during the research period, and others who had direct experience of it. In Chapter Six the role of the police and the debates surrounding the enactment of legislation against the Travellers are examined, and finally in Chapter Seven, in order to explain the official reaction to the Travellers, the data gathered throughout this study is related to the theory of moral panics. The remaining Chapter contains a bibliography, notes and tables on the informants cited throughout the study.

Notes

[1]The media-created term 'New Age Traveller' has been extensively employed in Parliament, by the police as well as being widely used in the press. There was, for example, a National Strategy produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers for dealing specifically with 'New Age Travellers'. However, the term is in many ways meaningless, and is particularly unpopular with Travellers themselves. For example, between 1985 and 1995 the meaning changed to embrace various groups within the 'DIY culture', such as the 'Dongas Tribe' (McKay, 1996), regardless of whether or not they were nomadic. Moreover, the dissimilarity between the 'New Age Travellers' and the way in which they were portrayed by the institutions, particularly in the 'fourth estate' of the press from the early 1990s, highlights shortcomings of the original expression, and in this study the term 'new Travellers' is preferred throughout.

[2] Both police and traveller estimates tend to vary considerably, with the former generally estimating for far fewer than the latter. Accuracy is further complicated by Travellers' mobility, and by the fact that some are mobile for only part of the year.

[3] A series of measures directing local authorities to designate and maintain approved sites for those whose livelihoods and traditions required them to be mobile. These are discussed in more detail at various points in the study.

[4] The Festival Welfare Service was a committee funded by the Home Office. It developed out of the voluntary 'Release' organisation, which provided information, support and counselling on drugs issues. It provided advice concerning free and commercial festivals to local councils and other support agencies on health, safety and social consequences arising from festivals.

[5] Section 39 gave the police power to direct trespassers to leave if they have damaged the land itself (as distinct from the property on it), or if they have six or more vehicles in the group.

[6] This Act made taking items from skips an offence, and dealing in 'scrap' illegal without a carriers' licence.

[7] This Act made it an offence for a person to use a caravan as their only or principal home without planning permission.

[8] These measures added a fine of up to £20,000 for failing to comply with a 'stop' notice if developing, for example a site, under section 183 of the 1990 Act.

[9] Trespass in England and Wales was formerly a civil rather than a criminal offence. To evict people trespassing on private land the police needed a court injunction. Provision in the 1986 Public Order Act made the unlawful trespass by up to twelve or more vehicles a criminal offence. This facilitated quicker evictions, as well as ensuring that Travellers moved around in smaller groups.

[10] According to government figures cited in Kenrick and Clark (2000:115).

[11] In 1991 I was listening to the BBC World Service news when it was reported that new age Travellers had broken down a fence and used it for firewood. My co-listeners from Spain asked me to explain why this was considered to be worthy of reporting as international news, at a time when the Soviet Union was collapsing and so on. My simple answer was that it obviously was not, but I was unable to give them a completely satisfactory account.

[12] Rose, H. (1975) *Up Against the Welfare State: the Claimants' Unions* in Milliband, R. and Saville, J. *The Socialist Register* The Merlin Press, London.

[13] Probably the best known work dealing with the counterculture was by the publisher, editor and author who coined the term, Theodore Roszak. The publication in 1969 of 'The Making of a Counterculture' offered a blueprint for an alternative society based on opposition to technology, and was widely influential in his native America and to a lesser extent in Britain, where it had a unifying effect on many disparate middle-class groups engaged in arts, music, publishing and other non-profit making projects.

[14] See Rigby (1974) for a fuller account of the Findhorn community and other communes in Britain.

[15] Traveller Informant 10.

[16] This has been researched by several authors, most notably by Heatherington (2000).

[17] Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979 and resigned in 1990, after winning three elections in 1979, 1983 and 1987.

[18] Although a definitive history of peace camps remains to be written, Greenham Women's peace camp has been well-documented and analysed, e.g. Cook, A. and Kirk, G. (1983) *Greenham Women Everywhere: Dreams, Ideas, and Actions from the Women's Peace Movement* Virago, London.

[19] For an extensive account of the eviction, see Garrard (1985), McKay (1996:59-65).

[20] See Thornton, (1995).

[21] This point and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) are mentioned in more detail in Chapter 7.

[22] See McVeigh (1997) for a full discussion of the practice of 'sedentarism'. Its application to Britain of the 1980s and the new Travellers is provided in Chapters Two and Three.

[23] Similarly with regard to ethnic variation; while it was possible to discover some variation among respondents with regard to variables such as age, level of education, and time on the road, I was unable to find any new Travellers who did not fall into the category of 'white British'. When I queried why this might be so with one of my respondents (TKI 1), he replied: *Why should they* (British Asians and Afro-Caribbeans) *want to come with us when they've got their own?* This was another unexplored aspect of the scene which may be worth further investigation.

[24] In the northern city of Logrono, La Rioja, in northern Spain.

[25] For example in Wiltshire and Cumbria.

[26] Comments by senior police officers experienced in dealing with new Travellers also suggest there was a realisation among police ranks of the changing nature of the 'problem', and that by evicting or arresting the Travellers they were merely displacing, what was by 1993, largely a product of social neglect and urban decay. Moreover, the police recognised the actors to be more harmless than the media and government had claimed, and were aware of the dangers of overreaction and further amplifying the 'problem'. Thus, compared to the mid-1980s, the policing response in the early 1990s was more passive than active, involving surveillance and coercion, rather than being aggressive and pro-active.

Chapter 2

Changing Attitudes to Vagrancy: the Question of Legitimacy

1. Introduction

As a preliminary contribution to understanding reactions to the new Travellers in the 1980s and 90s, this chapter examines the ways in which mobile groups were marginalised and estranged from the settled community in earlier times. Analysis reveals that as society has become more settled, the nomad-traveller has come to require a degree of legitimacy in order to avoid a negative response from the local authorities and community. In other words, travellers' motives need to be recognised, familiar and understood in order to avoid estrangement. Legitimacy is shown to be achieved in a number of ways, for example the need to be mobile for work, being independent and self-sufficient, or having an ethnic claim to a nomadic way of life. Visibility of the group is also shown to be important, as once in view, doubts are raised about those who are conspicuously different and about whom little is known. In place of hard facts, rumour and myth are quick to fill the void, and there can be suspicion, fear and resentment of the nomad-traveller. This can be made more acute by their presence in the modern countryside, an environment which like many urban areas in the twentieth century, has become both highly sedentary and spatially organised.

2. The Early Medieval Period: Legitimacy and Respect

The earliest mention of vagrancy can be traced back to Roman times. In A.D. 368 the Roman Ammianus Marcellus chronicled the Scots as the most numerous of vagrants, whose troublesome, roving, tribal existence made their subjugation impossible (Ribton-Turner, 1887:3). Such a view of vagrants as transgressors of boundaries, as a threat to social order and stability has, down the centuries, frequently provided the justification for repressive legislation. In the dark ages about which little is known, it can be assumed that the absence of adequate shelter made life on the road difficult and dangerous. However, conditions for travellers improved somewhat with the arrival31 of Christian missionaries from Rome and Ireland, who spread an ethic of hospitality and benevolence towards the poor stranger. The Church strongly encouraged hospitality as a Christian duty towards the poor, and their influence and benevolence led to increasing charity, alms giving, and the establishing of monasteries around the country. The ethic was reinforced by successive Archbishops of Canterbury, for example Theodore, (Archbishop of Canterbury 668-690) who declared:

Whosoever doth not receive a sojourner into his house hath not fulfilled the command of the gospel, and hath not washed the feet of the poor, nor done alms, so long let him do penance on bread and water if he amend not. (Ribton-Turner, 1887:9)

There was a nexus of charitable giving to those on a spiritual mission who had renounced earthly comforts, pleasures and possessions; a requirement of hospitality, a need to give bread, water and shelter to a footsore, weary traveller. Monasteries were established around

the country[1] to assist a variety of wayfarers, as well as the immobile poor of the locality. They provided hospitalisation for the sick, along with herbal remedies and treatments, as well as religious education and the teaching of elementary literacy, in what amounted to a network of social services. In this way, the pilgrim became an instrument of piety. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common variety of travellers on the early medieval road were those on religious pilgrimage. Encouraged by the Church, these started off in many parts of Britain and usually finished in Canterbury, which attracted as many as 200,000 pilgrims per year at the height of the Thomas a Becket 'cult.'[2] Other towns such as Walsingham, Winchester and St. Albans encouraged their own pilgrimages with relics and stories. They brought commerce and currency to the south and south-east in much the same way as tourism does today.

But pilgrims were not alone on the early medieval road, as more economic migrants had appeared. During the reign of Edward I (1272-1304) new legislation had allowed a Lord's tenants to contract labourers to do their work for them. This superseded earlier Norman systems of political and military feudalism, which meant that every man's legal rights and obligations as well as his prosperity and life chances, were profoundly affected by his relationship to land. In return for work, sustenance and protection, various financial impositions were exacted from tenants by landlords. Thus, given the absence of any better alternative, it would have been in a man's interests to remain close to the piece of land he was able to cultivate, and had little incentive to wander. However, under the new legislation freed labourers were able to look for a means of subsistence elsewhere and economic refugees and migrants began to appear on the landscape. Many were attracted to the growing industry of the towns and the expanding cloth industry, while skilled tradesmen such as builders, masons and carpenters were also mobilised by the Crown from Edward I to Henry VIII, with the construction of churches, palaces and castles (Leeson, 1979:36). As well as economic migrants and pilgrims, there were soldiers travelling to and from conflicts such as the Hundred Years War with France (begun in 1337), border conflicts with Wales, Scotland and Ireland, while others were serving in private armies in support of various internal quarrels of Lords and Barons.

Travellers on the medieval road would therefore have been largely of a recognisable type. Pilgrims, soldiers and craftspeople all had motives which were well known and understood. They aroused little suspicion or concern, and their adventurous spirit and opportunity to travel would even have been envied by many of the settled population.[3] Consequently, they had an identity and a familiarity, and thus enjoyed legitimacy and respect. Moreover, the Church taught that there was a moral duty to help the stranger, and led by example with the assistance and generosity practised in the monasteries, facilitating travel and making the stranger welcome. However, this would soon change, following the instability and uncertainty which the Black Death brought to the country.

3. Tension, Vagrancy and Rebellion

The understandings and rights which travellers enjoyed began to change following the Black Death of 1348-49. Between one third and one half of the population died, leaving the

country acutely short of labour. Mobility came to be used as a widespread means of emancipation from poverty, as landless labourers cast off the shackles of manorial oppression and feudal law, to gain the freedom of economic bargaining, perhaps in a neighbouring borough or in one of the Cathedral cities, or as an independent stranger on a distant estate where additional manpower was required. The Black Death thus contributed to a breakdown of the old feudal system, and created a more flexible system of buying and selling labour, which motivated more to go on the road in search of better rates and conditions (Platt, 1996). But high prices made landowners complain to the Crown, and in 1350 the Statute of Labourers was introduced to prevent workers travelling outside their parish in search of a better rate, thus ensuring landowners a supply of labour at a price they could afford (Chambliss, 1964:66-77). Additionally, new laws were introduced to prohibit the giving of giving of alms to able-bodied beggars, under the penalty of imprisonment. This was in direct opposition to the teaching of the Church, and perhaps for the first time in English history, vagrancy legislation was introduced whose spirit was fundamentally economic rather than religious.

Further attempts to prevent the movement of labourers were enacted following the Poll Tax riots in 1381[4] which made landlords realise that commoners' demands had to be considered, and gradually they began leasing out property, accepting in return financial payments in place of labour. The long-term effect of the Revolt was thus to give a greater degree of autonomy and responsibility to labourers, who became less inclined to cut and run to gain freedom as economic refugees, except in the direst of circumstances (Campbell, 1990). However, the Poll Tax Revolt also had another important consequence. Because fewer people were now inclined to take to the road, some classes such as strong, able beggars who could work but would not, became more conspicuous and aroused suspicion. Vagabondage involved the breaking of manorial ties, so it was unclear why they were wandering when recent legal and economic changes had promoted stability. It also implied a lack of responsibilities to village communities, or the need to take family holdings, and who could therefore be a charge on the community. Rootless, masterless and destitute, there was a worry that they were desperate, with nothing to lose, and who would destroy society, and against whom defence was weak.

In this way, the poor and mobile came to be presented as a threat to the social and economic well-being of society. A range of learned authorities were consulted on the issue of able-bodied beggars, whose views helped create the stereotype of 'sturdy beggar' which became identified in law to describe those fit and able, but lazy and unwilling. As with 'rogue' and 'vagabond' (which later gained currency to categorise those refusing to work), the term may in itself seem relatively mild, but the meaning which they had for the medieval mind was quite different, the modern equivalent being similar to 'anarchist', 'terrorist', or in some western societies, 'communist' (Beier, 1985). In a situation which bears some comparison with the new Travellers in the 1980s, the main outcome of this fearsome label was the creation of a visible stereotype which the Crown and population could readily identify.

But there was also growing anxiety about a different issue, that of growing tension between Church and State, coupled with the vast numbers of pilgrims who were openly showing

their opposition to the Crown by undertaking pilgrimages to Catholic shrines. Pilgrimages were seen as political acts as well as religious ones, which implicitly expressed support for the Roman Church. They swelled Church coffers through commerce with monasteries, trade in relics and political sympathies with Rome. Moreover, they were said to offer cover and anonymity for those with more nefarious intentions, such as the movement of strong, able beggars, who were able to work but could or would not, and were "going afar under colour of going on pilgrimage" so Parliament complained in 1388 (Leeson, 1979:34).

Significantly, the apparent threat of the sturdy beggar had the effect of uniting the population by providing a temporary distraction and scapegoat for fears and insecurities over the far more complex, divisive and possibly dangerous theological issues of a possible schism between Crown and Church. Between 1350 and 1400 the stereotype was further reinforced in a series of legislative measures. The passing of Statute 88 by Richard II in 1388, with its distinction between beggars able to labour and those not, prohibited wandering around the country. Although not explicitly stated, it was widely understood to mean that those incapable of looking after themselves would be provided for by their church and townsfolk. This marked the beginning of state interference in poor relief, which had previously been considered a purely local matter.

The economy continued its steady deflationary decline from the early 14th century, and into the fifteenth, causing endemic poverty and hardship. Vagrancy became more widespread, and attitudes continued to harden against them. By 1400 the issue was beginning to vex the church lawyers who argued against relieving those who could work but would not, on the grounds that some types of poverty did not promote spirituality and lead to holiness, but instead caused social disorder. The learned intellectuals - the opinion formers of their day, increasingly saw pilgrims and friars as fraudulent, and adopted the view of St. Paul that a good Christian had to pay his way.[5] In this way a new philosophy gradually emerged which ignored the spiritual or economic causes of vagrancy, and instead saw vagrants themselves as a social problem whose roots lay in idleness (Beier, 1985:5). The solution was to 'make them work', and if they failed to do so, they would be deported. In the religious ferment of the fifteenth century the vagrant was gradually becoming desanctified. However, those in search of work - the 'economic migrants' - still enjoyed a degree of legitimacy, since they were familiar, necessary, and their motives were understood and respected.

4. The Tudors and Vagrancy

Under Henry VIII (1491-1547) the new learning of the Renaissance was in the ascent, and Tudor thinking about vagrancy became influenced by European humanist ideas about the reform of society, which were founded on assumptions about personal character. Webb noted that:

Calvin quoted not with reference to the functionless rich but to the proletarian poor St Paul's stern dictum "If a man do not work, neither shall he eat" whilst he condemned indiscriminate almsgiving as vehemently as a 19th century charity organisation, and required the ecclesiastical authorities to visit regularly every family to ascertain whether any member

of the household was idle, drunken, or otherwise unsatisfactory in personal conduct. Under the influence of this conception of Christianity, industry became both the leading social virtue, and, at any rate in the poor, the very essence of personal morality.

(Webb, 1927:409)

Vagabondage and the need to correct it received its first detailed treatment in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). More saw the underlying causes of crime as economic - unemployment, exploitation and poverty. He believed no punishment would prevent from acts of robbery those with no other means of getting a livelihood. This was a radical work for its time, and proposed many imaginative, progressive, humanist solutions to problems of medieval society. Rather than treat the symptoms, for example by executing thieves, More wanted to address the causes, to pass legislation against movement from their areas of origin, and to find work for idle hands in essential areas such as animal husbandry and cloth manufacture; food and clothing (Beier, 1985:149). At the same time, indiscriminate almsgiving was regarded as socially injurious, and together with begging and vagrancy, was restrained by law. Once again, the Christian obligation to relieve poverty and suffering - an obligation sanctioned by rewards and penalties for the benefactor in the after-life - was seriously challenged. Consequently, the noble associations with the Franciscan virtue of poverty which vagrancy had once enjoyed, were gradually diminished, and the practice became synonymous with idleness and deviance, associations which incidentally, have never attached themselves to vagrancy in Catholic Europe.

The effect of this changing philosophy was the Reformation and dissolution of the monasteries, which eliminated the provision offered by the Church, in an act which must have been comparable to the destruction of the social services of the period, and created even greater social inequalities. In their place, new Tudor thinking about the role of the State advocated the systematic provision for all those in need, not through pity or manifestation of charity, but through a system of Poor Law. Public officials of all parishes were given the duty of maintaining the impotent poor, and pressure was increased for voluntary contributions. However, relief would only be given in return for a willingness to work. In the *Bishop's Book* (1537), Henry VIII personally amended a provision regarding charity to excluded persons living *by the graft of begging slothfully*, adding that they should be compelled to work (Scarisbrick, 1968:405).

The Tudor authorities were also concerned with introducing an effective system of taxation to pay for the new measures. Nomadic people were difficult to deal with as they could not be taxed and were a drain on the system's resources. Initiatives to deal with them became increasingly centralised, and in1530 'Egyptians' (Gypsies) were banned from entering Britain, and those already present ordered to leave. National legislation for poor relief began to appear, notably in a statute of 1554 which ordered parishes to register their poor, and to meet their responsibilities in relation to the local resources available. Paradoxically, one hand measures were being taken to settle people, but on the other, the increasing availability of municipal relief promoted a shift to those areas where it was most liberally dispensed, a prime location being London. Records from the southern shires show vagrants arriving there from most of England (Beier, 1985:189). Without the monasteries to

absorb them, the economic migrants and sturdy beggars became more conspicuous, and apparently more numerous. In the eyes of the Establishment, they became hate figures, and blame for their fate was laid firmly on their own shoulders.

Concerned about the situation, in 1551 an Act was introduced which prevented *all tinkers, pedlars and suchlike vagrant persons* from travelling without a licence, under pain of 14 days in jail. Penalties introduced against Gypsy travellers also became increasingly severe, with a ban on their entering the country for any reason, with the death penalty being applied to any found to have stayed for over one month. However, the life would be spared if the Gypsies in question submitted to being settled (Mayall, 1991:24).

Anxiety about vagrancy drove the authorities to reform as well as punish vagabonds. The most revolutionary attempt at reform was the 'Bridewell', begun in 1552 in London to create work for the able-bodied in the disused Palace of Bridewell, and which could be seen as a prototype for the later 'House of Correction' or work-house, as unlike the jails, its distinctive aim was said to be not to punish, but to reform the character of the vagrant, in the belief that if they grew accustomed to hard work, they would not be tempted to beg and wander. Within its walls, vagrants, children, the sick and ex-prisoners were all forced to submit to a daily regime of hard labour, often while manacled. Correction Houses similar to Bridewell were established in every county, where refusal to work brought reduced rations and whippings. In 1563 parishes were permitted to impose a tax which was used to help those poor and destitute. Aid was provided to the applicant's domicile, and was known as 'outdoor relief', or through special houses where the aged and infirm were gathered, known as 'indoor relief'. This system marked the introduction of a Poor Law system, which was administered in this way until 1722, when parishes opened 'workhouses' for those destitute.

The clutch of repressive measures introduced since the 14th Century contributed to the practice of settlement within the parish, and had the effect of deterring some types of vagrancy. They also transformed the image of the nomad-traveller in the public mind, from the 'legitimate' noble pilgrim or economic migrant, to a suspicious, possibly 'illegitimate' and dangerous undesirable. Although land labourers were a large and vital part of the workforce, pedlars were said to violate guild restrictions, military men could be dangerous as they knew how to use arms, entertainers brought together crowds who sometimes rioted, sturdy beggars could be violent, and wizards were said to associate with the devil. Nevertheless, vagrancy persisted. Pilgrimages had almost disappeared but market days and fairs had become infamous for attracting vagrants. In 1571 there were over 1000 fairs in England and Wales, often held on a day commemorating a village's patron saint (Beier, 1985:189). Records surviving from 1597 state that vagrants gathering in these towns did so in such great numbers that the authorities were overwhelmed at the cost of maintaining them. In consequence, punishments for sturdy beggars became more severe, with branding, whipping, ear-boring, the pillory and the ducking stool all in common use.

Further measures to relieve growing numbers of the poor were contained in the Poor Law of 1601. The Law recognised the state's obligation to those in need, and required

compulsory local levies to be administered by the parish. This became known as the 'old Poor Law', and it remained in place (often with substantial changes) until 1834. Relief was provided by poor houses, where the sick, aged and insane were grouped together, while the 'sturdy' refusing to work were to be imprisoned in a 'House of Correction', where they were forced to do manual labour.

But incentives to move around were strong; this was an era of social tension, inflation, and desperate and life-threatening poverty, the sources of which were not difficult to find. Real agricultural wages in 1600 were one third of what they had been in 1500, and there had been a massive redistribution from poor to rich (Tawney, 1912), and the provision of aid naturally encouraged movement and demand. Outdoor relief tended to be unevenly distributed, with some areas being more generous than others, causing people to move to generous areas in search of assistance. Poverty and the sense of injustice and discontent was expressed in religious and ethnic hatreds, and scapegoating of Gypsies and others, for example Jews, Africans, French and Dutch (Holmes,1988, quoted in Acton, 1994). In a situation which mirrors that of the Travellers during the Tory years, Acton further notes how Gypsies were also made scapegoats for the distress underlying and contradicting the 'glories'[6] of the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), with a spate of expulsions and executions.

Concerned about the situation, in 1622 the Crown provided further encouragement to settle in the form of the Law of Settlement and Removal, which gave parishes the right to expel from parish relief those who could not prove a local connection or some right of settlement. The most significant aspect of the new law was that the parish and parishioners would only provide relief to those who were of that locality, thus creating an incentive not to wander, and forcing those who did to return from where they came. The cost and difficulties of fairly administering such a service led to further attempts to contain movement, as vagrancy was seen not as an effect but as a cause of economic problems[7], and keeping out or throwing out the needy was a familiar aspect of 17th century Poor Law. In this way parishes came to be run like small, independent states, suspecting and rejecting 'illegal immigrants' who might be a charge on them.

5. Enclosure and Movement

As the population grew and became increasingly mobile under the impact of the agricultural and later the industrial revolution, vagrancy laws and Acts of Settlement became much stricter. Land enclosure marked a significant development in this direction, a simple measure which had far-reaching consequences. The erecting of barriers such as hedges and walls around land allowed sheep to be kept and gave definition to property, gradually transforming the pattern of land around a village from a shared, communal area to a privatised, individualistic one. Although the process of enclosure had begun around the end of the 1400s, the effects then were not nearly as pronounced as they were to become in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is because the population was small and still recovering from the ravages of the Black Death. Best (1981:2) points out that the population of England was 4.5 million before the plague, but this dropped to 2.4 million in 1377, before steadily recovering to 3.5 million in 1545. The initial decrease in population

meant farmers and freed labourers took advantage of cheap land and vacant holdings of their neighbours to make larger farms. This concentrated land ownership in fewer hands, but at a time of deflation and depression, the consequences of enclosure were clearly not as serious or as widespread as they were to become in the late 1700s, when the process began to accelerate and communal land for grazing began to disappear.

The profits to be made from wool ensured the process of enclosure spread quickly, and between 1760 and 1820 around 5.5 million acres, approximately 20 per cent of England's total acreage, was enclosed through applications to Parliament. In 1801 the Enclosure Act was passed, simplifying and quickening the process. The effects were disastrous; many villages were destroyed to make way for sheep, sometimes leaving a single cottage for the use of the shepherd. Others were left intact, but their common land was reduced to a patch big enough for cricket, but little else. The landscape was transformed from common land used for grazing by the landless, into a privatised, commercial space of regular, hedgerowed fields. The so-called 'typical' English scene of patchwork green fields is thus a product of 18th century enterprise.

Although it made an attractive environment for the leisured class of hunting and shooting landowners, it also made thousands of landless peasants poor and destitute. With a new preference for sheep, families who had worked their master's land for generations were forced out and left to wander the lanes hoping to hire themselves out for labour. In contrast to what was almost 150 years of broad deflation until around 1485, this was a time of steep inflation, in which the poor, vagrants, and squatters on private land suffered most as they had had no legal rights and were often evicted, only to become paupers. But the prevailing liberal economic thought saw this as inevitable, for example when Sir Frederick Eden, who had already written extensively on the state of the poor, remarked that:

... it is one of the natural consequences of freedom that those who are left to shift for themselves must sometimes be reduced to want. (Quoted in Briggs, 1983:174)

In a situation which bears comparison with the recession of the 1980s and 90s, the contradiction was that, at the same time as the state was setting in motion thousands of economic refugees through Acts of Enclosure it was also trying to limit economic migration through Acts of Settlement, as well as continuing to deny them legitimacy through a succession of Vagrancy Acts. These led to vagrants being pursued to the edge of the county, as each passed them on to the next. There was a reluctance to help the strangers who could squander the communities' charity, or who might commit crimes for which they could not be held accountable. Thus the main effect of the Acts of Enclosure was to ensure an increase in the ranks of poor and disenfranchised, as more were forced onto the road as economic refugees, who were to be the most substantial category of vagrants in the 19th century, as further events and catastrophes caused many more to become uprooted and homeless.[8]

6. Nineteenth century attitudes to vagrancy

The apparent contradiction between laissez-faire policies which forced people into poverty and vagrancy, and the wish to punish the apparently idle vagrant is explained with reference to the prevailing ideas of the time, which saw it as only natural that some should suffer in the interests of the greater good and the improvement of the individual and the nation. The ideas of Calvin had gained ground since the Reformation, and beliefs about the value of hard work, individualism, self-control and self-help, provided the means through which the individual could be brought closer to God. The spirit of Calvinism informed many philosophical writings of the 18th and 19th century. Adam Smith built on the philosophy with his own ideas about rational self interest, and the idea that the government should intervene in the economy to limit the self-interest of landowners, or that the poor should be given financial help, was seen as anathema, as it would only promote degeneracy and decline. Smith's 'invisible hand' of non-intervention came to inspire and influence much of the prevailing economic thought in 19th century Britain, and complemented Malthusian concerns about poverty and disease being related not to the consequences of the free market, but to a moral weakness, which led to overpopulation and man's inability to support his dependents. Similarly, Darwin's ideas on the evolution of the species which Herbert Spencer applied to the social world, also helped to shape the prevailing view that public or private giving interfered with the improvement of the poor, which he saw as a race.

Partly by weeding out those of lowest development and partly by subjecting those who remain to the never ceasing discipline of experience, nature secures the growth of a race who shall both understand the conditions of existence and be able to act up to them. It is impossible in any degree to suspend this discipline by stepping in between ignorance and its consequences, without, to a corresponding degree, suspending the progress. If to be ignorant were as safe as to be wise, no one would become wise.

(Herbert Spencer, 1891:438)

As with the Acts of Enclosure, the Highland clearances and the Irish famine, to criticise the effects of the new factory system would have been to criticise progress, the orthodox thinking about the value of economic self-interest, and the value of hard work in shaping and (re)forming the character. Those wandering around the countryside and increasingly in the city were poor because of individual failure, laziness and fecklessness, and the best way to remedy this was through enforced labour.[9] The orthodox view was that if work was available, and if most kinds required settlement, there could be no justification for vagrancy.

The industrial revolution demanded the introduction of more regular and 'routinised' patterns of work, and the movement and migration of labour which had been characteristic of labour for centuries was about to fall into decline. Organised and apprenticed artisans had earlier been numerous around the countryside, forming part of a tramping system in which members tramped in search of work, supporting each other around the country. But in the mid-19th century, travelling could involve 'grand tours' around union branches covering as much as 2,800 miles. But due to slower industrial expansion, less casualism, and greater specialisation, tramping declined (Hobsbawm, 1968:34). A more settled labour force was

urgently required. Factories and homes were built next to each other, and for many unskilled workers, the need to tramp looking for work was removed. In the countryside, tied cottages were often available for agricultural workers, which reduced the need for mobile agricultural workers. As well as the skilled artisans, the hawkers, drovers and showmen, who for centuries had been a legitimate part of the countryside landscape, also began to disappear, in a process hastened by the arrival of the railways.

The factory regime of long hours and repetitively dull labour, punctuated by bells and whistles, the noise, pollution and not infrequently disorder and violence must have created a yearning for the freedom of the countryside, autonomy and a changing bohemian existence, yet this was barely acknowledged. Most commentators of the period or government reports on vagrancy fail to comprehend or even comment on it, and as society became more settled an aura of mystery settled on the vagrant. In the absence of hard facts about the way of life, a variety of light entertainment was quick to fill the void. Oral and literary accounts came to have a strong influence on social attitudes, and encouraged suspicion and disdain of those wandering in the countryside. Like the tabloid press of today, they repeated rumours and coloured accounts, for example, vagrants were said to enjoy life to the full, far more than the average labourer in his tied cottage. They were said to live riotously and licentiously, free from the demands of work, social convention, and ironically, poverty. Gypsies were said to poison farm animals and put curses on people, steal washing and children, while tramps were accused of terrorising housewives, thieving, burning hay-ricks, and by long association back to the days of the plague, were said to be the carriers of cholera and smallpox (Jones, 1982). Similarly, most popular literary references[10] emphasised the annoyance and viciousness of begging, rather than the misery it could imply. In the works of Dickens for example, there are numerous representations of vagrants, romantic yet sinister, confusingly constructed to inspire envy or fear, and as such they seem to reflect Victorian society's mixed reaction to the vagrant, which in many ways seems to be a precursor to that of the modern day (Crowther, 1992).

As with modern day accounts of new Travellers, there were few substantiated incidents where vagrants had committed serious crimes and most rumours and reports seem to focus on their being morally suspect, as they were free from the demands of manual labour, routine, or convention. For example, in 1836 while gathering information in rural areas, Poor Law Commissioners were given the following account of local life by a local constable:

Their clothes were outwardly tattered, but warm in reality; they begged considerable sums of money, and also quantities of food which they sold to the innkeeper. They spent their evenings at the inn, with the best of food and drink, and slept there stark naked, several men and women in a bed. The local youth, not surprisingly were reported to be envious.

(Crowther, 1992:105)

Reflecting the philosophical opinions on vagrancy, the legislation forged against nomads of all kinds during the 18th and 19th century conceived of vagrants as a social degenerates in need of reform. The 1739-40 Vagrancy Act attempted to describe the wandering poor. Three different categories were created: the disorderly, rogues and vagabonds, and

incorrigible rogues, where classification depended not on what cause them to be nomadic, but on the number of previous convictions, inadvertently creating perhaps the earliest example of labelling by tariff. The 1824 Vagrancy Act retained the threefold classification first adopted in 1739-40. Outdoor relief to the able-bodied was removed, and the deserving poor were sent to the workhouse, but the undeserving, able-bodied were treated as deviants in need of punishment, and could be given up to three months hard labour, with additional whippings for the men. Possibly the most aggressive piece of legislation in force against all types of travellers in the 19th century, its spirit embodied the assumption that pauperism stemmed partly from unwillingness to work rather than from inadequate opportunities, and thus it took a much sterner and more disapproving view of those applying for help.

The Act of 1824, together with an Act of 1828 empowering JPs to provide county asylums for pauper lunatics, marked for the first time the development of national, centrally directed, administrative network for dealing with the problem of poverty and vagrancy. This was fully implemented in the the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, which removed local responsibility for relief based on the benevolence of local landowners and clergy, and implemented a national state apparatus set up with the aim of subjugating poverty. As such it became the most important Poor Law Act since 1601.

In spite of growing numbers of vagrants, especially the influx of Irish refugees fleeing from the Great Famine, the Poor Law authorities remained unsympathetic to their situation, attributing it to an unwillingness to work. In 1848, in a minute to the Board, Charles Buller, first President of the Poor Law Board, emphasised his fear that 'grievous mischief' would arise from too ready a distribution of relief to vagrants not entitled to it, and urged them to distinguish carefully between those tramping in search of work, and those who were idle vagrants. Buller instructed that the latter should be given only a minimum of aid, particularly if they were able-bodied. Over the next 20 years many Unions built separate vagrant wards at their workhouses. Yet even such meagre provisions were denounced by the public as encouraging vagrancy and professional vagabondage, and the terms 'vagabond' and 'tramp' gradually became synonymous[11] which probably indicates a return to the perception of travellers as a homogeneous, idle mass.[12]

7. Sedentarism: The Settling Of Society

So far it has been demonstrated how changes in attitudes towards vagrancy are not constant but are cyclical. Thus, in contrast to the tolerance and even benevolence shown towards the nomad-wanderer in pre-Tudor times, from the mid-16th century onwards changes such as a steady growth in the population, advances in agricultural technology, land enclosure, and the rapid expansion of the cities all led to an increase in the numbers of 'masterless men' and sturdy vagabonds. However, the authorities did not remain indifferent towards vagrancy, and the tolerance shown in earlier times was replaced by a steady growth in official concern, underpinned by a prevailing philosophy which cast vagrants as deviant, morally degenerate, and a threat to social wellbeing. Nomads of all kinds gradually lost their legitimacy, and came to be seen as morally suspect and criminal, in the sense that in the

view of the authorities they had no right to be living nomadically unless their work demanded it, for example in the case of seasonal agricultural labourers, and successive legal measures were enacted which attempted to settle people and prevent vagrancy with punishments. The comparisons with the new Travellers under Thatcherism are already apparent, which further demonstrates how attitudes towards vagrancy are seen not to be constant, but to change and proceed dialectically, in a pattern which, as will be shown in later chapters, can be seen repeating into the late twentieth century.

Attempts to stamp out vagrancy and settle people 'for their own good' is a tendency which has been described as 'sedentarism', a term originally coined by Jean-Pierre Liegeois, which can be defined as:

The system of ideas and practices which serves to normalise and reproduce sedentary modes of existence and pathologise and repress nomadic modes of existence.

(McVeigh, 1997:9)

In other words, legislation and practices designed to eliminate vagrancy and nomadic ways of life through enforced settlement. These practices have increased throughout the 19th and 20th century, as successive governments became increasingly interventionist in dealing with poverty, health and security. These have been expressed through both legislation and environmental practices concerning how land is used. With regard to security, the appearance of masterless men, 'sturdy beggars' and the appearance of an organised 'underworld' in the 19th century led to the creation of a police force, whose role was to civilise the homeless vagrant, and ensure the 'enjoyment of property' (McMullan, 1998:93). As McMullan notes, with regard to the policing project envisaged by Colquhoun:

The nomad, the vagrant, the idle were transformed from symbols of freedom and popularity into a unitary afflicted criminal archetype, whose every move was the reflex of physical, mental, moral and environmental defectiveness. (McMullan, 1998:108)

Scientific advances in understanding the relationship between dirt and disease led to the introduction of new public health laws to protect the settled community, yet no provision or exemption was made for nomad-travellers in mobile homes such as vans and tents, which meant they were often rendered illegal. For example, Section 9 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act (1885) extended the provisions of the 1875 Public Health Act, which ordered that the owner of any habitation which was in such a state as to be a nuisance, or so overcrowded as to be damaging to the health of the occupants could be prosecuted. Paradoxically, country life in a tent would probably been much healthier than life in most urban areas at that time but this was of little concern to the authorities.

The new approach to public health was accompanied by new thinking on tackling the causes of poverty, but once again the needs of nomad travellers were ignored. This could be seen in the three measures of the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, the introduction of a National Insurance scheme against unemployment, and the Labour Exchange Act of 1909, which all went some way towards helping the poor. But provision of national

insurance and unemployment benefit depended on possession of identification and an address, and many vagrants could not cope with the demands of paperwork or lacked the wherewithal or motivation to find settled accommodation. Furthermore, previous contributions were necessary before N.I. benefits could be claimed, thus penalising vagrants, those tramping (which was earlier seen as a respectable means for craftspeople in search of employment) as well as ethnic nomads (McVeigh, op.cit.:20). The publication of the Poor Law Commission's 'Minority Report' (1909) into the causes of poverty[13] also offered some hope, as its findings included a new understanding that unemployment could be experienced as a misfortune and not a moral lapse. Its recommendations found expression in the enactment of a series of new measures, however, qualification for the new social provision usually required a settled address, putting out of reach provision for the most marginalised and nomadic. Later in 1936, further provision was introduced with the Old Age Pensions Act, the National Health Insurance Act, and the Unemployment Insurance Act. But despite the official protection for the settled, until 1948 with the creation of the Welfare State, the workhouses remained as the only place of shelter for those who could not or would not conform to the demands of an increasingly sedentarist welfarism.

While some legal measures neglected the needs of nomadic people, others intensified the pressure on vagrants and travelling communities. In her illuminating study of Gypsy travellers, which are outlined in Okely, (1983). In 1959 the Highways Act specifically singled out the Gypsies for prosecution for camping on the roadside. The 1960 Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, although not specifically addressed to Gypsies, radically affected the lifestyle of all travellers, with the introduction of tighter controls for private sites, all of which now required planning permission. As a consequence, many encampments, used for either short or long-term stays, were forced to close (Adams et al., 1975:9-10). To relieve some of the pressure on Travelling groups, who were now forced to use unsuitable locations, a Ministry circular of 1962 encouraged local authorities to conduct surveys with a view to providing sites, even acknowledging that Gypsies had 'the right to follow their traditional way of life' (quoted in M.H.L.G., 1967), although only those whom the Ministry labelled the 'true gypsies and romanies' were included. A few sites were opened, but prosecutions against travellers for illegal park-ups continued on a large scale (Adams et al., 1975:11).

One of the most significant developments of the 1960s was the introduction of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act (1960), prompted by the indiscriminate holiday caravanning by a generation of increasingly motorised and leisured urban dwellers. This brought sites under a licensing as well as a development control system, creating a 'demarcated space' for those travelling in the countryside. Further measures were later enacted for Gypsies and other traditional travellers, much of it by an increasingly intrusive welfarism, for example a research report of the Department of Environment, *Gypsies and Other Travellers* (MHLG,1967) revealed the majority to be living in appalling living conditions. For the first time local authorities were required to provide designated sites for *adequate accommodation* and the eventual outcome was a legal obligation on local authorities to provide serviced sites with rented pitches for travellers under the 1968 Caravan Sites Act. This made provision for:

... persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, other than a travelling group of showmen, travelling together as such.

As the National Council for Civil Liberties has observed, it is vital to note this is a definition by lifestyle, not by race or other origin. But it also gave the Local Authority new 'control powers' to ensure the eviction of any person 'being a Gypsy' stationing a caravan on unauthorised land (Adams et al.,1975:16-22). Concerns about the lack of suitable space for Gypsies and other travellers had been voiced as early as 1976. Sir John Cripps, author of the report 'Accommodation for Gypsies' (which examined the progress of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act), maintained that the programme had been a failure, principally because of the inadequate number of sites[14] , and that the location of many was poor from a residential point of view. This was said to be caused by the identification of incompatible land-use associations created by a Gypsy site.

The need for both living and work spaces within the confines of a gypsy site inevitably restricts choice in planning terms, because in a residential area, they would include a non-conforming use. (Quoted in Sibley, 1983:110)

Those unable to find suitable, vacant sites in urban areas had no option but to move to the fringes of the city, and out to vacant land in the countryside, whereas earlier in the century the urban environment could have absorbed them. Moreover, many sites were situated well away from the cities and urban areas where most Gypsies made their living, and the Gypsy Council alleged that councils tried to move Gypsies from their areas in order to avoid having to provide a site (Acton, 1974:183).

8. The Disappearance of Marginal Space

The new sedentarist welfarism and anti-traveller measures put pressure on travelling communities, but during the 1960s and 70s a series of practices connected with land use and urban development further restricted the possibilities for a nomadic life, both in urban areas and the countryside, through the gradual disappearance of appropriate sites. New Travellers and other travelling communities usually prefer the freedom and distance from settled, non-traveller society which unofficial sites afford, and where the legal interests of owners (who are usually sedentary) tend not to be enforced. Such sites are often on land described as 'marginal'. Marginal land or space has been defined as any area where the dominant society or group is unable to define or control how space is used, in either a physical or cultural sense (Shields, 1991). Such sites are usually located in 'marginal' areas, for example those with poor or unsafe environmental conditions. Examples of marginal space may include derelict buildings, land cleared for redevelopment, canal-side or roadside areas (Kendall, 1997). The point about such areas is that although Travellers occupy them without official permission, the sedentary society may not be interested in their apparent transgressions, and turn a 'blind eye' to such sites, due to the ill-defined, marginal nature of the land or property, allowing what goes on there to pass unobserved.

Marginal spaces are contrasted with non-marginal spaces, in other words spaces or sites which are seen as valuable amenities, for example business parks, residential areas, or corporately owned farmland in the Home Counties. In these cases, the land is occupied with buildings or services/amenities which, according to the dominant group, have a functional and legitimate use. Such sites are, moreover, occupied by groups deemed 'legitimate', i.e. their occupants and usage have legal, moral and ethical rights to the land. In contrast, marginal sites are often empty and therefore less clearly defined and more open to contestation. Where Travellers occupy land of this kind, the dominant group may attempt to reassert control by occupying or preventing unauthorised access to the building or land. Thus the marginal space is temporary, and depends on place and time, the attitude of the local authorities, landowners, security measures, as well as the nature of the space itself (Kendall, 1997).

Until the 1960s the presence of travelling communities was not unusual in the central areas of Britain's cities, and the occupation of marginal space in the form of derelict and short life housing was common. Although it was often illegal, it used to be tolerated by some local authorities, for example one study in Hull found that several groups parked up and spent winters in the city, and one traveller had been stopping in a street with his trailer for as long as 14 years. Even where evictions were carried out, there was little public interest or media coverage, and where this did occur, there was rarely any mention that those evicted were often Gypsies (Sibley, 1983:131). However, in Sibley's studies of traveller communities in Sheffield this was not always found to be the case. Thus, although the inner city areas of Hull had traditionally absorbed travellers, in Sheffield they had not, as the local authority's greater hostility had provided a more favourable climate for residents' protests (Sibley, op.cit.:146). Thus, he concludes that the responses of the local authorities and community to Gypsies and other travellers tend to depend on the political sensitivities of their location.

This begs the question of what forces the issue into the limelight in the first place. One cause could be the visibility of the travelling groups, where this is heightened by a shortage of marginal space. This shortage has accompanied a general increase in prosperity and owner-occupation. In 1900 about 90 per cent of all households lived in private rented accommodation, but by 1947 this had fallen to 61 per cent, while owner occupation had risen to 26 per cent. The proportion in local authority housing was still quite small at 13 per cent, yet by 1972 owner-occupation and local authority tenancies together dominated the market, with 47 and 33 per cent respectively (Elliott, 1978). The decline in the rented sector contributed to fewer options, and increasing conspicuousness for the poor, homeless, and for those who were not sedentary. This was made more acute during the 1960s when many inner city areas which had been neglected since being bombed during the Second World War were subject to a new style of urban planning and development. This involved the segregation or 'zoning' of urban areas in terms of their function, i.e. their residential, industrial, commercial uses etc. Moreover, many new areas of development were marked by distinctive new designs and architectural styles, while historic buildings, areas and environments were often subject to preservation orders, improvement and restoration, etc.

Increasing property values led owners to make secure their investment, whether it was

commercial, municipal and private property. This was sometimes a condition of the loan or mortgage used to finance its purchase, and included measures such as fences around railway sites, mobile security patrols, and surveillance equipment such as CCTV, all of which helped to exclude those who had no place there. The adoption of other features and characteristics also tended to make environments more standardised and homogeneous, for example the kinds of activity in a particular area, and kinds of clothing which people tended to wear there, where these might be expensive business clothes or designer leisureware. The zoning of areas and the particular characteristics which became attached to them was also apparent at a more mundane level, for example through an increased number of parking regulations and a lack of waste land, which made it difficult to park trailers, especially in central areas, and for any length of time. This was something which a new Traveller pointed up in 1998, when I interviewed her about her experiences of some ten years earlier:

My first stint at travelling came one summer when I left Bristol with a friend... I travelled with a guy in a dodgy old Bedford van with a trailer... We drove around a bit then got bored. We never had enough money to buy petrol, so we used to park up on site..... afterwards we went back, then went somewhere else... but about 6 months later it got more difficult as we'd nowhere to leave the bloody thing... we needed a permit and kept getting hassled... so we decided to go on the road more permanently. (Traveller Informant 12)

Thus, one of the main effects of this styling and standardising of the environment was to further accentuate the presence of anything not specifically planned for that area as more conspicuously deviant, which appeared alien (Home, 1994:111), and as 'matter out of place'. This expression was first used by Douglas (1966) in anthropological studies of tribes in Central Africa and elsewhere. For Douglas, societies are highly structured entities, and anything which exists outside the structure, either in the margins or otherwise, poses a danger to it. To reinforce these boundaries, those whose moral behaviour is considered dubious, i.e. outside conventional standards, are commonly described as 'dirty'. This serves to signify the danger of moral pollution by contact with these groups. Douglas explains how those who are held not to belong to society or who transgress its moral boundaries are commonly described in this way. 'Dirty' thus describes not only physical objects, but also kinds of behaviour, and is closely connected with the delineating of boundaries, and their transgression by elements which need to be kept in place. As Scott observes (1988) Douglas's concept points to a need to resolve an anomaly, and one way of doing so is to annihilate the deviance concerned by refusing to grant it credibility at all.

The 1980s saw the countryside of the south-east of England become subject to similar levels of planning, building and development as the city centres a decade earlier, as planning regulations were relaxed and business parks, recreation, residential, and retail zones were built in rural locations. [15] 'Zoning' land by earmarking areas for specific uses, such as nature reserves, business parks, retail areas, golf courses, and Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSIs) etc. became increasingly widespread, especially in the south-east. One unintended consequence of development was to define the place where travellers of all kinds 'belonged', i.e. on designated sites, and where they did not, as their presence in

modern, zoned environments became increasingly conspicuous, especially when in theory at least, provision existed for Gypsies in the Caravan Sites Act (1968), and sites were available (despite the previously mentioned unsuitability of some). The result was that travellers came under increased pressure to keep away from the zoned areas and to settle 'where they belonged'.

In the 1980s and 90s, one of the most common complaints about travellers of all kinds, whether in an urban environment or in the countryside (where their presence was also more visible due to the increasing unavailability of marginal space), new Travellers was one of 'dirt' by local residents, the press and politicians.[16] It may be argued that this was simply because they were physically dirty, either through choice or accident. But for Douglas, it is a category applied to those whose moral standing we find dubious. The connection with real dirt is not necessary. Thus for example, some occupational categories such as miners, farmers and builders may get dirty, but are not criticised for this. Similarly, crowds at an arts festival, on a beach or at any major open-air event may leave behind a lot of rubbish, but despite the physical presence of 'dirt', such crowds are rarely described as dirty unless their moral significance is in question. [17]

Thus, as the amount of undefined marginal space gradually disappeared in town and country, travellers on unofficial sites who had earlier passed unnoticed, gradually became more conspicuous, and as with other 'polluters' of the countryside, from the early tourists of the 1920s to pop festivals and Travellers (Heatherington 2000:162-6), the presence of 'dirt' symbolising 'that which does not belong' within a rural setting normally associated with the purity and sanctity of nature, was used to justify these concerns.

The situation bears some comparison with the ideas outlined by Foucault when he observed that the effects of social philosophy and moral engineering in the 18th and 19th Centuries aimed to control behaviour and discipline those who did not conform, and to this end disciplinary apparatuses were set up, such as correction houses, poor houses, prisons, schools, barracks etc. (Foucault, 1975). The aim was to correct and condition individuals by forcing them to abide by societal norms. While earlier punishments concentrated physical punishment, the new forms have sought not to punish physically, but to control the individual's whole being, through an official culture in which individuals become subject to surveillance and examination to ensure they become 'useful' to the state. For Foucault, this has been achieved through the imposition of legal measures and demands, as well as more subtle environmental controls which restrict and arrange spaces within which people function, and if the subjects not conform, they and their culture are denied legitimacy. Applying this to nomad-travellers, it can be seen that the measures enacted against them since Tudor times, the increase in environmental controls, the surveillance and demands of sedentary society, such as the requirement of a postcode or settled address, all represented a 'panoptic' intolerance of nomadism, and in the repressive and intolerant moral climate of the Thatcher years, heightened their visibility in the city, in the countryside, and hence exposed their illegitimacy in the eyes of the authorities.

This heightening of sensitivities is found to coincide with the emergence of new Travellers

as a 'problem' by the Conservative government in the mid-1980s, where closer surveillance may have been responsible for a greater recorded number of nomadic Travellers. For example, in 1986 the Tory government reported a total of 10,592 Gypsy caravans in the country, and around 4000 places for those caravans on legal sites. Less than 40% of traditional Gypsies were supplied with legitimate spaces, though the Caravan Sites Act put a legal duty on councils to provide *adequate accommodation* for persons of *nomadic habit of life*. (NCCL, 1986:35). Added to this were the official estimates of 8000 new Travellers and their 2000 vehicles in the 1980s and 90s, and the already inadequate provision is seen to have been under even greater strain. The statistical increase could also be understood as further evidence of new Travellers' greater visibility through a more spatially organised environment, closer observation of 'matter out of place', and therefore a greater likelihood of their numbers being recorded, and hence growing concern on the part of the authorities.

Faced with pressure from the authorities over illegal encampments, the question of legal sites for new Travellers was pursued by the National Council of Civil Liberties, who approached the Department of the Environment to explain how it could distinguish between new Travellers and Gypsies for the purposes of providing sites under the Caravan Sites Act (1968). The DoE replied:

It is not considered that there is any duty under the 1968 Act for local authorities to provide specifically for the Peace Convoy.

The main reason given was that:

The Act is concerned with the provision of Caravan Sites, not tenting or camping sites.

(Both quotes: NCCL, 1986:43)

Thus, the sheer variety of convoy vehicles and living spaces became the Government's let-out clause. But this distinction ignores the social fault lines and distinctions among different types of traditional travellers which have been noted by Acton. These have been ignored by the successive governments and their agencies, and therefore the willingness of the Government to actually propose a dichotomy of 'traditional' travellers and the 'new age' variety is exposed as irrational prejudice. It also left the latter with few legal opportunities to park-up, as well as heightened visibility and a new status of 'matter out of place' in the English countryside.

9. Concluding Remarks

Attitudes towards nomadic travellers and vagrants have not remained constant but changed throughout history. At times they have been approved and at other times they have been punished and blamed by the government as the source of many of the social ills affecting the nation. Despite the many comparative freedoms accorded to many citizens of the twentieth century, the nomadic condition has not been one of them; rather it has come to represent a qualified, not an absolute freedom. Progressively extended sedentarist policies and practices have created a situation in which the vagrant traveller's legitimacy has to be

justified, earned and granted, principally through occupation, or membership of an ethnic group whose way of life is created through being itinerant. Where these are lacking, the vagrant is rendered potentially deviant. Hence the case of the new Travellers, who suffered a multiple denial of legitimacy and hence an increased vulnerability, through having neither the characteristics of the traveller whose work demands mobility, nor the human rights accorded to an ethnic group. Moreover, many were unable to support themselves, and depended on community goodwill, and/or state benefits at a time when, as in the 19th century, a philosophy of economic individualism, laissez-faire and independence was in the ascendant, which provided the intellectual justification for the Tory view that state help would only 'make matters worse'.

In previous years it had been possible for groups of new Travellers to avoid potentially hostile reactions and attention from the authorities by parking up between festivals or over winter in quiet, backwater areas of the urban environment or in inconspicuous, marginal areas in the town or country where they were considered to be of no importance. However, by the mid-1980s these were fewer and fewer, and attempts to create their own sites in lanes, fields, common land, and on unused council land not far away from necessary services made them more conspicuous, heightened their visibility and hence their potential as 'matter out of place'. This contributed to a sense of new Travellers being marginal and undeserving.

As sedentary ways of living became more common in the carefully zoned countryside, the boundary between new Travellers and sedentary society was further strengthened. Consequently, their presence was more likely to be observed, recorded, and sometimes resulted in confrontations and intense conflict in the form of court orders and evictions by police and bailiffs, which in turn made attributions of deviance more likely. Changing reactions to new Travellers during the 1980s and 90s could therefore be partly explained by their heightened visibility through the absence of suitable places to park. However, visibility is only part of the explanation for their problematic presence; political sensitivities, geographic, economic and cultural variables will be explored in the next chapter.

Notes

[1] Webb notes there were around 1000 monasteries in medieval England, with one found every 60 square miles (Webb, 1927:16), which also catered for those en route to shrines abroad, in Santiago de Compostela, Jerusalem and Rome.

[2] Following the murder of Thomas a Becket by the King's men in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170, and its later transformation into a shrine for pilgrims after miracles had been reported there.

[3] Hence the interest in stories such as Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

[4] All heads of the population except beggars had been required to pay the Poll Tax equally, regardless of their property holdings.

[5] A situation bears comparison with the thinking of the 'new right' in the 1980s, and its thinking on social welfare.

[6] For example, uniting Scotland and Ulster with England and Wales, establishing Protestantism, saving the country from the Spanish Armada, and presiding over the cultural achievements of Shakespeare, Spencer and Marlow etc.

[7] Thatcher and various right-wing economists made similar observations about unemployment in the mid-1980s and early 1990s.

[8] For example, as a result of the Highland clearances (1811-1820) thousands of Scots were forced out of their homes, and later in the 1840s thousands more Irish were forced to flee famine and hunger. In both cases the loss of homes and livelihoods occurred due to the compliance or at least the wilful neglect of the British Government, and landowners in Scotland and Ireland, yet relatively little official attention was paid to the plight of economic refugees, or to the actions of those who had precipitated the crises.

[9] Unless it referred to show people, whose performances generated income for local landowners and communities.

[10] With the exceptions of Mayhew and Dickens, whose stories delight in beggars' mischievousness.

[11] The words vagrant and vagabond, with their Latin roots, were used to signify the aimless wanderings of the dispossessed. 'Tramp' entered the language in the mid-17th century, when it was applied to moving purposely in search of work, and thus indicated a difference in the economic status of artisans 'on the tramp' between jobs. The tramping system was an early attempt to resist unemployment and wage restraint (Leeson, 1979). However, in the works of Dickens, 'vagabond' and 'vagrant' are used interchangeably with 'tramp' and 'tramper' (Oxford English Dictionary, cited in Crowther, 1992).

[12] The Romantic movement in the arts and literature provided a sentimental view of the vagrants' elemental world of nature. Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hardy, the Lake Poets, R.L. Stevenson all extolled the virtues of a simple life spent wandering over hill and lea. This later found expression in popular activities such as walking, hiking, sleeping out, and with the establishing of the Caravan Club, whose founder George Stables designed a Gypsy Caravan and assiduously made nature notes set out on a journey from London to Inverness. In a similar vein, George Borrow, whose account of his life as a tinker and his encounters with Gypsy folk enabled him to become one of the best-selling authors of the period, not unlike a modern-day travel writer, see for example, Lavengro (1851) or 'Romany Rye' (1857), or the poet W.H. Davies, published in 1908 his 'Autobiography of a Supertramp' with a preface by G.B. Shaw. It is ironic to note that when his fellow Fabians on the Poor Law Commission were recommending that tramps be sent to prison, Shaw broke ranks to declare his solidarity with them.

[13] The two reports subsequently became known as the 'Majority Report' and the 'Minority Report' and were signed respectively by the majority and minority of Commission members. The minority report signed by Charles Booth and Beatrice Webb, among others.

[14] These were said to be caused by the hostility of local populations where sites were proposed; a number of 'gypsy habits' gleaned from hearsay; and the division responsibility between county and district authorities.

[15] This process is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

[16] See Chapter Four for more details.

[17] The tribal world of soccer also provides some more examples, where some rule infringements are called 'dirty' by fans, for example the kicking of an opponent. Interestingly, such a breaking of the taboos is known as a 'foul', i.e play which is loathsome, repugnant and dirty. Similarly, opposing fans are sometimes referred to pejoratively as 'scum' or 'filth'.

Chapter 3

The English Countryside: A Crisis of Identity

1. Introduction

To explain the official response to the new Travellers in the 1980s and 90s and the nature of the moral panic surrounding their actions, it will first be useful to review and examine the prevailing economic and social conditions within the 'locale' of the conflict, the English countryside. The rapid social and economic changes which had taken place around England, particularly in the south-east since the 1950s, were heightened in the 1980s and generated a series of conflicts; parish Tories against Westminster Tories, conservationists against rural landowners and farmers, and an increasingly marginalised, disaffected rural poor who resented the transformation of their villages into commuter dormitory towns by wealthy newcomers. The areas most sharply affected were the Tory heartlands of the Home Counties and the south-east of England, where the conditions were created for an exaggerated response by the Thatcher government against the new Travellers, in an attempt to unite the government's traditional supporters, and deflect attention away from the complex and divisive issues which racked the countryside in the 1980s and 90s.

There are many administrative definitions of 'rural', and for the purposes of this account I have used the definition used by the Countryside Agency, as described in their annual reports entitled 'The State of the Countryside'. This classifies rural local authority districts and unitary authorities, and was based on three other lists of rural districts: the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 'Classification of Local Authority Districts' which used data from the 1991 Census to classify areas with similar characteristics into groups; the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) list, based primarily on population density; and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) list of (pre-reorganisation) districts included within the 1995 Rural White Paper. The advantage of using this definition is that media and parliamentary accounts of incidents in predominantly 'rural' areas tend to use the term in this way.

2. Who Owns the Countryside?

Since the 18th century the movement towards enclosure and private exploitation of land has created a division between landowners and non-landowners, which consolidated the rights of the former while restricting the latter's rights of access and usage. The process has continued until the present day, creating a situation where virtually all the countryside in England and Wales is owned and controlled by someone, a situation unique in western Europe. But details of ownership are often difficult to come by; moreover, finding out who has the right to exercise control over land use further complicates investigation, as ownership and control are often legally separate. However, an extensive study of land ownership of England and Wales found that in 1985, 87% of the countryside was held privately, mostly by titled and untitled landowners and farmers, while only 12% was held

publicly, by organisations such as the Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Defence (Shoard, 1997).

But publicly held land does not mean that there is a public right of access. For example, in 1982, 9% of publicly held land was National Parkland, i.e. land constituting the 10 National Parks in England and Wales, but only 1% was held by the park authorities for use as recreational land by the public. The National Trust (who owns and manages Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSIs), special sites of historical interest, nature reserves, monuments and sacred sites) only owns 1% of land in the UK. And although the term "common land" describes some 1.5 million acres of England and Wales (i.e. around 3% of agricultural land) also suggests public ownership, it does not mean this, as it is land over which certain individuals other than the owner enjoy long-standing rights, associated for example, access, grazing or mining, but where these rights are carefully circumscribed. There is no automatic public right of access, and people other than the owner may have rights over it. Citizens have no legal rights to roam over some 1.2 million acres (80%) of common land, and can be treated as trespassers (Shoard, 1997:93). This shortage of public land was exacerbated throughout the 1980s, when more public land was transferred to the private domain, for example between 1981 (when privatisation started) and 1997, the Forestry Commission, who was the major public landholder, sold 20% of its holdings (Shoard, 1999:462). The implications which ownership patterns have for Travelling communities of all kinds is clear; that there are few places available as parking places where they can park and conduct their way of life on what is truly common land which does not belong to anyone, without potentially contravening local or national laws, or at the very least invoking the wrath of the owner, controller, or their agents.

3. The Idyllic Countryside

Just as patterns of land ownership in Britain have a complex history, so does the way in which the countryside is conceived of, and the values which it embodies. For many years it has been represented as a green and pleasant place, a site of tranquillity, conservatism, order and respectability. It has become the most important landscape in English environmental ideology, and the most widely celebrated in the English heritage (Short 1991), and during the 20th century notions of it constituting an 'idyll', have emerged as the dominant conception of the rural space (Heatherington, 2000:20; Matless, 1998; Sibley, 1997). However, it is interesting to note how, as with attitudes to vagrancy, attitudes are not constant and change according to different historical circumstances. For example, the Chinese-American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan notes that in the early Soviet Union, the industrial areas with their smoking chimneys represented happiness and a sense of national power, while the vastness of the steppe represented misery and hopelessness to Russian peasants. In contrast, a similar landscape has symbolised freedom and opportunity to the Americans (Tuan, 1974).

In Britain it is possible to see how a romantic, genteel view of the countryside developed as a counterpoint to the speed of the unchecked growth of the nineteenth century city, and the dirt, disorder and degeneracy which it fostered. Census data reveals that in 1851 over

half of the expanding population of 18 million lived in rapidly growing towns, and by 1891 there were 23 with over 100,000 inhabitants, as the population gradually drifted from the countryside in search of regular work. Uncontrolled growth had led to poverty, grime, smog, insanitary conditions and social disorder, but there was a relative lack of concern with the city among the authorities. The rich and powerful saw it as a place to work and make money, but rarely as a place to live, and there was more interest in caring for the depopulating countryside which seemed to be increasingly subject to threats from new technology, first from the railway and then from the motor car. A host of philanthropic societies were formed for its preservation, such as the Commons Preservation Society (1865), the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (1877), the Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising (1893), the National Trust for Places of Historical Interest and Natural Beauty[1] (1895), and Country Life Magazine, founded in 1897 to bring visions of the country into aspirational city drawing rooms. Among the early figures of pro-countryside lobby was John Ruskin, whose moral and social judgments extended to highlight the destructive impact of the arrival of the railway in Derbyshire rural beauty spots (Simmons, 1997:32).

This view of the countryside as an idyll which required care and preservation was consolidated by a wealthy, leisured and influential middle-class, whose romantic, sentimental perspective extended into the arts. The church, government and wealthy patrons, through their financing and patronage were able to influence the kinds of work created and shown. Landscapes paintings emphasising the purity and wholesomeness of the countryside were strongly favoured, and scenes by John Constable and Joseph Turner have long been recognised as Britain's major contribution to western European art. In poetry, writers extolling the virtues of the countryside such as Tennyson and Hardy came to be among the most appreciated and widely taught in the English language. During WWI, a time when it was important to bolster soldiers' moral, a sense of Englishness as being essentially rural was the basis of national identity (Matless, 1998:25), and verse featuring evocations of the beauty and wholesomeness of the countryside and its inhabitants, e.g. by Rupert Brooke and A.E. Housman were among the most popular. Houseman's idealised evocation of the English countryside contained in the collection 'A Shropshire Lad' (1896), with poems such as the untitled 'X.L.' (often referred to as 'Blue Remembered Hills') was a source of inspiration to troops and civilians alike, and was one of the most popular works of the time. But one of the most enduring was a poem written by William Blake; *Jerusalem: the Emanation of the Giant Albion*, extolling the purity and virtue of English countryside, which was set to music in 1916, becoming the well-known song of national praise.

Although there were other, dissenting and arguably more truthful voices, they did not become dominant, and the idea of Britain expressed through the countryside became widespread, reinforced by political as well as artistic voices. In 1926 the Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin expressed a quintessentially Tory view of the nation. After crushing the General Strike of 1926, he made a romantic speech to the Royal Society of Saint George, declaring 'his' England to be:

....the tinkle of the hammer on the country smithy, the corncrake on a dewy morning, the sound of the scythe against the whetstone and the sight of the plough team coming over

the brow of a hill, the sight that has been seen in England since England was a land. These are the things that make England. (Baldwin:1971)

The country influence extended into architecture, where the country house style commanded respect and attention, for example in 1900, Edward Lutyens' contribution to the British Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition was a faithful copy of a seventeenth-century country house. In domestic architecture, fake half-timbering later brought a country theme to suburban housing around the nation, before the full-blown 'garden cities' of Letchworth and Welwyn. The countrified English dream was also influential in English socialist thought (Arnold Toynbee, William Morris, the Hammonds, R.H. Tawney), as well as the Arts and Crafts Movement (Chambers, 1986:27). Literary influences in praise of the countryside are numerous, for example the popular novelist and playwright J.B. Priestley who in 1933 wrote 'English Journey', an account of a trip from Southampton to the River Tyne. Like many others he reviled the industrial towns, noting:

As I thought of what the nineteenth century has left us in every industrial area, I felt at once angry and ashamed. (Priestley, 1934:66)

Later, when attempting to encourage a sense of national unity and purpose during a post-war radio broadcast in 1945, he chose to invoke images of Britain's countryside, its historic past and future as essential elements of Britishness. Similarly, the late Poet Laureate John Betjeman often wrote about the spiritual sustenance which country landscapes and architecture could provide, and how these were fundamental elements of national identity.

In 'The Country and the City' (1973) Raymond Williams analyses how such an image of the countryside came to be constructed. He shows how the notion of a pastoral 'idyll' developed during the 18th century at the same time as the enthusiasm for land improvement and enclosure, and the consequent degradations and dispossessions which rural change brought to many country folk. He argues that the work of artists, poets, novelists and essayists who extolled the virtues of the countryside was appropriated and socially embedded by a ruling, landowning elite, in a process which led to the creation of a particular view of the countryside in English culture. Its effect was to maintain existing social and economic relations and conceal prevailing inequalities, in what Williams saw as part of a class struggle. His description of this process is supported by a detailed statistical account of rural poverty and decline, which emphasises the harsh realities prevailing in the English

countryside of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Williams further shows how exploitative social relations in England came to be replicated in the colonies overseas. For example, he notes how in 1700, about fifteen per cent of British commerce was with the colonies. But the coming decades saw a massive export of good from the new industrial economy which by 1775 had risen to around one third of total output (Williams:280). With greatly increased demand for goods, people continued moving from the country to the city, in an exodus which changed not only the nature of English towns, but also the countryside and eventually the world. Britain became a predominantly industrial and urban society, and agriculture declined to marginal status, something which would have been impossible without colonial development.

Williams further notes how, as the countryside became depopulated it became a place of pleasure for a privileged, leisured class, who often had only a marginal interest in conservation and 'old country ways.' (p.282). For them it became a place of field sports, fishing, and above all horses; racing, hunting, jumping, showing etc. It became in effect, a 'country club', and perhaps unsurprisingly it also became a place of retirement for those having worked overseas, such as colonial officers, civil servants, plantation managers and traders:

Its green peace contrasted with the tropical or arid places of work; its sense of belonging, of community, idealised by contrast with the tensions of colonial rule and the isolated alien settlement. The birds and trees and rivers of England; the natives speaking more or less, one's own language: these were the terms of many imagined and actual settlements. The country, now, was a place to retire to.

(Williams, 1973:281-282)

To Williams' insights on the 'construction' of the countryside and its appeal to the colonisers of overseas territories, it should be added that the countryside came to be seen as an appropriate place to relocate for not only the retired, but also for for the successfully employed. Those moving up the social hierarchy have traditionally seen a rural home as the pinnacle of their rise and a mark of their arrival. Large, extravagantly adorned country houses were a desirable form of conspicuous consumption during feudal times, and the preference of the Royal Family for country retreats helped to establish fashions. An early example could be seen with Prince Albert's purchase of Balmoral - a Scottish laird's house - for Queen

Victoria, ostensibly for recreational purposes, but also to maintain royal ties with Scotland and so help cement the union. Some years later in 1902, Rudyard Kipling bought a house in the country, a 17th century manor house in the Home Counties. Writing to a friend he wrote:

England is a wonderful land. It is the most marvellous of all foreign countries that I have ever been in. It is made up of trees and green fields and mud and the gentry, and at last I'm one of its gentry. (Quoted in Carrington, 1956:286)

The appeal of the countryside to the tastes and standards of the gentry was widely influential and came to characterise an essential part of the modern British establishment of government, civil servants and other professionals. Showing how this was often uncongenial towards industry, Wiener (1981) comments:

The past and the countryside - seen as inseparable - were invested with an almost irresistible aura. These standards and images supported a very attractive way of life, geared to maintenance of a status quo rather than innovation, comfort rather than attainment, the civilized enjoyment rather than the creation of wealth. (Wiener, 1981:159)

Later in the 20th century the appeal of the countryside remained undiminished, and improved communications and greater affluence promoted its 'rediscovery' by a generation of urbanites. Between 1945 and 1960 car ownership grew from two million to eight million (Humphries, 2000:ch.6), and the building of motorways across Britain during the 1960s made it possible to travel quickly and safely from town to country. The attractions of the countryside were further enhanced by the progressive opening up stately homes to the public by their titled owners, who were anxious to raise revenues to offset falling incomes and death duties. Lord Montagu of Beaulieu was one of the pioneers, opening Beaulieu in 1952. His example was followed by many others, and soon afterwards rural tourism boomed, as a variety of attractions such as safari parks, craft centres, tea and souvenir shops all helped turn the countryside into an amenity. Improved public transport services also helped link town to country. The public companies which managed them stood to gain from an increase in long-distance commuting, and began to publicise their services with short public information films. Two such examples are 'Day of One's Own' and 'London's Country', produced by British Transport Films[2] in 1954. They highlight the attractions of a bigger house and garden, tranquillity and silence, while a voice-over in the latter film promotes the idea of the countryside, not the city, as a natural home:

... *where our first parents were born and crawled into the light, where the shaggy ancient Britain hunted...* and as *the place to get rid of that wild energy....those delinquent forces that the city pens up in our blood.*

These were typical examples of early 'heritage' promotion films designed to appeal to the public imagination by projecting an idyllic view of rural life. Presumably, they had the desired

effect, as by the 1960s only a few areas of the Home Counties isolated by bad roads and non-existent railways remained relatively unchanged in terms of population growth and development.

4. Countryside Colonisation

Improved communications and greater affluence allowed more families to realise their dream of relocating to the countryside, and in many areas of Britain housing schemes were constructed close to the motorways and main arterial roads leading out from the major urban centres. As they did so, many villages were gradually transformed into non-agricultural settlements, with the growing presence of an educated, affluent, urbanised commuting population who, unlike the long-term residents, did not need to rely on the locality for employment, or for schools, health centres, banks, shops and pubs. Consequently, there was a reduction in demand for these services, which in many cases were wound down and closed, or reopened as expensive boutiques, wine bars and restaurants, out of the reach of many local pockets. Public transport was also subject to declining demand, as more people preferred to use private means. Services became uneconomic and were reduced or closed, despite the fact that they could be an essential lifeline for some. Those who suffered most were of course, those who could not afford to make their own, private arrangements, for example the unemployed, those on low incomes, the elderly, sick, leaving those marooned in the countryside with no alternative. But there was also a declining quality of life for everyone, as small towns and villages became more isolated and divided, existing more as a series of isolated units than as communities.

Paradoxically, out-migration from the cities to rural areas around England became even more pronounced. Between 1984 and 1994 the population of districts with a predominantly rural character (as defined by the RDC and adopted in this study) grew appreciably faster at around 10%, than that of England as a whole (5%), with a particularly sharp increase noted between 1984 and 1989 of approximately 7%, compared to a population increase of around 2% (ONS 1999). However, it is important to recognise that there are different types of countryside, with variations in the landscape quality, agricultural regimes, pressure on housing and availability of services. But the area of England which was characterised by greatest population growth and commercial activity during the 1980s was south of an imaginary line drawn from Cornwall to Norfolk (Cloke, 1999:283). The rural zones within this area (sometimes known as the 'Golden Horn' or 'Golden Belt') carried several important locational advantages in terms of the availability of environmentally attractive landscapes and settlements where the middle classes could find their rural idyll, and perhaps unsurprisingly, studies into why people chose to move there showed that, amongst the wealthy, 'employment' and 'quality of life' reasons were among the most common[3] (Findlay et al., 1999).

During the 1980s and 90s the 'horn' became the most economically active area of Britain, in terms of production, consumption and planning. In commuter areas such as South Warwickshire, Kent and Hampshire, the national patterns of population shift from urban to rural areas were closely reflected. Many of those moving to the countryside bought homes

there, encouraged by the Tory government who made the promotion of home ownership a cornerstone of policy (Williams, P. in Cloke, ed. 1999:166; Gamble, 1994:62). Williams (op.cit.) notes how home ownership grew from 54% in the UK in 1979 to 67% in the first quarter of 1990. Approximately half of the 13 percentage points are attributed by Williams to the government's 'Right-to-Buy' policy which allowed tenants of local authority housing to buy their houses. This was introduced in the 1980 Housing Act, and extended in subsequent Acts in 1984 and 1986. Other factors influencing the tendency towards house purchase include the growth in real incomes 1984-88, the downward trend in mortgage rate, and the maintenance or enhancement of existing favourable tax treatments on property loans.

With increased amounts of credit and quick profits made by domestic consumers from the public flotation of newly privatised companies and public utilities, demand outstripped supply and there was a boom in property prices. It was felt most acutely in London, where rapidly rising values meant that the sale of a smaller property could frequently be enough to purchase a substantial property with land in the countryside.[4] With quickly arranged and widely available property loans, the ability to leave the town for the country gradually passed down the social scale, and an aspirational urban middle class could now aspire to a share of rural England, albeit a rather more modest one than their wealthier predecessors of the 19th century. Country life became an aspirational good, a means of conferring status, especially in the prosperous south-east, and was heavily promoted in a series of new lifestyle magazines which appeared throughout the decade. Titles such as 'Traditional Homes' (1984), 'Country Living' (1985), 'Country Homes' (1986), 'Interiors' (1986), 'Country Walking' (1987), and 'County' (1988) all featured the lifestyle, health and consumer aspects of country life. In 1988 when a journalist asked a Londoner about the state of the capital, he replied:

In this country there is the culture of the countryside: as soon as you have made a pile, you move out of town. I think one of the reasons London is such a poor place is that not enough nobs live there. (Guardian, 26.10.88)

In an *Observer Magazine* article of 4.9.88 entitled 'Mind Your Manners', the writer sought to indicate the correct manners in 'polite society' which defined the latter as the owners of country seats. The lead photograph was of a tweed-clad couple on the steps of their country home, welcoming brash townies. The message reads:

How do we turn these nouveau riches folk into well-behaved members of the elite? The most obvious way is to buy a home in the country, or at the very lest to know how to behave during a weekend in the country; and in order to play the part, to get kitted out in green wellies, jackets and thick-soled shoes and viyella shirts, all in a fawning copy of the Balmorality of the modern Royals.

The author of this serious article assumed that rural living was the unstated yet universally accepted desired aim, the zenith of good taste, status and credibility. Similarly, in 1988 The Independent published a profile of the millionaire Alan Bond, noting how:

Bond left the City...and drove to Oxfordshire where he has brought the estate village of Glympton for £11 million. He and his colourful wife 'Red' Eileen bought the 2,000-acre estate to realise Bond's dream. Now that he is 50, of becoming a county Squire in the land of his birth. (The Independent, 12.11.88)

Not only the untitled recognised the way in which holding land conferred status. In 1987 Lord Brocket, who then owned the 5000-acre Brocket Park Estate in Hertfordshire, explained why he liked being a landowner:

I think first because of the privacy it offers. People like to feel that they are nice and private in the middle of their patch, whatever size their patch is. Secondly, it offers them a security for the future, because land ownership has always proved over the last few hundreds of years a good investment for the future, and something that people tend to hold on to through its ups and downs in its value: land and bricks and mortar are always the things that people shout about. And I suppose there's a third thing for some people: it's like I think for some people, and I hope for myself, like owning a Rolls-Royce. It makes a statement. It says, "I have arrived". (Quoted in Shoard, 1999:133)[5]

5. Tory Countryside Policy

In political terms, the countryside in general and the south-east in particular have always been staunchly Conservative domains, with some of the largest majorities and safest seats in the country. Much the same could also be said of the parish councils and other local organisations who tend to run affairs at a local level in England and Wales (Simmons, 1997:113; Lowe et al., 1986:23). These, like their Westminster equivalents, tend to be dominated by men, and if not politically Conservative, they tend to be 'small-c' conservative in attitude and outlook. This finds expression in terms of its class, race and status connotations, and the demands for conformity and opposition to change which are placed on those who live there (Philo, 1992:200). Citing a study by ACRE[6], Simmons notes that parish councillors tend to:

.. frown today, as they have for centuries, on single parents or Gypsies, or on travellers new or old. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they generally aim to maintain the status quo.
(Simmons, op.cit.:113)

During the 1980s there was a net inflow to affluent rural areas of the Home Counties mainly of urban professionals who tended to be affluent, articulate, aspirational, and younger than the more deferential, long-term residents. Many new residents were Conservative supporters as well as sympathisers and members of various conservation and environmental groups (Findlay, 1999; Winter et al., 1999). With a membership base that was primarily middle-class, educated and wealthy, such organisations had the means to organise and mobilise tactically (Lowe et al., 1993:116-117), and once there the new residents often appropriated the local levers of political control with the aim of protecting their 'idyll' from being spoilt through uncontrolled development, local industry, farming, indeed anything it

was felt would detract from the natural beauty of the area and the value of their property. Campaigners were often labelled 'NIMBYs'[7] displaying what were popularly known as 'NIMBY' or 'NODAM' attitudes (Derounian, 1993).

It can be seen that 'attractive countryside space' as a good, was in a very fixed, limited supply. It had become what the social economist Fred Hirsch describes as a 'positional good' that is, one in fixed supply and one whose consumption depends on ones position in society, in this case, one's ability to afford it (Hirsch, 1977). His example was the suburban predicament, where any increase in residents in the suburbs worsens the situation for all the others. The more popular the suburban environment becomes, the less desirable its setting. It therefore followed that for many country dwellers, its quality as an amenity could only be retained if access by other groups could be restricted.

In the prosperous and densely populated 'golden horn' of the early 1980s, demand for houses and land for development, either for businesses or residential accommodation, far outstripped supply, especially in commuter-land and green belt areas. The system of land use controls, forcefully codified in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, had taken as its main aim the protection of the countryside. The system developed as a means of delaying, stopping or channelling urban growth. Cities were seen as necessary evils to be tolerated but not encouraged. However, by releasing market-driven forces, the government encouraged local authorities to relax some aspects of their green belt policies to accommodate development in the long term[8] (Elson, 1986). It also recommended scrapping pieces of green belt which were isolated[9]. Construction companies such as McAlpine, Costain, Barrett and Galliford were some of the major supporters of and financial contributors to the Conservative party, and began focussing their attention on finding rural sites for large, expensive developments of 'executive' housing. But paradoxically, it was the very protection of the countryside through conservation and green belt policy which had made it attractive for businesses and construction companies to move there in the first place. A study quoted in Blunden and Curry (1988:85) suggested that land-use policies created in the south-east from Hampshire to Cambridgeshire resulted in:

a limited number of linked, medium-sized growth areas set in a sea of general rural restraint... it is just this policy of protecting the character of the countryside which has made the area so environmentally attractive to both indigenous and incoming high-tech firms.[10]

There is considerable evidence that the process of (perceived) deterioration described by Hirsch, or at least a fear of it, was taking place. There was often resistance to development at local level, with the opposition to a major new scheme to develop green belt sites with new settlements. For example in 1983 several major private housebuilders set up the development company Consortium Developments Ltd. and proposed to build some 15-20 new towns within approximately 60 miles of London, each with a population of between 12-15000. The Council for the Protection of Rural England did not totally oppose them, recognising a possible role for new settlements as the most environmentally and socially attractive way of providing new housing development in areas of substantial growth (Burton, 1990:7). But the 1984 DoE circular 'Land For Housing', concerning the development of

three of these at Tillingham Hall, Foxley Wood and Stone Bassett encountered extensive local opposition, and the projects were eventually rejected, suggesting that the deregulation of planning should not be allowed to run rampant over the interests of local Tories.

Subsequent pressure from back-bench MPs, complaints from conservation groups such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), and an enquiry by the House of Commons Environment Select Committee resulted in less aggressive intentions for the Green Belt. The resulting 'Circular Relating to Green Belts' (14/84) stressed links between green belt restraint and urban regeneration, and commented that approved Green Belts would only be altered in exceptional circumstances. Consequently, it was no surprise that planning appeals to central government following objections at local level rose to over 20,000 p.a. in 1987, an increase of over 40% since 1979 (Blunden and Curry, 1988:82). But government intentions to continue moving towards deregulating can be seen in policy statements such as 'Lifting the Burden' (DoE, 1985), which speaks of a need to 'simplify planning' and make it more efficient by engendering a 'presumption in favour of development'. However, government suggestions to adjust the belt boundaries were resisted by many of the authorities concerned, and the ensuing conflict between the retention of green belt restrictions and the allocation of housing land led to numerous refusals, appeals and compromises.[11]

Another notable example of apparent NIMBYism involved the former Secretary of State for the Environment Michael Heseltine. In 1981 he sent a letter indicating a need to deregulate the planning system. It read as follows:

I do not look to the planning profession to recreate an economic base. But I would ask you to think and act with resolve as you create some of the necessary preconditions, and remove some of the constraints. (author's underlining)

(Quoted in Cloke, 1999:281)

By 1988 he had reverted to his status as an MP for an Oxfordshire constituency and wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment in the following letter, complaining about the:

.... threat posed by the rash of urban villages which developers seek to impose on green-field sites against the planning policies of national and local government - and against the wishes of local communities - with you forced to fight a field by rearguard action through the appeal system at taxpayers' and ratepayers' expense... Have you not the powers under planning legislation to indicate by circular that you will not countenance such large scale intrusive development? And can you not insure... that when developers indulge in these extravagant endeavours then the cost of resisting them will be met by the developers and not the ratepayers? (Quoted in Blunden and Curry, 1988:190)

Heseltine later returned to John Major's cabinet as Secretary of State for the Environment, but the incompatibility of supporting both private development, as well as the 'NIMBYism' of rural residents who demanded protection from it, remains clear.

These and other examples highlight the growing friction between Conservatives at parish level and those in Westminster. This disparity between the wishes of the party at national and local level could also be seen in rural Scotland in the early 1980s, and involved the deregulating of planting activities of the Forestry Commission together with sponsored investment by the private sector. A highly publicised programme of selling off followed later, which was keenly supported by Tory-supporting celebrities such as the TV presenter Terry Wogan and snooker star Steve Davis. Despite some commentators accusing the government of blanketing the hills with private conifer plantations, there was little public disapproval since it took place in an area where public opposition was relatively unimportant and in an area not subject to planning restrictions (Tomkins, 1989).

However, the government saw the need to maintain a more careful balancing act among diverse rural interests when introducing countryside policy closer to its heartlands. In 1981 the Wildlife and Countryside Act was brought in, and was largely seen as pro-farming, even though it involved a high degree of voluntarism and agreements between farmers and conservationists (Blowers, 1987). But the voluntarism was relatively short-lived, as in 1985 a major confrontation occurred between farmers and conservationists at the Halvergate Marshes in Norfolk. One consequence was that ESAs (Environmentally Sensitive Areas) were introduced in an attempt to placate conservation interests, together with subsidies for farmers who agreed to maintain or improve the landscape (Lowe et al., 1986; O'Riordan, 1989). Even though the introduction of ESAs were apparently in contradiction to the monetarism and free-market forces being unleashed elsewhere in the economy, the government saw the political expediency of pursuing votes by supporting some 'green' issues such as these. In this way it was hoped to balance interests among rural dwelling Conservatives (Hodge, 1990).

Further evidence of a fundamental conflict between Conservative interests in Westminster and those in rural areas is provided by the Conservative manifesto prior to the 1987 General Election. It involved the establishing of a group known as ALURE (Alternative Land Use of the Rural Economy) to analyse possible conservation strategies for rural areas. Two sets of proposals were put up for consideration from MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) and DoE (Department of the Environment). Stated briefly, MAFF proposed to develop farm woodland, develop forestry in the private sector, and aid farm diversification, while the DoE proposed that rural land be used for agriculture, and a revival of the rural economy and the environment equally. The aim was to appeal to farmers, conservationists, middle-class rural residents and house building interests alike. But as Cloke and McLaughlin (1989) point out, by making the proposals the two groups inadvertently drew attention to a number of existing contradictions in countryside policy, in particular the impossibility of satisfying the demands of the agribusiness as well as those of various conservation groups. MAFF pointed out the DoE proposals could lead to farmers diversifying into other areas, for example tourism, and permission being granted for the development of farmland. But instead of assuaging fears about the countryside's future, it further exacerbated them, drawing public attention to issues such as to what extent property companies were being allowed to develop areas of the countryside protected by green belt policy.

6. The Tourist Imperative

From the mid-60s to the mid-80s there had been a general desire on the part of central government, local government and farmers to limit recreational access to the countryside in an effort to avoid what they feared would cause irreparable damage. Visits to well-defined sites such as monuments, stately homes and wildlife parks were tolerated and controlled, but received little official encouragement. However, by the mid-1980s a number of factors were combining to create a new context and the need for a policy 'U-turn'. The situation had been brought about by three main causes. Firstly, faced with massive surpluses and waste of agricultural products such as beef and milk, the Common Agricultural Policy demanded a curb in output. In turn, less land was required for agriculture, with estimates of up to one third less being required by the year 2015 (North, 1986; Cloke, 1999:278), and a consequent need for those dependent on the rural economy to earn a living in ways other than agriculture. Secondly, BSE had been identified among dairy cattle, reducing international demand for most products from British farms. Thirdly, but perhaps most significant of all, was the deepening recession in agriculture and in the wider economy, which had accounted for some 30,000 lost jobs between 1984 and 1989 with the closure of mines in rural areas, and further losses of between 60,000 and 100,000 predicted for the subsequent ten years (RDC, 1992:2).

Thus, there was a need for diversification into other areas, as well as an ideological wish on the part of the Tory Government to make agriculture stand unsubsidised, as had been the case with steel, coal and other major industries. To this end, measures were introduced in an attempt to make rural economies less dependent on farm revenues and government subsidies. The principal way in which the government set out to achieve this was through the promotion of tourism and recreation[12] in the countryside. One of the most notable pieces of legislation in this respect was Section 17 of the 1986 Agriculture Act which required agriculture ministers to promote the public enjoyment of the countryside, while the Countryside Commission's *Recreation 2000* policy review culminated in the 1987 policy document *Policies for Enjoying the Countryside* (Blunden and Curry, 1988:133), which outlined plans for opening up the countryside to development.

Studies have repeatedly shown that people are more likely to participate in countryside recreation if they are in a higher status occupation, have good access to a car, and are in a higher social group (op.cit:134-138). Around 66% also showed a strong preference for taking drives, picnics and long walks, in other words, they preferred to experience the 'unmanaged' countryside. Therefore, passive leisure experiences involving time to sit and think, and the leisured enjoyment of the tranquillity of the countryside, as opposed to more active pursuits, such as 'wet leisure' activities, was shown as particularly significant, and it was thus seen as important on the part of local councils to keep their rural areas orderly, clean and attractive in order to attract as many rural visitors as possible.

As has been stressed earlier, there is no single 'countryside', and the effects of policy making had a different impact on different rural areas. However, the south-east and the

commuter belts around the North and Midlands of England, and the connurbations of Wales and Scotland were among the most market driven and susceptible to commodification (Brindley, et al., 1989:176; Cloke, 1999:286). These regions experienced a period of rapid diversification, into such areas as self-catering and serviced accommodation, along with an increasing number of activity holidays. In more remote areas, for example in parts of rural Dyfed in Wales, there was an growth in self-catering accommodation in the form of new bungalow developments in open countryside.

7. Countryside Conservation

By around 1990 one of the biggest obstacles to development, apart from Nimbyism, was an increasingly vigorous and tactically skilled conservation movement. Public awareness of the damage to the countryside had been steadily increasing since the 1960s, following the publication in 1962 of Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring', which envisaged a countryside devoid of many bird species as a consequence of chemicals used on the land in modern farming methods. Following the publication of Marion Shoard's 'The Theft of the Countryside' (Shoard, 1980) which expressed growing public opinion against the farmers, the debate shifted to the damaging effects of modern farming on wildlife and the landscape. In a restatement of her views she reflected in 1999 on how for many years there has been an increasing awareness that ever-increasing demands on the natural environment led to more damage and destruction (Shoard, 1999:201). But as people became better informed, there was a general recognition that the physical presence of the public on land was less of a threat than the damaging effects of intensive farming methods on wildlife, woods, heaths and hedgerows by an agribusiness which would apparently do anything for profit.

The popularity of wildlife television programmes, the exploitation of nature and wildlife in advertising all attested to public sympathy, and the results of one survey in 1981 showed over half of the respondents would support an increase in income tax of 1p in the pound to pay for measures to protect wildlife and conserve the environment (Lowe et al, 1986:118). The National Trust (NT), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (R.S.P.B.) and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (C.P.R.E.) quickly increased their membership base in the 1980s, and by 1991 the NT had over 2 million members, the RSPB 852,000, with one million members affiliated to some 50 other national and voluntary groups concerned with rural and nature conservation (ONS, 1999). Thus environmental and wildlife groups enjoyed widespread support, and became popular national concerns, rather than a minority issues. Significantly, they further indicated a high degree of public sympathy for the environment against risk and pollution from wealthy landowners, the agribusiness, and the building of houses and roads for what they saw as a wealthy country-dwelling elite.

The countryside was also home to many communes which had been explicitly set up to explore alternative lifestyles, for example the case of Tipi Valley in south Wales, as well as the Gypsy travellers and the new Travellers, who had begun to feature in the English landscape during the mid-1970s. Other groups were more overtly politicised, for example the Greenham Women's Movement and the Rainbow Fields Villagers, both of whom established well-known protest sites outside US air bases at Greenham Common and

Molesworth, Cambridgeshire during the early 1980s, generating large amounts of publicity and conflict with the authorities.

Environmental activism was on the increase, as growing public awareness resulted in moves to oppose the agribusiness and its attempts to liberalise planning during the 1980s and 1990s. Methods of opposition varied, but over time there was a hardening of tactics, particularly as groups such as Hunt Saboteurs, CND and later Earth First! and others took up direct action and attention-grabbing media-conscious strategies (notably at the Poll Tax protests in 1990, at Twyford Down in 1992 and Wanstead in 1993-4). The campaigns of Greenpeace, whose countryside campaigns embraced the Quaker tradition of "bearing witness" - putting oneself in the path of an objectionable activity - during the 1990s became the preferred way of operating for many new environmental groups. Others, such as the Ramblers Association - well known for its demands for greater access to the countryside - began to vigorously pursue a policy of a general rights of access to some kinds of countryside, regardless of the law of trespass, and since 1991 has organised 'Forbidden Britain' days, when some 30 mass trespasses, protest walks and rallies took place on private land around the country. Direct methods proved more effective than passive, 'fluffy' lobbying and work 'behind the scenes', and attracted great publicity.

8. A Countryside of Two Nations

The kind of protest seen in the English countryside during the 1980s and early 1990s would have been almost unimaginable 30 years earlier, when most rural villages were still occupational communities based on agriculture (Newby, 1987: Ch.4). However, the government provided generous subsidies to encourage mechanisation and productivity, transforming agriculture into an 'agribusiness'. After the shortages of the war years and austerity of the post war, the idea of cheap, abundant, home-produced food was widely seen as desirable. With the creation of vast prairie farms and the extensive use of chemical fertilisers first introduced in World War II, yields tripled in 30 years. The wealthy farmers were backed by big government grants and investment from the City. Large modern farms had farm managers to oversee the development of intensive farming methods. The heavy use of chemical fertilisers and herbicides like DDT were essential in the new system of 'monocropping', which involved growing the same crop on the same land, year after year. Hedges were ripped out from several small fields to create a large one, allowing large machinery such as combine harvesters to be used, and avoiding the maintenance required by several smaller ones.

Food production in Britain was further modernised with the introduction of factory farming methods, and as traditional agriculture declined, a new business class of entrepreneurial farmers moved to occupy rural locations. Untitled barons moved in next to their rural counterparts, for example 'turkey king' Bernard Matthews was one of the first to begin factory farming in 1955. He promoted his products in television adverts and became a millionaire aged 31. From the breeding to the slaughter of his turkeys took place not in some industrial unit on the edge of a market town, but in a remotely sited stately home in Norfolk. The television documentary 'Too Much Of A Good Thing' (Movietone, 1967) shows

how "Fountain Farming" based in rural Hampshire became one of the largest farming corporations in Europe. By the late 1970s its land assets extended to 30,000 acres, all over Britain. The corporate image of farmers extended to ties and badges, as farms and estates became part of a corporate empire, which was based at a country house in Wiltshire.

British farmers had for many years benefited from European subsidies from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)[13] which were given to farmers to increase food production and modernise farms. But as mechanisation on the farm accelerated, local jobs became more threatened. The revolution in farming methods did away with the need for much casual labour, which had previously been essential, especially at harvest time. Consequently, travellers and itinerants who had been a regular feature of country life became much rarer. There were also fewer jobs on the land, and the number of farm labourers shrunk from around three-quarters of a million in 1949 to a quarter of a million in 1979 (Humphries, 2000:171). Moreover, as new farming methods proved to be more efficient than anticipated, which led to overproduction, waste and degradation of the environment. Therefore, by the early 80s the CAP had been forced into a U-turn, and was granting subsidies to limit production as well as making them available to environmentally friendly farms. Thus, while some farmers had been paid to remove hedges and ponds to increase production, they were now being paid to replace them.

But the years of prosperity and generous subsidies were slowly coming to an end. As mentioned earlier, there was a crisis in the economy and in agriculture, there was a BSE epidemic in 1985, which led to slump in demand for British farm products both at home and overseas. And despite a major change in agricultural subsidies with the McSharry reform[14], subsidies were paid in Euros, and a strong pound meant a poor exchange rate and lower rates for farmers. Moreover, a slump in international markets (primarily in Asia and the Soviet Union) shook the world economy, and demand for British farm products fell even further. This had a devastating knock-on effect on a substantial countryside population composed of farmers, farm labourers and rural poor who were severely marginalised by the social and economic changes of all kinds which were taking place in rural areas, and shows there was another side to the story of greed, pride and prosperity which came to be popularly associated with the Conservatives and country life in the 1980s.

However, within the 'golden horn', the county of Surrey and other Home Counties were among the first regions to be 'colonised', followed by Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire in the 1970s and 80s, where run-down farming communities were transformed into metropolitan villages by new settlers who were often from London and other urban areas. Wiltshire, a county closely associated with new Travellers[15], and the county where the earliest conflicts were reported at Stonehenge, was one of the counties to be particularly badly hit in the recessions of the 1980s and 90s. Its heavy industry had declined in the 1980s with the loss of engine building at Swindon, several coal mines around the county, plus the ancillary industries. Hundreds of small communities along with their cultural and social values had gone too. Elsewhere in the county, military bases had disappeared after 1991, as the armed forces sought to economise and wind down their operations, making hundreds redundant. Consequently, incomers were sometimes surprised to find that,

instead of joining a friendly community of rustic locals, there was often tension and suspicion. Locals were often wary of the 'townies', who tended to take control of the levers of power, the pubs and the parish council turning their village into a 'dormitory village', a commuter suburb (Humphries, 2000:169-70).

I used to be able to drive my sheep through Wingrave when I wanted; now I'm just a public nuisance... I have very few close friends in the village, I have good friends on neighbouring farms. People in Wingrave are predominantly Yuppies. I used to be on the Community Association Committee, but I got sick of the people who moved in... (they) don't really understand farming life; I can't get on with them.

(A Buckinghamshire farmer, quoted in Murdoch and Marsden, 1996)

The discontent in rapidly changing rural areas attracted considerable academic interest, and recent studies and surveys identify a number of threats to community spirit and social cohesion in rural areas, stemming from the rapid change in the local population (Bradley, 1987; Hedges, 1999; Jones, 2000; Shucksmith, 1999; Winter et al., 1999). In the survey by Winter et al. (1999), 59% of locals and 52% of incomers agreed that new conflicts were arising between incomers and locals; incomer-farmer conflicts were referred to by 39% of locals and 30% of incomers, although there was some variation between the 5 areas studied (Cheshire, Devon, Hampshire, Norfolk and Powys). For example, the proportion of local respondents identifying incomer-local conflicts ranged from 45% in Cheshire, to 78% in Norfolk; farmer-incomer conflicts were mentioned by 52% of Norfolk locals, and 23% of Hampshire locals. Some areas of the countryside were clearly becoming uncomfortable places to live, but on a scale and in ways which had rarely been seen before.

Perhaps the most significant factor in the growing rural depression was the lack of housing. Research by Bramley (1995) concluded that in 1991, 40% of newly formed households in rural areas would be unable to enter the owner-occupied housing market. In spite of a growing crisis in farming, the number of wealthy migrants to the countryside increased, and demand grew for country properties, with prosperous incomers bidding up the prices of local houses beyond the reach of long term rural dwellers (Findlay, 1999). This produced a context in which some of the richest people came to live alongside some of the poorest. For example, according to Gomm (1997), some 27% of all households in the Cotswolds had incomes of less than £7000, while 33% had incomes of over £25000.

Waverly, in balmy stockbroker-land, is far from being the most grim council area in Britain. But the cooks, gardeners, chauffeurs and farmworkers who have lost tied accommodation at the end of their working lives now depend on the council for homes as they cannot possibly afford to buy the humblest cottage in an area where £250,000 is barely enough to get an estate agent to return your call... In affluent rural areas, the poverty of the minority is made worse by the wealth clotted around them.

('Comment', by Sandy Mitchell, *Country Life* magazine, 27.3.97)

The usual alternative was local authority rented housing, which had always been limited in rural areas, but was severely depleted in the 1980s, mostly as a result of the right-to-buy

legislation. Nor had it been matched by the provision of new units. For example, between 1985 and 1990, 91,000 homes were lost from the local authority rented sector in rural districts (ACRE, 1993); from 1991-1997 only 17,000 new units were provided (DTZ Pieda, 1998). Cloke et al., (2000) note that between 1992 and 1996, rural homelessness rose from 11.8% to 14.4%. In some rural districts, the increases were particularly dramatic, with 8 districts showing an increase of more than 50%. These were Isles of Scilly, South Hampshire, Daventry, Forest of Dean, Richmondshire, South Shropshire, Selby and North Dorset. In the 6 rural districts of Hampshire alone 2,238 households were accepted as homeless in 1996, with a further 2,735 households approaching these authorities, but not deemed in priority need.

A significant factor in the homelessness and rural poverty of the 1980s was an economic recession and unemployment, together with a withdrawal of homelessness status from 16-18 year olds and a general worsening of provision for the homeless during the 1980s. The Social Security Act (1986) which took effect from April 1988, cut income support for young people under 25 and withdrew benefit for 16 and 17 year olds who did not 'choose' to enrol on a youth training scheme (Redhead, 1990:87). In April 1988 general rates (later the Poll tax) and water rates had to be paid out of other benefits. Given that young people under 25 were already receiving less Income Support than anyone else, their plight is clear., and more pronounced than that of many groups, and contributed to their seeking habitation in the same kinds of marginal environments as other travellers.

Moreover, by 1985 farming was itself deep in recession[16]. In the agribusiness, farming companies were often brought in to run their holdings at minimal cost which often involved laying off farm staff in a rationalisation of the existing structure (Harvey, 1997:159). This contributed to a fall of some 112,000 in the agricultural labour force from 1981 to 1995 in the UK, with regular hired workers hit the hardest (MAFF, 1997). Although some agricultural labourers stayed, they had to learn new skills to keep their jobs and remained among the lowest paid in Britain.

Numerous studies were done into the consequences for local communities. McLaughlin's study in 1979 for the Department of the Environment and the Rural Development Commission found one in every four households was living in or near poverty. A later study in 1990 produced similar results, with 1 in 4 rural households living in or on the margins of poverty (Shucksmith, 1999). Another study of 7000 unemployed from 1991-96 concluded that 1 in 3 residents of rural Britain experienced at least one spell of poverty in this 5 year period (Chapman et al., 1998). However, the situation did not improve, and further studies suggest the rates of unemployment in rural areas remained fairly constant throughout the research period. Cloke et al., (1994, 1995) in 12 contrasting rural areas, found that in 9 of them over 23% of households were below the poverty threshold of half average income. The self-employed were not immune from the burgeoning crisis; 23% of those of working age were on low incomes in rural Britain (Shucksmith, 1999).

In 1994 the Rural Development Commission produced their survey 'Lifestyles in Rural England'. The compilers of the report stated that in 9 of the 12 areas studied, 20 per cent or

more were living in or close to poverty. Over half those surveyed said they found difficulties in getting a job. Many said the fact that they lived in the countryside presented specific disadvantages in their search for work. There was, according to the researchers, a 'severe problem of rural lifestyle in most areas of the country'. They emphatically rejected the argument that the issue of poverty and deprivation was an outdated phenomenon, and had in some way become an anachronism in the purportedly prosperous 1980s. They found that many of their respondents were, on the whole, reluctant to admit their poverty and deprivation, yet more than 39% of households in the Nottinghamshire study area, 34.4% in Devon and nearly 30% in Essex were described as in or near poverty. A report compiled by the Community Council for Wiltshire (1996) - a county often associated with conflicts involving new Travellers - recorded that in 1996 some 30% of households were on some kind of benefit, even though the unemployment levels were below average in that year. In the town of Devizes, just under 50% of the working population were on benefits to top up their income. The same year, in a small village of 200 people outside Swindon, around one third earned less than six thousand pounds p.a., while another third earned more than forty thousand pounds.

The extensive number of studies carried out into rural poverty clearly show the economic strain which many farmers and rural dwellers were under, particularly from around 1990, when an economic recession began to deepen. Poverty precipitates social exclusion, and an attendant social and psychological conflict. An extensive study carried out by the Countryside Agency reveals how in many areas, local services were declining, and accessing basic services, such as post offices, banks, GPs, pre-school childcare provision was increasingly difficult, especially without access to a private means of transport, which was increasingly necessary due to the cut-backs in other 'uneconomic' public services such as transport (Countryside Agency 1999c). Many services were faced closure, not through reduced demand, but due to the devastating effect that a Conservative programme of privatisation and reduced public subsidies was having on both urban areas and the countryside (Cloke, 1999:288).

The importance of a private means of transport to rural dwellers was clear, yet car crime was one of several types of crime which increased in rural areas at a rate greater than elsewhere. From 1991-95 vehicle related thefts increased by 24% in rural areas, compared with 4% in urban areas and 10% in inner cities (Mirlees-Black, 1998). This makes it more difficult to get to jobs and look for them, as well as accessing other rural services, as over 66% of rural journeys are by car, compared with a national average of approximately 50% (Pretty, 1998:207). Between 1991 and 1995, contact crime increased by 60% in rural areas, 48% in urban areas and 91% in inner city areas. There is some evidence of a belief that crime is rising in rural areas, and a sense of heightened vulnerability, especially to property crime committed by people from outside the immediate area. Fear of crime is exacerbated by community fragmentation and reduced social cohesion, and awareness of increasingly stretched police resources, and decreased scope for traditional policing methods (Anderson, 1999; Hedges, 1999).

Fear of crime and other, external threats led to rising levels of stress in the farming

community in England, along with most countries of the western world (Monk, 1999). According to surveys by the NFU (1999, 2000) many farmers experienced "classic symptoms of stress" while one in ten tenant farmers were said to be taking anti-depressants. Farmers were also a "high-risk from suicide" occupational group, with a 1991-96 proportional mortality ratio (PMR) from suicide of 144 (against a population standard of 100) Hawton et al. (1998). This was attributed to a series of negative factors, such as declining incomes, poverty, social exclusion, crime, as well as the appearance of BSE, new unfamiliar and largely unwelcome legislation from the European Community, and a radically altered use of the countryside in many areas.

Another contributory factor to high levels of stress was the need of children of long-term residents to leave rural areas to find work and affordable homes (Simmons, 1997:27). The loss of younger people can 'inhibit' the social reproduction of the community and damage informal support networks. In particular, the elderly may become socially isolated as their children are priced out of local housing market (Bradley, 1987; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1999; Shucksmith, 1999). Isolation is frequently suppressed and hidden, which can lead to mental health problems, depression, and a higher rate of suicide. The result was a marked increase in mental distress, depression and suicide among farmers and others in the rural community; e.g. farmers and farmworkers were two and a half times more likely to commit suicide as the rest of the population (Pretty, 1998:212). In response, several 'caring' agencies have developed rural outreach initiatives, e.g. the Samaritans launched their Rural Outreach Initiative in 1987, and since then have been active partners in most country initiatives.

The picture painted by the statistics of conflict, unemployment, poverty, exclusion, homelessness and crime is one which is very much at a variance with the experience of the casual observer. If one had taken a trip on a summer weekend to any of the popular tourist destinations or 'honey pots' such as the Cotswolds, South Downs, Lake District and Peak District of Derbyshire, it would have been easy to witness a prosperous scene, as tea rooms, pubs, craft centres and car parks played host to thousands of city-dwellers. Similarly with the many gentrified, manicured villages such as Glastonbury, Woodstock and Bakewell, with their monuments, quaint shops, castles and country houses. This is because part of the problem of rural poverty then, as now, is that it goes unnoticed, and tourism is a trade which is subject to immense seasonal variation. Although there can be great demand for part-time and temporary staff of all types in the busy summer season, the rates of pay are generally among the lowest, and much of the employment temporary, part-time, 'informal' as well as illegal (Simmons, 1997:27). Between October and May, many such villages and attractions would be largely deserted of tourists, leaving its summer beneficiaries unemployed. In recognition of the problem, the wealthy landowner the Duke of Westminster commented that:

Hidden in the rural landscape, which the British so much love, people are suffering poverty, housing problems, unemployment, deprivation of various kinds, and misery. Traditional patterns of rural life are changing fast, causing worry, shame and distress. Those most affected are angry and bitter, but feel they have little chance of being heard. The suicide

rate is very high. Neither the public nor the private sector is showing any sign of caring very much about all this. (Quoted in Pretty, 1998:213)

9. Concluding Remarks

By the mid-1980s there was a series of fault lines running through the countryside. Much of rural Britain in the south-east had become the 'locale' of a complex matrix of interests, many of them in direct conflict. Firstly, there was a basic conflict emanating from within the political right. On the one hand, Tories in Westminster sought to unleash the forces of monetarism and the free market on the countryside, which led to its commercial exploitation in terms of residential developments, business and retail parks, tourism, leisure and entertainment services and so on. But this met with resistance at local level from other Conservative groups such as wealthy ex-urbanites and landowners, together with their representatives at parish level, their Members of Parliament, and their organisations such as the Country Landowners Association, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, who believed that the countryside's quality as an amenity could only be retained if access and use by other groups could be restricted.

By 1990 a second 'fault line' in the countryside emerged, between another element of the political right - the old establishment of farmers and landed gentry - and a burgeoning movement for the preservation of the countryside, which had its roots in the political left. The landowners, who had for centuries seen themselves as its custodians, and been accustomed to deference and compliance, were increasingly challenged over environmental and conservation matters by groups favouring direct action, such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Hunt Saboteurs, Earth First, CND and the Ramblers Association, as well as numerous rural sympathisers, who all sought in their own, sometimes conflicting ways, to protect it from business development, pollution, damage, bloodsports and so on, in order to preserve the idyll, and make it available to all.

A third strata of conflict, perhaps the deepest and most commonplace but also the most invisible, involved those stranded by social and economic forces, such as poor rural dwellers, manual labourers and owner-occupier farmers. Many had seen their villages lose their sense of identity and community as they became transformed by a growing numbers of wealthy ex-urbanites. They had further suffered from a withdrawal of public expenditure and declining or non-existent private and public services, from pubs, shops and banks, to bus and train services, post offices police stations. High levels of unemployment, homelessness all indicated profound levels of social exclusion. Ultimately, this manifest itself in terms of personal stress, depression, and conflict with others.

Clearly, there are many different areas of the English countryside, depending on the landscape quality, agriculture, pressure on housing etc. which all fared differently in the 1980s, but the area where these three conflicts were most sharply experienced was within the so-called 'Golden Horn', in the Home Counties, and in the central south of England. The resulting rural tensions there, in a bedrock site of Conservatism, created the conditions for the vilification of the new Travellers as 'folk demons' with no place in the countryside. In this

way, the Thatcher government was able to give the appearance of defending a wide range of interests (which were in fact those of their supporters), and at the same time deflect attention away from other, more complex economic issues of rural poverty, and the apparent incompatibility of reconciling the free-market Conservatism of Westminster with the wishes of the Conservatives in the shires. In the next chapter/section the 'hidden wiring' of this mechanism will be described and analysed.

Notes

[1] A public body founded by Victorian radicals who were concerned to protect the countryside and improve access to town dweller. The NT is mentioned in more detail later in the discussion.

[2] Films are available from BFI, see their online catalogue for details; see also www.britishtransportfilms.co.uk

[3] The Countryside Agency document 'State of the Countryside - 2000' on page 1, points out that the RDC classification was based on three other lists of rural districts:
- the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 'Classification of Local Authority Districts'. This used data from the 1991 Census to classify areas with similar characteristics into groups:
- the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) list, based primarily on population density;
-the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions list of (pre-reorganisation) districts, included within the 1995 Rural White Paper.

[4] Among other areas, 'retirement areas' (e.g. East Devon) were characterised by greater in-migration from outside the region, but with many incomers not working. In 'remote rural areas' (e.g. Alnwick district), local within-region movement predominates, with many working locally. Movement in 'old industrial areas' (e.g. Wear Valley) was likely to be local or within the region; many worked locally or were unemployed, consequently, these areas are the most likely to experience net out-migration. The survey of Findlay et al. (1999) concluded that the majority (84%) of out-migrants were the son or daughter of the head of the household, with 73% aged under 25, contributing to an older than average rural working population.

[5] Peter York gives an interesting and colourful account of the 1980s property boom, which, unlike many economic renditions of town planning, captures the spirit of the times in a series of interviews and sharp observations (York, 1995:ch.3).

[6] For further discussion of landowner's attitudes to access, see *This Land is Our Land,* chs. 6 and 11, and M. Shoard, 'Robbers v Revolutionaries: What the Battle for Access is All About', in C. Watkins (ed.) (1996) *Rights of Way: Policy, Culture and Management* London, Pinter.

[7] The pressure group Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) was formed in 1987. It is a product of the expanding industry of concern relating to the countryside. The charity campaigns with voluntary backing from all parts of the country against the impoverishment which has afflicted people who, in some instances, have been living in the countryside all their lives.

[8] Wealthy rural dwellers who protested against development became renown for their attitude of 'Not in My Back Yard' ; in other words they were generally in favour as long as it did not take place in their locality or affect their enjoyment of rural facilities. Alternatively, N.O.D.A.M.= 'No Development After Mine'.

[9] This is expressed in a series of circulars from the DoE, such as the Draft Circular on Green Belts (1983).

[10] The green belts around many of Britain's cities were areas which had been protected from development on government advice during the post-war period.

[11] In the 1980s a variety of enterprises, from military research and development centres, to electronic goods and components and large retailing outlets such as Tesco, Odeon, and B and Q successfully relocated there, and by 1987 over 60 million square meters of large, out-of-town retail schemes were at the proposal stage, including nearly a dozen major superstores around the M25 (Blunden and Curry, 1988:85).

[12] For example, the identification of institutional land within green belts, (such as old hospital buildings) being made available for redevelopment, arguing that parts of the 'belt' were artificial, in the sense that they were subject to institutional uses, e.g. universities, schools and golf courses.

[13] 'Tourism' is often taken to mean leisure activities which involve at least one night away from home, while 'recreation' refers to those which do not. More specifically, the Rural Development Commission's 1992 document *Tourism in the Countryside* defines it as 'the temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations, outside the place they normally live and work, and the activities during their stay at these destinations.

[14] The C.A.P. was first conceived of by the original member nations of the Common Market in the 1950s, when after the austerity of the post-war years the idea of cheap and abundant food produced self-sufficiently seemed an attractive one.

[15] The McSharry reforms were intended to compensate farmers for the decline in the prices with a scheme to guarantee payments.

[16] The Southern Central Intelligence Unit, created to monitor new Traveller movements nationwide, was based in Devizes, Wiltshire.

[17] Total UK farming income for 1985 was around £2.2 billion pounds, compared with over 7 billion in 1973 (source: NFU website).

Chapter 4

Press Images of New Travellers

1. The Preparation of 'News'

In this chapter I analyse the press coverage of key events involving the new Travellers between 1984 and 1994. Examination shows how press stories used sensational, exaggerated language and themes in order to create a series of stereotyped labels which implicitly validated public criticism of the Travellers, and provided the justification for harsh measures against them. Like the traditional stereotypes promulgated in earlier centuries, these negative images helped shape public opinion, stirring up hostile feelings and inciting public prejudice.

The post-war has seen a growing concentration of press ownership in the hands of relatively few right-wing proprietors, and the vast majority of the newspaper and television stations project a broadly conservative political world-view (Curran and Seaton, 1994). However, this world-view has been shown to be not necessarily a product of the right-wing proprietors, but of the way in which the politically and economically dominant groups in society define the issues and the ways in which they are discussed (Hall et al., 1978). Analysing the creation of the 'mugger' in British media of the early 1970s, Hall et al. show how reports incorporate a number of assumptions which help make sense of news items and give coherence to them, which is termed the 'mapping of meaning' by the media. The most significant of these is an assumption about the concensual nature of society, which helps to construct and reinforce an image of social consensus about the topic under discussion. But as the authors point out, if only one perspective, culture or one central value system is assumed, the presence of any other is implicitly denied.

Thus the media's mapping of problematic events within the conventional understandings of the society is crucial in two ways. The media define for the majority of the population what significant events are taking place; also they offer powerful interpretations of how to understand these events. (Hall et al., 1978:57)

Applying this to the media discourse surrounding the new Travellers, one of the most common stories to be found in the tabloid press concerned the disruption caused on sites. Reports regularly criticised the damage, pollution and dependence on social security benefits as well as the disruption caused locally, the effect of which was to narrow debate down to their problematic nature. There was a focus on confrontations, pollution, damage and so on, rather than on broader issues that may need to be debated', for example the need for more sites and facilities for travelling groups, the need for more publicly owned land, or more accessible state benefits. Consequently, such questions are deemed to be 'outside the boundaries' and cannot be addressed in a public forum as they do not fit the accepted narrative on new Travellers.

In order to report information and make news, the media interview and report those whose views are held to be the most authoritative and knowledgeable, and these are usually in positions of power and privilege, which Becker referred to as a "hierarchy of credibility". Thus, by providing a platform for powerful individuals to air their views, the media:

... reproduce the definitions of the powerful, and *... reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order.* (Becker, 1967:58)

Events come to be defined through consistent reliance on 'experts', such as M.P.s, trade union leaders or institutional spokesmen, who are known as 'primary definers' or sources.

The result of this structured preference given in the media to the opinions of the powerful is that these 'spokesmen' become what we will call 'primary definers' of topics.

(Hall, et al., 1978:58)

'Primary definers' provide a particular interpretation of news, which becomes the established version. They define what the issues are and how one is to look at them and discuss them. Consequently, all other points of view take their cue from their original formulation. Thus, the media come to reproduce the dominant definitions, and in this way maintain the existing status quo and contribute to a culture of control by the government. The significance of this is that it becomes difficult to introduce a wholly new definition from the one which is given by the expert, as once a particular way of looking at a phenomenon is set, discussion about it must then take place within defined boundaries, as there is little or no opportunity to contest the 'official' view of events[2] . If this is applied to the criminal justice system, we find that those reporting on crime cases - the crime correspondents - rely on the information provided by those working within it, such as the police and their representatives.

The popular image of journalists (elaborated in many movies) as intrepid hunters after hidden truths, is hardly realistic. Specialist reporters in particular are closely involved with and indeed dependent upon their sources. Thus crime reporters identify with the police, defence correspondents with the armed forces and industrial relations experts with the trade unions. But, in addition, journalists, who are better seen as bureaucrats than as buccaneers, begin their work from a stock of plausible, well-defined and largely unconscious assumptions. Part of their job is to translate untidy reality into neat stories with beginnings, middles and denouements. (Curran and Seaton, 1994:264-5)

This is no doubt overstating things, as it fails to recognise the efforts made by some pioneering journalists in exposing stories that political and economic interests would rather conceal. But the essential point is that such interests do set limits on access for the news media (Ericson et al., 1987, 1989, 1991; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1993, 1994), and this results in a one-dimensional viewpoint in the reporting of news. As will be shown here, until 1992/93 it was the moral outrage at the 'undeserving' Travellers receiving social security payments, and the threat of what may be described as 'stranger-danger', which formed the critical thrust of reporting, rather than representing issues of homelessness, a lack of adequate sites, and the marginalisation of travelling communities as serious social problems,

views which were echoed in parliamentary debates.[3]

Thus, the ways in which news topics are processed sets the ways in which they are viewed and discussed. This is to such a degree that Ericson et al. argue in the final instance, that:

... news media are as much an agency of policing as the law-enforcement agencies whose activities and classifications are reported on. (Ericson et al., 1991:71)

Put more briefly, they: ... *reproduce order in the process of representing it.*

(Reiner, 1997:223)

As well as defining topics, the media frequently applies a label to those who are the subject of its texts. This is another aspect of media coverage which has effects not only on the readers' perceptions, but also on the subjects themselves. Research by Cohen (1972) and Rock (1973) found that although the characteristics and behaviour of a particular group may change over time, the particular narratives which accompany them are unlikely to do so. The repeated use of a given label creates associations which remain constant in the readers' minds, which facilitates the creation of a sensational story or scandal. One effect is to entertain readers, which helps to sell newspapers. However, another is that it provides 'normative contours' which inform society about "what is right and what is wrong", about the symbolic boundaries beyond which one should not venture, and about the shapes which transgressors - the folk devils - have assumed. When these symbolic boundaries are shown to have been crossed, the effect is to leave the public with a general feeling of anxiety about some newly exposed 'problem', which the media have exposed and alerted the readers to. Yet in some respects the 'problem' has been created by the media themselves.

Young has shown how, in the case of drug taking, the media play on the normative concerns of the public, and by thrusting certain moral directives into the universe of discourse, can create social problems suddenly and dramatically. (Cohen, 1972:17)

The effects of identifying these problems and labelling the transgressors has been analysed by Becker (1974). For Becker, labelling defines an individual in a particular way, categorising and evaluating them at the same time. Where this label is deviant or threatening, it may override the application of any other, and has the effect of reinforcing the behaviour.

If this is applied to the coverage of the new Travellers, it would therefore seem likely that, as the Travellers were defined in early press coverage as 'giro gypsies', 'brigands' and 'scum', a negative perception was generated in the public mind, which led to to social ostracism, rejection, exclusion, and the defining of a deviant identity which remained with them whatever their behaviour was on subsequent occasions. Moreover, it could also be posited that the intense negative publicity given to the new Traveller press identity subsequently attracted other, would-be travellers whose motivations for living on the road were far removed from the counter-cultural idealism of the original generation, which confirms the amplification derived from the labelling hypothesis. This point is taken up again in Chapter Six, but attention will now be given to the the kind of image created in the press between 1984 and 1994. First, in

section two of this Chapter, a general assessment of reporting in relation to various key incidents is offered, and then in section three the ways in which images of the new Travellers were manufactured in the media are analysed.

2. The Changing Culture 1984-94

During the 1970s and 80s pop festivals became a regular feature of the British countryside, with 47 events recorded around England and Wales in 1980, each with attendances of between 200 and 150,000 (Clarke, 1982:ix). The numbers involved required a strong police presence, and there were often arrests in connection with drug and public order offences. However, despite the increase in festivals and attendances, attention did not usually extend beyond the local press. Reports were generally brief and did not make any distinction between travelling groups and day trippers, even though by the late 1970s there was evidence of traveller groups making their living at festivals on a year-round basis (Earle et al., 1994:5-6). The exception was in the case of large commercial events such as Knebworth and Reading, which sometimes attracted articles in the national dailies, usually relating to traffic jams and arrests of 'hippies' for drugs offences, and occasionally, criticism of heavy-handed policing. This is illustrated in the following account of aggressive police action in 1974 at the Windsor festival, when a Times editorial pointed out that:

... accusations of unduly rough tactics will have to be inquired into, but reports do give the impression that the police went into the camp expecting more formidable resistance than they in fact met, and that their manner of proceeding may have aroused more opposition than it forestalled. A warning at the start that the field would be cleared after five days might have changed everything. The camp, with its women and children and pet animals, with its sleeping-bags, primus stoves and guitars, was no kind of fortress, and many people who have never had cause to witness the harsher sides of police activity may today be nursing a disillusionment that will not fade rapidly or make the relations of the police with the public any easier ... Festivals do tend to leave a mess, to be noisy and to fill the village street with startling styles of dress. But they are basically amiable gatherings, which with a degree of tolerance it should be possible to accommodate. Indeed, several other festivals took place over the Bank Holiday without serious disturbance. Intelligent cooperation on the part of organisers, councils and police should stop matters getting to this stage again.

(The Times, 30.8.74)

Editorials critical of the police handling of events were conspicuously absent throughout the 1980s, however the new Travellers attracted no attention at all either in the media or in parliament until 1982, when they became associated with the already sizable peace camp of some 30,000 at Greenham Common. A small police presence of some 50 officers was not enough to deter around 500 Travellers, and a site several yards from the base fence was quickly established (McKay, 1996:58). An impromptu celebration was held, calling itself the 'Counter-Cruise Carnival' which raised the profile of both groups, which at a time of increasing Cold War tension, and in the year of Britain's war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands, presented the new Travellers as ideologically motivated, oppositional forces. Indeed, a broadly similar political outlook, and similar ways of life meant that both groups shared much in

common, and during the early 1980s groups of new Travellers were frequent visitors to what became around 20 peace camps.

The Tory election victory of 1983 was followed by more aggressive policing of the new Travellers, with increasing police presence, surveillance and harassment, the carrying out of drug searches, the police moving Travellers on, burning their belongings, and in some cases using helicopters to survey their movements. Soon afterwards in August, 1984 at a small, commercial festival at Nostell Priory near Wakefield in Yorkshire, a 'fringe' free festival took place in the car park. Police unexpectedly raided the site, where they arrested all 360 participants, damaged their vehicles and burnt their tents.

It was the first violent eviction of a cycle which continued into 1985 at a military air base in Molesworth, Cambridgeshire, where an encampment of CND supporters and Travellers collectively known as the 'Rainbow Fields Village' were parked up over winter. However, on Feb. 5th they were dramatically evicted by the Cambridgeshire police, military police, and around 1500 soldiers from the Royal Engineers army regiment. To the delight of the media, the Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine arrived wearing combat gear to oversee the operation , and supervised the erection of a barrier of razor wire to seal off the site.

Unlike earlier evictions, this one was widely reported in all national press on 7.2.85, and later in a series of articles which were broadly sympathetic to the government's initiative. The public profile of the eviction allowed press to point out that many travellers had been parked there over winter at a time when there were no festivals, which helped to make the connection in the public mind with the Travellers as a mobile political force, peopled by more radical elements of CND, as well as hippies who sought no active engagement with the political scene. Many of those evicted from the site became joined up with the convoy of May and June, and were to find themselves caught up in events on June 1st. 1985, when confrontations between police and Travellers intensified in an event which would have far-reaching implications. At the Savernake Forest in Wiltshire, several hundred Travellers had spent the night en-route for Stonehenge, a World Heritage site, where since 1974 there had been a free festival on the days over the summer solstice. The previous year had seen, according to police estimates, up to 30,000 people attend an illegal and unregulated festival. Despite the event having passed off peacefully in previous years, official attitudes were changing, and a number of interested parties colluded to obtain an injunction to prevent the Travellers gathering at Stonehenge in 1985.

The background to the injunction application is unclear, but involved English Heritage and the National Trust consulting with local landowners and others, who claimed that land of archaeological interest was threatened by the festival. Yet the fact that there were thousands of visitors to the stones every year, and nearby Salisbury Plain was subject to heavy M.O.D. use, was completely ignored. Injunctions were subsequently granted to prevent Travellers reaching the stones. According to Observer reporter Nick Davies who was threatened with arrest at the Beanfield:

The whole of the Wiltshire establishment had sat down to decide what to do about the

convoy. This involved various landowners, the County Council, the police and their solicitors. There wasn't really a law that would enable them to keep the convoy out. So they came up with the civil injunctions to justify all that happened.

(New Statesman and Society, 23.6.85:22)

On the days leading up to the festival, armed Wiltshire police crossed into the neighbouring county of Hampshire, where they waited for the Travellers to assemble. Tension grew and by the end of May, Travellers were congregated a few miles away, held back by a four-and-a-half mile exclusion zone which prohibited entry to the area around the stones. Police efforts to stop the growing convoy reaching Stonehenge involved forcing vehicles away from the main A303 road, down minor roads of the Wiltshire countryside, where they parked and waited. Following a tense stand off, riot police moved in to make arrests as Travellers tried to move away into a nearby bean field where they attacked some 150 vans and buses, destroying many. There were scuffles and confrontations as armed men attacked families, women and children, and made over 500 arrests. It was the largest single civil arrest in British history. There were 24 appeals, all of which were successful when they were finally heard 7 years later. But, there was no public enquiry, and although ITN had a film of events, the most incriminating shots 'disappeared' before they could be shown. It became known as the 'Battle of the Beanfield'[4].

The Beanfield was a major event which attracted widespread press coverage from 3.6.85. While most articles in local and national press referred to the new Travellers at the earlier Molesworth eviction as 'protesters' (Cambridge Evening News, 07.02.85) who formed the 'peace camp' (Hunts. Post, 07.02.85), coverage of the Beanfield involved a more sensational labelling of the Travellers as 'hippies', 'the hippy convoy', 'the peace convoy', and of a 'Battle of Stonehenge' in articles which ran in all national press over some two weeks.

The 'battle' itself took place on Saturday, but by Monday the event was no longer of first importance, as a football riot which had left many dead at the Heysel stadium had become the main event of the moment. Nevertheless, the Sun and the Mirror both ran articles on the 'hippies'. In the Sun, the headline was "Hippy may face murder bid charges" and followed on with "A HIPPY leader is expected to be charged with attempted murder" following the bloody battle of Stonehenge (Sun 3.6.85). It should be emphasised that the individual concerned was described as a 'leader', which suggests some organisational structure to a Traveller group prepared to overthrow and even kill the police to achieve its own ends. However, the Sun did not mention the threat again, nor was the story taken up by any other newspaper. But in practically all the articles in the Sun covering this episode, the 'hippies' are presented as potentially violent and delinquent, while the police are seen as an objective authority whose words are always worthy of respect.

In contrast, the coverage in the Mirror of 3.6.85 was less predictable than in other tabloid press, possibly because of the treatment of the miners by the police during the strike of 1984-5. Two photographs are shown, the larger of which shows us the 'blood-spattered' face of a young man, whose expression of suffering resembles Christ on the cross. The second shows us a moment in the 'battle' itself; police and 'hippies' - both groups are armed with

batons, facing each other in front of a car. In the article accompanying these pictures, we read:

Baton-wielding riot police were accused of brutality yesterday after arresting 520 hippies in the Battle of Stonehenge... Fighting broke out after the convoy of 250 rusting old ambulances and coaches was halted at Grateley, Hants, six miles from Stonehenge. Motorists who saw the battle claimed that police were showered with petrol bombs, stones and missiles fired by catapults.

The Sun and Mirror stories of the next day also had different coverage of a story telling how some of the people whose vehicles had been damaged in the 'battle' took refuge on land belonging to a member of the aristocracy, who was willing to shelter them despite warnings given to him by the police. Such a tale, of a local titled owner and Tory offering protection to the Travellers, was exploited in the Sun, which announced: "LORDY! HIPPIES GET A REFUGE" (their capitals). In this case a headline has been adopted using a light-hearted exclamatory pun which announces the humourous tone adopted in the article. It goes on as follows:

The Earl of Cardigan defied a police appeal yesterday, and gave sanctuary to 100 hippies recovering from the Battle of Stonehenge. The 33-year-old Earl let a so-called Peace Convoy of 40 vehicles regroup in Savernake Forest, Wilts., which is owned by his stockbroker father the Marquess of Aylesbury. (The Sun, 4.6.85)

Again, the Travellers are referred to as 'hippies'; figures who come to challenge traditional values, and who are projected as folk devils who come to invert the normal order of things. But the hippies - in particular the women and children - had, according to Lord Cardigan, "gone through hell". As a prominent local aristocrat, his testimony was an influential one, as it contradicted those who wanted to conceal and reinterpret the police action as reasonable and appropriate. Consequently, several national newspapers presented him as the "loony lord", questioning his suitability as an eye witness and drawing farcical conclusions from the fact that his great grandfather had led the Charge of the Light Brigade. The Times editorial of the day before (3.6.85) had even claimed that being "barking mad was probably hereditary".[5]

The Mirror outlines the tale in a rather different way. Under the headline 'Earl makes hippies happy' and a photo of Lord Cardigan in the company of a woman and four children, the Earl is allowed to explain the reasons behind his act of charity:

I'm taking a lot of flak from some local residents who don't want these people here,' he said. 'But they didn't see pregnant women and children going through hell as I did.

(The Mirror, 4.6.85)

The Mirror story treated the police and their adversaries in practically the same negative way, yet other sympathetic voices found expression among the public, for example in the Times, where the following extract from a letter by Dr. Pamela Storey was published on 7.6.85:

Sir, those of us who watched the television news last Saturday evening would agree with your

correspondent (June 3rd) that the forces of law and order prevailed at the Stonehenge debacle, but it was fortunate that the opposing sides were dressed in their respective team strip, for otherwise I would have found it difficult to distinguish between those upholding the law and those flouting it.

Other newspaper articles expressed a greater sense of shock and were broadly sympathetic towards the new Travellers, for example two articles written in the Observer by Nick Davies on 9.6.85 and 16.6.85:

There was glass breaking, people screaming, black smoke towering out of burning caravans, and everywhere there seemed to be people being bashed and flattened and pulled by the hair... men, women and children were led away, shivering, swearing, crying, bleeding, leaving their homes in pieces... Over the years I had seen all kinds of horrible and frightening things and always managed to grin and write it. But as I left the Beanfield, for the first time, I felt sick enough to cry. (Observer, 9.6.85)

Following the incident, coverage of the new Travellers abated in the national press until later in 1986 when the convoy, again en-route for Stonehenge, spent May and June being split up, forced from one site to another by police, magistrates, landowners and local authorities in their attempts to stop any festival taking place. Farmers blocked the entrance to their fields, vehicles were impounded, Travellers arrested, children taken into care and animals put down (Heatherington, 1992). But the most serious event of the year was the mass eviction from Stoney Cross in Hampshire, of new Travellers en route for Stonehenge on 2.6.86[6]. Significantly, there was a week long stand-off on the run-up to the eviction, which provided the media with a good opportunity to get in position and start a long-running story, as well as commission a BBC2 documentary *Seven Days at Stoney Cross*. In the press, headlines and articles served to increase pressure on the police to act firmly against the Travellers, as well as agitate farmers who feared the convoy would park in local fields and damage crops. In turn, police began to fear attack from farmers and local youths, who threatened the Travellers with arrest if they did not move on as instructed (Heatherington, 2000).

But many convoy vehicles were already breaking down, and the groups finally stopped in a disused airfield at Stoney Cross in Hampshire for 9 days, refusing to move. It was around this time that the new Travellers became a familiar sight in news bulletins and in newspapers, where they represented not only the newly emerged 'problem' of the small, free festival, but also a problem in their own right. In the press, comment had shifted from small columns on drug offences and traffic jams, to national headlines and denunciations from leading members of the government, for example the then Home Secretary Douglas Hurd infamously criticised them as "medieval brigands" in the House of Commons (Hansard, 3.6.86:378), and the comment in the press began to talk about "bums, beggars, vandals and thieves" (Sunday Mirror, 8.6.86) as well as criticising their dependence on benefit claims, and their new status as "Outlaws" (Guardian 25.7.86).

The government moved to enact new Public Order legislation in 1986[7] which included sections designed to curtail the problems caused by new Travellers. However with the

exception of the annual attempts to reach Stonehenge, official interest and newspaper coverage waned again, and by 1990 the Stonehenge story was almost 'dead', the non-event being due to the Wiltshire Police's four mile 'exclusion zone', designed to keep festival goers away from the stones. However, while the Stonehenge event disappeared, the new Travellers did not, and numbers continued to grow.

In 1990 there was a resurgence of reports in most daily and weekly newspapers. There were heightened levels of media interest, especially after the Poll Tax[8] demonstrations and riots in which some new Travellers were said to have been involved, and there was more critical coverage in all press from 31.3.90 to 03.4.90, which in part was provoked by changes in the character of Travelling groups over the years. This point is taken up again in Chapter Six.

In 1991 coverage began early in the year, when on 6th. February, 24 Travellers won their case for wrongful arrest, assault and damage to property during the 'Battle of the Beanfield', and were subsequently awarded damages. This had been the longest civil court case in British legal history and received sympathetic coverage in the Guardian and Independent newspapers. Even a Channel 4 documentary film covering the story was also well-received by newspapers which normally supported the Government's policies on law and order, such as the Sunday Telegraph of 04.11.91 and the Financial Times of 13.11.91.

But the following year was marked by a significant growth in Traveller press coverage, from reporting events around the summer solstice, to year round attention. Significantly, it was not only the volume of coverage that changed, but also the tone, which suggested that concern about the Travellers was no longer an issue about law and order, but an issue about morality. Public opinion was orchestrated by the right-wing press and Tory members of Parliament following the event in May at Castlemorton Common in Hereford and Worcester, when for 8 days, between twenty to fifty thousand people (estimates varied) camped in a free festival which attracted a mixture of new Travellers and Ravers. The latter, with their own counterculture of drugs, and dancing to frenzied, high energy dance music provided by massive sound systems at unlicensed venues (e.g. warehouses, film studios and fields), had been another cause for official concern since around 1987 (Thornton, 1995). But with the increasing risks of staging free festivals there were now fewer events, and the new Travellers and Ravers had been drawn together at a number of other unlicensed events. Castlemorton was the biggest countercultural gathering since the last Stonehenge free festival in 1984 (McKay, 1996:120), and represented the height of the festival/rave fusion, which ran for eight days before a peaceful departure.

The event stimulated new levels of outrage in the press. On 30.5.92 the Daily Telegraph ran the headline 'Villagers at boiling point over hippies', accompanied with provocative comments by Tory M.P. Michael Spicer, who warned that if nothing was done about events like Castlemorton, vigilante groups would spring up. The following weeks saw a steady growth in the number of negative reports. On 28.5.92, 'The damage the invaders have left behind' was a title in the Daily Telegraph. On 29.5.92 the Police Review ran an article under the headline 'Chiefs should be able to ban hippy festivals'. On 31.5.92 the Observer reported that 'Castlemorton has provoked as much uproar and complaint as at any time since the free

festivals came into being'. And in the Daily Mail there seemed to be evidence of a siege mentality developing, in an article written by Detective Chief Inspector Alan Burrell, under the heading 'How to stop this happening in your village'. Later, on June 22nd. although there were few arrests and no festival at Stonehenge, the fact that nothing happened even made a headline in the Daily Telegraph, in the article entitled 'Peaceful solstice at Stonehenge'.

Press indignation subsequently intensified over the setting up of a social security office in Kerry, Wales, where local Travellers allegedly refused to leave until they got their benefits. On 29.7.92 the Daily Mail ran the headline 'Dole staff's field trip to pay hippy handouts', and by the summer of 1992 the "invasion" of Castlemorton and the question of giving benefits to Travellers had become highly sensitive issues.

On 7.2.92 there were numerous reports of Travellers heading for Otterborne and the 'Torpedo' festival, and the NFU issued guidelines on the best way to deal with the 'invasion'. The following day the Times ran an article explaining how all police leave was cancelled in Hampshire due to the number of festivals taking place there, which Travellers would be attending. The same edition carried a report on how the government had announced new rules making benefit more difficult to get. On 9.8.92 there were reports and pictures of violent scenes at Otterbourne and Romsey festivals, and the next day the Times and others carried reports of the intervention by police in riot gear who had been sent to Otterbourne to evict some 2000 New Age Travellers, at a cost of an estimated £700,000. The same day there were reports in the Times that Travellers had possibly set fire to Hants. County Council Offices and caused £1 million pounds worth of damage; the government was urged to deploy troops in such cases.

Throughout the summer opinion columns and letters' pages attracted numerous comments criticising the Travellers and expressing anxiety about their behaviour, and urging a tough response from the government, such as 'Tough laws to tame Travellers', and 'Hit the hippies where it hurts' in the Daily Star of 19.8.92. On August 11th it was reported in many newspapers that Earl Ferres had said the government would launch an enquiry into trespass law, after the "anarchy" which had occurred the previous weekend, and soon afterwards on September 23rd the then Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke was reported to have promised tough action against New Age Travellers. Throughout the year press coverage was concerned with the 'invasion' of Castlemorton, eviction and the law, and the issue of social security benefits for new Travellers.

Sensitised to the presence of Travellers, some newspapers began to run stories not about their presence, but about the possible presence in certain areas, and how preparations were being made to 'head them off'. The Daily Mail (22.6.92) noted that despite fears of a "massive invasion", 'The feared invasion of Pilton near Glastonbury never happened'. In other cases there were ample warnings of the Travellers arrival, in a manner which was redolent of the invasion of an occupying force, or the imminence of some natural disaster. For example the Western Daily Press (14.6.93) detailed preparations for the likely arrival of Travellers in the area for the Avon Free Festival, which included an announcement of plans by police, the district council, and conservators of common land in the area. These included the monitoring

of events through the surveillance scheme Operation Nomad (this could be a mistake, as Nomad was intended to gather data in the north and Operation Snapshot was based in the south). The co-ordination centre (SCIU) was put on full alert. Police leave was cancelled, tow trucks and bailiffs were on duty to guard sites, there was a hotline to report Traveller presence or activity, and notices had been put up to warn Travellers away. More prosaically, the Guardian (8.11.93) noted that 'Village pays convoy hippies £1000 to move on'.

Numerous reports on Traveller incidents and evictions continued into 1993, together with comment on the proposed legislation which had been proposed in the form of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, published in November of that year. However, in the same year the reporting of traveller matters was not confined to the daily and weekly press, and extended to other publications. This was a significant event, and for the first time a range of viewpoints was started to be expressed on the Travellers which were not limited to the narrow and biased views of the political right. This appears to have been in response to the new legislative proposals contained in the new Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which proposed a wide ranging set of proposals affecting many different sections of youth and minority groups. These were dealt with in some detail in a wide range of journals which did not normally concern themselves with Traveller issues, e.g. Young People Now (1.2.93), Geographical Magazine (1.3.93), Children in Focus (1.3.93), and Community Care (29.4.93). Articles covered a wide range of Traveller matters, such as education and health, to the implications of the new Criminal Justice Bill. The factual content and non-judgemental tone of such articles seemed to reflect a growing recognition in many quarters that the Travellers were indeed more heterogeneous than earlier media reports had suggested. Moreover, that many were deserving of public sympathy and support, in particular the rights of women, children and young people which were being threatened by the new Bill.

The apparent shift in public opinion began to be reflected in some quarters of the mainstream press. In March 1993 the Independent reported the launch by Liberty of a charter of human rights for Travellers. On 15.6.93 the Guardian published an article 'Travellers - five centuries of wandering', and 'Bumpy road for our Travellers' in the leader column of the Independent of 22.6.93. But not all newspapers were inclined to run articles sympathetic to the Travellers, for example throughout the summer the Daily Mail maintained a hostile stance, with numerous articles based on benefit fraud and themes related to 'sponging' off the State.

But in 1994 the emphasis changed in press reporting of Traveller festivals and evictions. Instead of fear and harsh criticism, there was more coverage of the implications of the proposed legislative reform regarding the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (1994), published in all press on 18.12.93. Its proposal to abandon the definition of 'Gypsy' attracted comment in the Times of 11.1.94 from the solicitor Luke Clements, who raised the question as to whether the proposed toughening of anti-nomadic laws would lead to intervention by the European Commission. Soon afterwards, and following the second reading of the Bill in Parliament, Simon Fairlie in the Guardian of 21.1.94 attempted to unify the interests of groups such as Friends of the Earth, the Ramblers, the Travellers and the general public, in an article which expressed a trend which had been taking place since the early 1990s; that of a growing coalition of countryside activists from across the political spectrum, which included the new

Travellers, road protesters, animal rights groups, Greenpeace, Ramblers, Friends of the Earth as well as official organisations such as the National Trust.

On 1.3.94 the Guardian published an article 'Police watch on Travellers to go before European court' after the human rights group Liberty had announced it would take the issue of Traveller surveillance by Wiltshire Police in Devizes to the European Court, arguing that it breached Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. This was followed soon afterwards (4.3.94) by an article by Suzanne Moore, which discussed the implications of the new legislation, concluding that:

...there are always groups of people who reject the dominant lifestyle and strive, however messily to find some alternatives. Shouldn't we be proud of its tradition instead of trying to police it out of existence?

Connections were made between current attitudes in Britain and those in Germany of the 1930s, when similar attitudes had led to the Holocaust. This found angry expression in the Guardian letters page of 6.6.94, in a year in when new Traveller coverage was frequently concerned with the effects of the new legislation, whose introduction was now imminent. A report by the Children's Society *Out of Site, out of Mind* (1994) into the travelling way of life, and in particular its effects on children received frequent mentions, in particular the decision to appoint a Traveller liaison officer. But by 1995 a decline in the number of new Travellers on British roads due to the new legislation, media coverage waned, as many new Travellers left for Ireland, Portugal, and Spain, while others returned to the towns and cities and began to lead more sedentary lives.

3. Images of New Travellers

a. Travellers as 'Hippies'

When the new Travellers first began to appear in the national press they were largely unknown, but their associations with anti-materialism, libertarian activism, and experimentation with alternative, Utopian lifestyles readily identified them with proponents of late 1960s counterculture. Hair was usually worn long, perhaps matted, in dreadlocks, or in a variety of punk styles, and many early Travellers also wore brightly coloured clothing, and accessories from different ethnic sources, such as Asian or Oriental which in the mid-1980s, made the label 'hippy' seem appropriate. The press label made them familiar, and although the majority of the population did not share their counter-cultural beliefs, the new Travellers were not seen as a threat to local communities, perhaps because of their core pacifism, and because there was a generally more tolerance of diverse political opinions, both in the press and in society. In this way the 'hippy' came to enjoy a legitimacy, rather like the 'pilgrim' in medieval times, who as a travelling stranger, was a recognisable figure whose motives were understood and tolerated.

However, as the Tories began to attack the 'enemies within', there was a new mood of intolerance towards counter-cultural tendencies of all kinds. A new discourse emerged which

presented the new Travellers as dangerous and a threat to public order, and in a way which bears comparison with the medieval pilgrim following the 'Dissolution', the hippies' legitimate status was removed and recast as potentially subversive, thus justifying tough measures taken against them. Moreover, although mild, the term 'hippy' was one which was in opposition to the way in which the 1980s was conceptualised, being symbolic of counter-culturalism, collectivism and hedonism, rather than being the embodiment of self-reliance, self-restraint and 'Victorian values'.

This coincides with the adoption in the press of other names in addition to 'hippies', which unambiguously branded them as a different kind of group with different kinds of behaviour, and implicitly shaped expectations about how people in that deviant role behave, validating prejudice and intolerance towards them.

Thus, early press references particularly around 1985 and 1986, were mainly to 'hippies', and were in connection with their annual attempts to reach Stonehenge in June. For example, the Daily Mirror of 3.6.85 ran the headline '520 hippies pack cells', and the Observer of 5.8.86 'Police victory over hippies'. But in 1986 some newspapers began to vary their terminology. The Guardian of 2.6.86 and 9.6.86 referred to the 'hippy convoy', although the Telegraph of 10.6.86 which reported the attempt to congregate at Stonehenge, referred sceptically to the 'self-styled 'peace convoy". The Guardian's article 'Era of peace dawns at Stonehenge' of 23.6.86 makes reference to "hippy travellers" and later in the same article, simply 'travellers'. In fact, the first reference to "New Age Travellers" appears to have been in the Guardian (Society Tomorrow section), in an article written by John Vidal on 19.8.87 entitled 'Glastonbury comes of age'. The article referred to "pilgrims of the New Age", the "New Age Children" who had come to Glastonbury to celebrate the "New Age of Aquarius". The article noted that the "New Age" tag had only recently been applied to the Travellers, which previously embraced anything from supporters of Greenpeace and the Soil Association, to health 'foodies' and acupuncturists.

By the summer of 1988 several different terms were being used in the press to describe events around Stonehenge over the summer solstice. In the Independent of 13.6.88 an article appeared entitled 'Hippy pilgrims keep right on for Stonehenge". In a Guardian article of 18.6.88, 'Stonehenge convoy clash with police' the terms "convoy travellers", "travellers" and "convoy people" are all used. On the same page, there is an article by Sarah Boseley, based on an interview with photographer Alan Lodge who refers to "... the growing number of New Age Travellers, as they call themselves."

In an article published two days later entitled 'Thinking again in the cold light of day', Bosely again refers to the 'tattered Stonehenge pilgrims', 'ramshackle army', and 'ragged travellers'. In another article on the same day, 'Hippies disperse after dawn battle at stones', the terms "festival travellers", "hippy festival folk", "travellers", and "hippies" are all used. In the Guardian's comment by Jeremy Sandford, reference is to "hippies", and the Telegraph headline of 22.6.88, '67 'hippies' held after Stonehenge solstice clashes' refers to both "hippies" and "travellers". A year later the press coverage of Stonehenge varied its choice of words. An article in the Guardian of 22.6.89 'Police defend stones action' uses the word

"travellers" throughout. An article in the Independent of the same day, '250 hippies held as Stonehenge is blocked off' referred to both "travellers" and "hippies", while the Telegraph also referred to "travellers" and "hippies".

Thus the term 'hippies' remained in common use in the tabloid press up to 1994 but was less prevalent in the broadsheets after 1990, where the term 'New Age Traveller' with other attendant connotations entered general usage. But significantly, there were numerous other labels which began to attach themselves to the Travellers.

b. Travellers as 'Able-Bodied Beggars'

As was discussed in Chapter Two, those who can work but refuse and prefer to rely on the goodwill of those around them have long been seen as a threat, as morally sinning and criminal by the authorities. This feeling was brought to the fore during the 1980s and 90s, when a central pillar of the new Conservative ethos was that of self-reliance, which was supported by the belief that providing state aid only encouraged dependence. As early as June, 1986 headlines such as 'Dole fraud squad tail hippy convoy' (the Sun 4.6.86) were common in tabloid newspapers and elsewhere.

However, it was during the early 1990s at a time of high unemployment, the Community Charge (Poll Tax), negative equity and house repossession due to mortgage defaults, that the image of the merry, roving freeloader became more powerful, as it played on readers' feelings of envy and resentment of the new Travellers' freedom to ignore the increasing number of economic constraints, while at the same time continuing to claim Social Security benefits. Consequently, headlines such as 'Free spirits on the highway of history' in the Guardian of 28.7.92; 'Have a drink on us - say dole spongers' in the Daily Star of 30.7.92, and 'Hippy scroungers must get jobs or starve' in the Sun of 1.8.92 were common subtitles of critical articles, and became more intense in September 1992 following an eviction near the village of Kerry in Wales, and the setting up of a mobile benefit office to make sure the appropriate benefits were received by new Travellers there. On 27.9.92 benefit staff were recorded in the Daily Mail as:

... *handing out claim forms to a few Travellers on site, helping them to fill them in, and paying out benefits.*

This was allegedly carried out at the request of local police. The incident was reported with the headline caption 'Dole staff's field trip to pay hippy hand-outs' and was accompanied by a large photograph of Travellers and their dogs being attended by benefit staff. This seemed to have the effect of outraging public opinion, and on 2.8.92 in the Mail, ministers were said to be: "... determined to prevent social security officers being held to ransom" and announced a special force to build up a history of their claims. On 2.8.92 the Independent published an article entitled 'New age travellers face dole crackdown' reporting tight new controls on benefit claims by the new Travellers. It claimed:

The move was hastily announced in response to the wave of protests by M.P.s which came

after Social Security staff handed out claim forms to a Traveller at an illegal camp at Kerry, Powys, last week. John Major made it clear to Ministers earlier this week that he wanted urgent action on the issue.

The issue of social security benefits was keenly exploited in headlines such as 'Arrogant spongers' in the Daily Express of 18.8.92. Soon afterwards, in the Daily Telegraph of 8.10.92, in an article on the Conservative Party conference headed 'The something for nothing society', it was reported that Peter Lilley

... won rapturous applause from Tory representatives for an uncompromising assault on the so-called New Age Travellers, whose benefit claims earlier this year led to the introduction of tougher regulations. Mr. Lilley said: *Most people were sickened as I was by the sight of these spongers descending like locusts, demanding benefits with menaces. We are not in the business of subsidising scroungers.*

In the Mail on Sunday of 12.5.93 nearly a year after the Kerry incident, the issue of Traveller fraud emerged again. An article with the title 'Why do we put up with the welfare state cheats?' discusses the general problem of social security fraud. Readers are assured that the 'dole staff' are still handing out the dole cheques to minicab drivers, one-parent families, and building workers as well as new Travellers. However, a closer examination shows the picture of New Age Travellers accompanying the article is the same as the one used on 29.9.92. The effect is to reinforce the stereotypical image of Travellers as fraudsters, and builds on the old stereotype of the 'sturdy beggar' who feigns poverty, and is therefore undeserving, on which much of the police concern and public opinion is centred. This comes without any reference to the current story, or any mention of the fact that claiming benefit had been made even more difficult for Travellers during the previous 9 months.

The apparent ease and satisfaction which the Traveller lifestyle provided, and the conspicuous rejection of more conventional ways of sedentary society at a time of high unemployment, negative equity, Poll Tax etc. could explain increased mixed public feelings of envy, resentment and anger. The feeling of resentment finds expression over the issue of benefits provided to the new Travellers from income generated by the taxpayer. It is therefore unsurprising that there was a steady stream of articles throughout the 1990s which drew attention to groups of young people who had allegedly turned their backs on society, and as such had no right to be in receipt of benefits. Articles made no mention of the harsh realities of the nomadic lifestyle and difficulty of depending on seasonal work, or the difficulties faced by the increasing numbers who were being forced into taking to the road. But the new Travellers were cast as undeserving freeloaders who were 'parasitic', since they were not independent but supported by the taxpayer, which was in opposition to the government's desire to promote a society based not on community, but self-reliance.

c. Travellers as 'Agents of Pollution'

The association of nomads with dirt is long-standing. As was argued in Chapters Two and Three, in a spatially organised and sedentary society, the nomad is seen as out of place, and

this is often represented in terms of 'dirt' in the sense that, as Douglas (1966) argues, dirt emphasises difference, otherness, disorderliness, degeneracy, and a disregard for clean, orderly civilised society. She emphasises the way in which those who are described as 'unclean' are different to the rest of society, and therefore 'matter out of place' which needs reordering to avoid contamination. Applying this to the new Travellers, McKay (1996:66) comments succinctly that:

Dirt is a signifier of difference, of outsiderness for Travellers and other marginal groups...

One of the most prominent characteristics attributed to new Travellers was dirt, disease and a lack of hygiene.[9] Headlines such as 'Bath time' in the Independent Magazine of 26.10.91, 'Order of the bath' in the Daily Express of 1.8.92, 'My filthy life with the new age travellers' in Today of 18.8.92, 'My new age life of grime' in the Sunday Express of 16.5.93, and 'New age hovellers' in the News of the World of 6.6.93 are some typically found in national newspapers of the time. For example, the front page headline of the Daily Star of 1.6.93 cried: '£1 million wasted on scum' and went on to talk of "unwashed scroungers" and demand that:

Instead of DSS officials meekly handing out cash, the scum army should be told they can openly collect in John O'Groats... after crawling on broken glass.

In many articles and pictures the predominant image is of squalid, filthy encampments where Travellers show disrespect for the environment, apparently in contradiction of their protective, nurturing ethos towards it. In this way there is a constructed secondary image of Travellers as hypocrites, which make it more difficult for the public to take seriously any attempt to draw attention to issues felt to be of environmental importance. At the same time, the sedentary, non-Traveller society is implicitly described as clean, civilised and orderly / ordered. But it is this otherness, this symbolic opposition which helps to justify the intervention by the authorities and the agents of social control. As with the Gypsies and the Jews over the centuries, the imagery which was attached to them created the feeling they had to be policed and controlled - a response to the fear that the Travellers may stay and pollute the local community and countryside.

The threat of the new Travellers was not only of physical pollution, but of moral pollution too. They were frequently said to threaten families through their potential to attract new members and remove them from the domestic unit, implicitly placing them in moral danger (though the exact nature of this was not usually specified). In this context, the Travellers may be seen as a danger to youth and a cause of parental anxiety. This fear was exploited particularly during 1992 and 1993, by which time many had become Travellers not because they wanted to, but because it was preferable to the alternative of rough sleeping or living in gruesome bed-sits or lodgings, as is shown in Chapter Five of this study. But rather than recognise this new development, the Conservative press seemed content with a traditional narrative about the way in which Travellers can break up families.

An article in the Daily Mail of 8.6.93 is entitled 'A mother describes the anguish of seeing her daughter become a drop out'. Although the article is quite sympathetic in tone, the mother

accepts that her daughter's association with 'New Age Travellers' is dysfunctional, and may be traced back to earlier problems at school. Similar headlines include: 'Did I fail the son I lost to the new age travellers?' in the Mail on Sunday of 2.8.92; 'Save my kids from the new age pigs' in the Daily Star of 1.8.92; 'Is it romantic to run away?' in the Daily Telegraph of 14.8.92; 'Just why did Sarah become a new age traveller?' in the Daily Mail of 20.2.93; 'Sarah's tragic travels' in the Daily Mail of 20.2.93; and 'My lovely daughter is a rolling stone' in the Independent of 3.5.93. The theme of the threat to youth even extended to the Radio 4 series 'The Archers' in 1994, which included a storyline where Kate, the daughter of one of the protagonists, disappears from home to join up with 'New Age Travellers'. As with many newspaper articles, the main story focussed on the worry of the middle-class mother over the safety of her daughter, and brought her anxiety into millions of listeners' homes.

d. Travellers as a 'Mobile Threat'

The image of a roving wanderer, a danger to property and complacency has long been seen as a threat to sedentary society, and as was shown in Chapter Two, governments have attempted to regulate it since the earliest times. Curiosity about its causes led early sociologists to speculate about its basis, and in the 1890s the German sociologist Georg Simmel observed public fear of the stranger who *comes today and stays tomorrow*, and who may as a consequence bring about change in the community (Simmel, 1971:143).

In the 20th century, itinerancy has frequently been seen as the product of individual failure, and requiring intervention either through punishment, medicine or social work. Consequently, the same fears and suspicions of itinerants have continued to inform public opinion, and perhaps as a result of increasingly sedentary society, have become even more pronounced. However, such a view is largely the product of sedentarist prejudice, and it was precisely this type of prejudice and fear which the Tory press were able to play on with their imagery, by presenting Travellers' mobility as threatening. They were mobile, but they had no legitimacy in the sense that they were not work-seeking, therefore what could they want? The imagery is intensified and made more threatening by using expressions to describe new Travellers not only as mobile, but also as potential invaders; dangerous, hostile raiders who would rob and pollute.

Throughout the research period there were frequent mentions of the new Travellers in this way, but the earliest reference can be traced to 1986 when the then Home Secretary Douglas Hurd described Travellers as 'medieval brigands', and was widely quoted in the Sun and elsewhere of 3.6.86. The imagery is potent, evoking an image of primitive bandits or robbers whose mobility, like pirates on the high seas, makes them a law unto themselves, i.e. beyond the reach and the jurisdiction of any local authority, and therefore lawless.

The power of such images is enhanced when they are linked to festivals, and the threat of disorder among the crowd there. Its potential instability and volatility has long been considered as a potential threat to social order, and it is interesting to observe how those who are mobile and constitute a threat have come to be referred to as a 'mob'.[10] McClelland (1989:1) describes the 'mob' as a crowd that has come to present a direct, rather than a

potential challenge to law and order, and perhaps unsurprisingly, references to the new Travellers as a 'mob' were common in the press, along with imagery which included battles, attacks, invading armies, hordes, and even a Trojan horse. Some early examples could be seen in the press after the notorious 'Battle of the Beanfield' and the wrecking of Traveller homes by Hampshire and Wiltshire Police on 1.6.85. This was an early, high-profile incident involving Travellers, and afterwards the following headlines appeared in the daily newspapers: 'Battle of peace convoy' in the Times, 'The Battle of Stonehenge' in the Daily Telegraph, and 'Stonehenge hippies attack police' in the Daily Mail.

The tendency to report the Travellers in the same way continued in press stories after the summer festivals in 1992. Following the event at Castlemorton, the Sunday Times (31.5.92) described it graphically:

West Mercia (police force) *was caught totally unprepared for the arrival of the numerical equivalent of two motorised army divisions complete with flying flags and beating drums, and followed by packs of dogs.*

Headlines such as 'Hippy mob's £1m rampage' in the Daily Mail of 10.8.92, and 'Campaign braces for hippy invasion threat' in the Guardian of 30.4.93 also give the impression of war-like hordes which create public anxiety and implicitly justify military action. Similarly with headlines such as 'Campaign braces for hippy invasion threat' in the Guardian of 30.4.93, 'Stonehenge police battle' the Observer of 6.6.93, 'Misery march of the high-tech hippy army' in the Mail on Sunday of 6.6.93, 'Trojan horse gets travellers past gates' in the Independent of 26.6.93, and 'A last ditch stand' in the Daily Mail of 9.11.93. Such expressions are clearly emotive, and evoke in the public mind an invasion by a hostile force.

e. Combined Imagery

These categories were not mutually exclusive in the ways the expression were used in headlines and articles. Thus it was sometimes possible to see examples of crossover expressions where a combination of images was used to vividly illustrate the alterity of the new Travellers, for example in the following three expressions from the Daily Star: 'Scum Army' (Star, 1.6.93) = vile agents of pollution who are mobile, organised and aggressive; 'Unwashed Scroungers' (Star, 1.6.93) = agents of pollution who do not deserve help; 'Sponging Scum - Invasion of the giro gypsies' (Star, 29.7.92) = an attack by vile, undeserving 'others' who are invading and polluting the pure community.

Through their choice and use of metaphor, these and other headlines serve to evoke in the readers' minds the idea of an invasion by a marauding army, presenting a physical threat to the region. They suggest a 'siege mentality' which implicitly justifies the methods used by the police against them. But many articles did not only consist of colourful and emotive language. On occasions they were supported by dramatic photographs, showing dirty, dishevelled Travellers, or Travellers dressed in carnival / festival clothes. They are selected to complement the text and reinforce the idea that here are people who are not like the reader, who do not share their ways; aliens in other words, who are close to being labelled as sub-human, and

against whom strong measures can be justified. Thus, physical attacks on Travellers and ensuing casualties may be justified, and similarly with the nature and extent of the police measures used to 'resist' them in the 'defence' of local communities.

4. Redressing the Balance

The moralising of the Tory government under John Major, and the elaboration of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill and the wide sweep of measures it contained threatened a spectrum of interests, and the proposals were critically examined in a variety of publications. Public opinion began to turn against the government, a new, 'd.i.y. culture' was in the ascendancy, and new forms of contemporary protest appeared which began to challenge media stereotypes (Purdue et al., 1997; Earle, 1994). This development was gradually reflected in the mainstream press coverage of the new Travellers. For example, around 1993 following some 10 years coverage, some broadsheet newspapers began to publish articles which either supported the new Travellers' case, or simply offered unbiased, impartial information within the context of a debate on the implications of the Bill, such as the Times Educational Supplement with its feature on the education of Traveller children (18.12.92); the Guardian with 'Travellers - five centuries of wandering' in (15.6.93), and the Observer with 'An everyday story of country hatred' on the daily difficulties of living on the road (14.11.93). Similarly, many specialist magazines not normally associated with the topic also began to publish occasional articles related to Traveller matters. These included mainstream and popular journals, as well as professional and other titles representing a diverse range of interests, for example Nursing Times (18.8.93), Nursery World (25.11.93), Community Care (29.4.93), Inside Housing (29.4.94). Many of the views expressed were not a predictable and polarised set of opinions on Travellers, but a diverse range of accounts, portraying them not just as a social problem, but as a social phenomenon. Impartial, objectively written articles written to promote an understanding of the kinds of problems faced by Travellers.

However, perhaps the most influential factor which contributed to the gradual contesting of a single, 'official' view of the new Travellers was the appearance of cheap, DIY home-publishing, and the production of popular journals and quasi-political publications written by support groups and the new Travellers themselves, such as 'Squall', 'SchnNEWS', 'Frontline', 'Festival Eye', 'Greenleaf' and the 'Stonehenge Campaign Newsletter'. Even though they were frequently short-lived, publications such as these provided a network of information and support, particularly regarding how the Travellers represented themselves and their problems to their own communities, as well as to those outside.

5. Concluding Remarks

After winning the 1983 election with an increased majority the Tory government set about attempting to re-establish the authority of the state. This was achieved partly through greater assertiveness in its criminal justice policy, where there was a general shift towards implementing authoritarian solutions (Norrie and Adelman, 1989:115) to deal specifically with those Thatcher called the 'enemy within', i.e. those groups who were seen as oppositional, such as the miners, trade unionists, students, the unemployed, football hooligans and black

youth, who with the help of the tabloid press, were all identified as 'folk devils' (Brake and Hale, 1989; Hall, 1983; Scraton, 1987).

For Brake and Hale (1989:140) the rhetoric of law and order "tacitly legitimated" attacks on those outside "respectable life", and in this way threats to the state by an 'enemy within' were readily represented as threats to society and the individual. Thatcher confidently began to take on her adversaries using harsh and often violent measures, and the new Travellers of the mid-1980s were the latest in this line, for many complex reasons which are explored throughout this study, but which in the mid-1980s could be summarised as a general failure to conform to the social, economic and cultural expectations of the Thatcherite agenda. The result was a 'traveller offensive' by the authorities between 1984 and 1986, which was complemented by the creation of an anti-Traveller narrative in certain sections of the media that sought to justify police action and vilify the Travellers.

Although the new Travellers largely disappeared from the press after 1986, the techniques and processes of news production meant that a full battery of labels, vocabulary, and narrative had been prepared and set ready for future incidents, which lay as if in hibernation until the early 1990s, when there were fresh reports of confrontations and anti-traveller narratives grew more hostile and intense. At that time there was certainly a number of new risks which seemed to threaten the public, such as high levels of unemployment, riots, an increasing drug problem, the erosion of welfare benefits, and increasing levels of crime and tension in both urban and rural areas, all of which might have been deserving of equal amounts of official attention, yet were not. Instead, newspaper reports echoed the fear and loathing of vagrants in earlier centuries, with vivid descriptions of new incidents which brought to the public mind a series of 'respectable' fears of new Travellers as 'hippies', 'beggars', and 'agents of pollution' who were, moreover, mobile and therefore could come to endanger the well-being of the settled community at any time. These ways of describing the new Travellers bear a notable similarity to the ways in which vagrants have been described since the earliest times, and in this way, during the early 1990s a debate on protecting the public from Travellers could be presented as more urgent than other social issues, such as the failure of public provision for housing, jobs, social security, the need for temporary sites, and so on.

However, around 1993 a change occurred in the power of the press to dictate the narrative. The publishing of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill and the implications it had for the curtailment of freedoms enjoyed by minorities of all kinds, led to the development of new alliances and the pursuit of new initiatives, as the DIY culture and assorted pressure groups began to challenge the power of the "traditional moral guardians" represented by the government, police, politicians and others (McRobbie, 1995). An expansion of the media and increasing access to DIY publishing allowed more participants to enter the public debate to support and defend Traveller interests, both in the mass media as well as in other 'niche' media. This indicates a shift in the power of the press to dictate the narrative on new Travellers to a more even contest to negotiate control. Nevertheless, between 1991 and 1993 there was clear evidence of press hysteria over their actions, and the next chapter will compare media descriptions with the reality I was able to experience through my encounters with new Travellers living on site.

Notes

[1] "Once it's in the clippings, you'll never weed it out" is a press industry saying.

[2] This was especially so in the highly centralised media of the 1980s and early 1990s. However, the situation began to change around 1993 with a greater diversification of the media and of political viewpoints. This point is discussed in the concluding part of this Chapter, as well as in Chapter Seven.

[3] Discussed in this Chapter and in Chapter Six.

[4] The Beanfield eviction was also the subject of a Channel 4 documentary 'Operation Solstice'. It was also the subject of a long-running court case in which 24 Travellers won an appeal for wrongful arrest, assault and damage to property in 1991.

[5] Cardigan successfully sued the Times, Telegraph, Express and Mirror for claiming he had made false allegations to the police, receiving a cheque and written apology in return.

[6] Known to police as 'Operation Nomad'.

[7] The 1986 Public Order Act contained a significant clause banning vehicles from travelling in a convoy or parking on land in groups of more than 12 vehicles. The aim was to prevent the holding of illegal festivals.

[8] The 'Poll Tax' was officially known as the Community Charge, which was later recast as the Council Tax.

[9] This was also corroborated in a study by Heatherington (2000:177) who studied negative local responses to the Travellers by measuring the frequency of a number of keywords in letters to local newspapers in the Salisbury area near Stonehenge, between 1975 and 1990. It was found that 'invasion', 'crime' and 'dirt' occurred the most frequently, with 'crime' ahead by only one occurrence.

[10] The word 'mob' is an abbreviation of 'mobile', derived from *mobile vulgus*, or 'mobile crowd'. (Oxford Reference Dictionary, 1986, Oxford: OUP).

Chapter 5

The New Travellers: a Case of Mistaken Identities?

1. Introduction

The social definition of a person or groups is a sensitive issue, especially when they have suffered from stigma due to the way they are represented in the media. In the case of deviant labels, for example 'dirty scrounging hippies' or 'medieval brigands', the descriptive term can acquire the status of a default assumption, in other words, unless there is any evidence that the opposite is the case, then negative terms or definitions come to represent an established way of seeing a person, and all aspects of their lives can be characterised as deviant. As Becker wrote:

Possession of one deviant trait may have a generalised symbolic value, so that people automatically assume that its bearer possesses other undesirable traits allegedly associated with it. (Becker, 1963:33)

In previous chapters it has been shown how sections of the media frequently made negative assumptions and commentaries on the new Travellers' way of life, usually in an attempt to make political capital. But the concepts which informed media reports, the official responses of the government or police spokesmen, never attempted to understand or describe the daily realities of life on the road, or why people choose to live this way. To show how these differed from the rhetoric, in this chapter I will describe some of the most significant elements of the new Traveller way of living. These were found not to be constant but varied over time, and were subject to significant internal differentiation. Motivations for becoming a Traveller also changed, often in response to changing economic conditions. This is not to suggest that all elements of the early scene disappeared, but simply that new elements were added. What emerges most clearly is that the features which characterised it during its early phase from 1974-85 were in many instances quite different from those which came to characterise it subsequently.

Press reporting played a significant role in the evolution of the lifestyle. Early reports introduced the new Travellers as an anti-social and dangerous subculture, which implicitly justified harsh measures against them. This seems to have later created an amplification of deviancy, in which others joined the Traveller scene to play out an aggressive, oppositional role. This led to further negative publicity, more harassment, and a dangerous reduction of facilities. The consequences were found to be most severe for women and young children, causing suffering and distress, particularly in the areas of health and education, as well as being a frequent source of conflict between travellers of all kinds.

2. Locations and Sites

From the mid-1970s to the early 1980s new Travellers were not confined to a particular geographic region, although some of the most frequented areas tended to be in the Welsh borders, Hereford and Worcester, Kent, Avon, Hampshire and Wiltshire. The nearby location of Stonehenge and other sacred sites such as Glastonbury Tor and Avebury with their 'New Age' cultural appeal, the local agriculture with the possibility of earning extra income through fruit-picking, as well as a more favourable climate, all attracted new Travellers to the area. Once there, Travellers tended to live in places where they would not be harassed, and this meant parking in places where their visibility was low and unlikely to attract the attention of passers-by. The most favoured areas for establishing a camp were the green lanes which had traditionally been used by travelling people in the past, such as ancient by-ways used by farmers, dog walkers and horse riders.[1] Similarly, land used for rural recreation was another favoured location, as were disused quarries and lay-bys close to authorised sites. An ideal site would also be within easy reach of shops, a water and fuel supply, and perhaps medical facilities, depending on whether or not the Travellers had young children or pregnant women in the group. Safety was an important consideration, and an ideal site would be large enough to accommodate perhaps 20 or more vehicles, which offered safety in numbers for those concerned.[2]

But following the association of the new Travellers with the anti-nuclear policies of CND and the peace camps at Greenham Common, Molesworth, Sizewell, and elsewhere in the early 1980s, and the government's determination to quickly evict them from wherever they were found, suitable sites became increasingly difficult to find. A strengthening of police powers contained in the s.39 of the Public Order Act 1986 gave the police power to direct trespassers to leave if they damaged the land itself (as distinct from the property on it), or if Traveller groups had six or more vehicles on site. The section also extended to common land, highway verges, byways, green lanes and other minor highways, as well as including new police powers to remove vehicles. Its effects were immediate, as after its introduction many lanes and secluded spots were subject to police patrols and to the new laws of obstruction, which made it more difficult to find suitable places to park.

As was shown in Chapter Three, a relaxation of the planning laws and the consequent development of areas of the countryside which had once been protected, further limited possibilities of finding suitable sites. As land values rose, new owners rigorously enforced their rights as owners. Similarly, rural land which was previously unused often came to be exploited for recreation purposes, for example pony trekking, golf and mountain biking, and in such areas the owners tended to enforce evictions swiftly and mercilessly. In the cities too, an increasing spread and enforcement of parking restrictions also made it difficult to park up large vehicles on a temporary basis.

An alternative to official sites or temporary illegal ones was the offer of a park-up on private land. This was usually for the purpose of work nearby, for example fruit picking,

or perhaps to offer services in connection with a fair or show. Some made private arrangements with landowners who wanted or needed them; others had access to land owned by friends or family. But as it became more difficult to find legal parking spaces, there was increasing competition for these places. An example of the variety of unsuitable sites is provided by a Traveller working on a mobile school bus, who cited some 26 different sites on which she worked in 1990. These were described as follows: 6 areas of common land, 6 green lanes, 4 disused airfields, 3 areas awaiting development, 1 verge area, 1 commercial festival, 1 council owned recreation area, 1 farmer's field with permission, 1 farmer's field without permission, 1 national conference site, 1 field under disputed ownership (Earle, 1994:68). In other words, there was all manner of unsuitable sites, from where families could have been evicted at virtually any time.

3. The New Traveller Economy

Secure and relatively permanent sites were important for the Traveller economy, which allowed efforts to be directed towards income generating activities, rather than living on site on a temporary and insecure basis. Yet from around 1986 and especially after 1991, the government and media frequently referred to scrounging, idleness and social security dependence among new Travellers,[3] for example at the Tory Party Conference in 1992, Peter Lilley likened Travellers to locusts "*who descend to demand benefits with menaces*"[4]. It will therefore be useful to review the characteristic occupations of travellers in order to show how manifestations of economic life differed from the negative stereotype, which is important because the official and public response was largely conditioned by the mythology.

While it would be impossible to deny that social security payments were a source for some travellers, they were rarely the only source. Many of those going on the road in the early years report that they wanted to live independently of the state, and their own skills and trades allowed them to do this, primarily through selling their goods and services at festivals. But the loss of Stonehenge in 1984 as well as other events, made it more difficult for Travellers to be self-sufficient. Social security payments were a source of income for some Travellers, but rarely the sole source, especially following changes in the benefit system from 1985 and 1988[5], which made it much more difficult to qualify for payments. Most I spoke to wanted to be economically independent, and some of the long-term Travellers who had been on the road since the 1970s were attracted to the lifestyle for the opportunity to be independent, but in recent years had felt forced into accepting the benefits to which they were entitled. Naturally, the level of benefits paid out was far less than for unemployed house-dwellers, as they didn't include housing benefit, and although some new Travellers popularly known as 'Crusties'[6] were less interested in the idea of independence and self-sufficiency than to get as much out of the benefit system as possible, they were very much a minority.

To give an impression of the different ways new Travellers earned a living, in this section I will follow Okely's (1983) classification of English "Traveller Gypsy" occupations, where

commercial activities are grouped into three categories: production and sale of goods, services, and seasonal labour. These are not exclusive, and frequently overlap. Two more points may be emphasised; firstly, that some activities could be carried out only periodically, while others were practised more or less continuously. Furthermore, by retaining a certain degree of autonomy, Travellers were much less affected by the traditional divisions which have limited work opportunities in settled society, for example between different types of occupation, between formal education and work, between workplace and home and to a lesser extent, between the economic roles of men and women.

a. Production and Sale of Goods and Services

In contrast to other subjects about which Travellers were willing to talk, the ones I spoke to seemed more reticent and cautious when speaking about income, and it seemed wise not to probe too deeply, just as in wider society. But those I spoke to left me with the impression that Travellers have several sources of income, one substituting for the other, depending on circumstances (for details of the sample, see Appendices).

Sources of income were manifold, ranging from legal paid employment to illegal activities. Adaptability seems to be a general characteristic, and most engaged in modes of employment recognised by settled society, trying to find new economic niches as and when there was an opportunity. But the traditional mainstay of Traveller income was the free festivals, which constituted an informal market for the sale of goods and services, both home-made and acquired. These could also be traded at the 'medieval' fairs, which became a significant addition to the festival scene in the mid-70s, and included crafts, pottery, sculpting, decorating, music making and ethnic crafts. These are all activities which can be carried out easily in a small space with a minimum of equipment at any time of the year. On one visit to a group of Travellers I sat in a trailer watching the careful painting of small figures such as dragons and camels, as well as other pieces of small jewellery, which were to be sold at a forthcoming event.[7] Moreover, it is the type of activity which children can freely participate in, and was typical of many site activities in which children become interested and involved at an early age, thus providing another source of income.

Another source was the sale of illegal drugs, but the majority of Traveller Informants I spoke to emphasised that soft drugs such as marijuana and ecstasy were the most common. However, while drug dealers were present on some sites, Travellers I spoke to agreed that their 'customers' approached them, unlike in some urban situations where 'customers' are approached or recruited, for example in pubs and clubs. This pattern of dealing left me with the impression that a need was supplied, rather than one being created in the first place. Those I spoke to commented that drugs were mainly used for personal consumption and not generally a source of income. It would be wrong to suggest that hard drugs such as heroin, crack and cocaine were never used, but my conviction is that it would be wrong to see hard drugs as an integral part of the Traveller lifestyle. I was told by one long-term Traveller (Traveller Key Informant 2) that she did not

take drugs, and commented that during the self-policing of some festivals such as in the early years of Stonehenge, drug dealers had been forced to leave by other Travellers on site. Another informant emphasised how much the scene had changed in this respect:

At one time smack wasn't tolerated on the road at all. Certainly on festival sites, if anyone was selling or even using it, they were put off site straight away. Heroin, the great escape to oblivion, found the younger elements of a fractured community prone to its clutches and its use spread like myxamatosis... Traveller families were forced to vacate sites that became 'dirty', and that further destabilised what were already becoming divided communities. Heroin is something that breaks up a community because people become so self-contained that they don't give a damn about their neighbours. (TKI 5)

Some of the most commonly provided services consisted mainly of traditional craft skills and folk entertainments, such as busking, circus acts, clowning etc., as well as the sale of vehicle parts, pots, jewellery, and clothing, along with cafes, showers, massages and body decoration. Dealing in scrap metal, which had been the mainstay of Gypsies and others for many years, was said to be a relatively scarce activity among new Travellers, due to the introduction of legislation which limited the transport of scrap to specially licensed vehicles.

The larger, more commercial festivals required a massive crew on-site to erect fences, dig trenches, distribute bins, set up communications etc. Electrical and mechanical skills, joinery, welding were also necessary for the erection of stages, while other support staff such as kitchen staff, field organisers, and litter-pickers to clear up afterwards, and all these activities provided opportunities for new Travellers to earn a living. But after the 'dissolution' of Stonehenge in 1984 it became more difficult to make a living in traditional ways, and the mechanisation of agricultural work in the post-war period had left few opportunities for seasonal labour. Where opportunities existed, they were often taken by urban gangs who could be brought out in buses from the towns. They did not require local accommodation, unlike the Travellers who needed a place to temporarily park up near the fields, and for the reasons discussed earlier in Chapter Three, these were proving difficult to obtain.

The sources of income described above are not exhaustive, but comprise those which were the most profitable and among the most commonly found. The salient characteristics are autonomy and flexibility; they allowed independence and freedom of movement, as well as variety. However, due to changes in the law, changes in attitudes towards travellers, as well as changes in the countryside, the scene became more restricted and many of these opportunities disappeared.

b. Consumption

i) The Traveller Home

As was shown in Chapters Two and Four, during the 20th century itinerancy has frequently been seen as deviant; a product of individual failure which required intervention and regulation either through punishment, medicine or social work. It was also shown how such a view is largely the product of sedentarist prejudice, and how, as a consequence of an increasingly sedentary society, these prejudices have become even more pronounced. It was further shown in Chapter Four how the Tory press were able to play on precisely this type of prejudice and fear by presenting Travellers' mobility as threatening.

However, a closer examination reveals that most Travellers were mobile only for short periods, and often preferred to be stationary. Until 1985 the free festival circuit had provided the economic backbone of the scene. The three most important times were the May bank holiday, the Solstice and the August bank holiday. Without the need for advertising, travellers knew that on these dates a festival would be in progress, and those in between gave a chance to go from on to another, over the whole summer. Travelling on the road in a convoy was a means to reach a festival, and once there they could remain parked for a month or more, while over the winter months, spending perhaps 3-4 months parked up was not unusual among Travellers of the late 1970s to mid-80s. The vehicle or trailer thus became a home on wheels.

This contrasted with the earlier context of festivals in Britain in the mid-1970s, when ordinary cars and vans were the main forms of transport, with camper vans and tents providing basic accommodation and shelter for the duration of the festival. Afterwards, festival goers and those involved in its organisation generally went home. But as festivals became more widespread, there was an increasing opportunity to stay 'on the road' for longer periods. There was also a need on the part of the organisers to move sound gear, stages, stalls other equipment from one festival to another, as well as the need for somewhere to live, preferably in an independent, self-sufficient way between festivals. These factors all contributed to the need for larger vehicles which would serve not only as a temporary refuge, but as a home, meeting the needs not only of single individuals, but groups of friends, couples and families.

The kinds of vehicles preferred by Travellers varied. Bigger, more practical forms of transport such as old buses and lorries were popular, together with makeshift tents known as 'benders', or for more long-term use the 'tipi' was sometimes preferred (Garrard, 1986a; 1986b), and when parked or on the move, the ensemble could give the impression of some strange 'festival army'. Large vehicles could of course, be very expensive, but during the mid-1970s economic circumstances combined to make many large, old and often eccentric looking vehicles widely available at very low prices. Firstly, following the oil crisis of 1973-74 and a sharp increase in petrol prices, older vehicles such as buses, ambulances and lorries in the transport fleets of local authorities, nationalised industries and private transport companies were deemed uneconomic, and were often sold off in lots at vehicle auctions or in private sales around the country. This coincided with the establishing of several large government agencies, notably the British Waterways Board (1968), the County Councils (1974), the District Councils

(1974) and the National Park Authorities (1974), who required modern fleets painted in corporate colours and adorned with a logo to project their new corporate identity.[8] In 1979 there was a second period of price rises, as an oil producers' cartel raised the price by 50% between January and June. Older, uneconomic fleet vehicles were seen as a liability, and were either scrapped or sold quickly and cheaply to private buyers.

Another reason why companies were keen to dispose of their aging fleets was that the price of new vehicles had fallen in real terms. Production costs were lower, as more journeys were made along smooth motorways instead of twisting, bumpy country roads, so new vehicles did not need to be built so robustly. Taking out a loan to purchase a vehicle also made economic sense in a time of inflation. Moreover, as the MoT test became progressively stricter, the value of many older vehicles further decreased, as they were no longer economic to repair. A further incentive to buy such a vehicle was that an MoT certificate did not use to be necessary for vehicles over 30 cwt. which were used for living in, i.e. mobile homes. Finally, the law relating to licences for public service vehicles allowed those who had already held a full driving licence for some years to drive a bus without having to take a PSV test, until the introduction of a driving test for such vehicles in the mid-1980s.[9]

Consequently, in the 'sell off' of dated company fleets, a tough and characterful 1950s Bedford van or Leyland bus could be bought privately or at auction houses around the country, driven away and adapted for living in full-time for as little as £300 or less in 1974, and large old vehicles such as buses, lorries, ambulances and vans were acquired, adapted and driven cheaply and easily, which helped define and facilitate the lifestyle for the first 'wave' of Travellers in the 1970s and early 80s. Similarly with aging trailers, which could be bought for comparable amounts in the mid-late 1970s. However, the rarity and unusual style of such vehicles served to increase their visibility, which was further heightened by, for example, the tendency to board up the rear and side windows, and adorn vehicles with 'new age' psychedelic paint and decorative symbols and logos, which readily identified their owners. [10]

Vehicles usually travelled and parked up in large groups, but following the introduction of the Public Order Act (1986) legislation the number of mobile homes travelling together tended to get smaller, as this enabled them to park up with lower visibility on unofficial sites, as well allowing more possibilities to find a place on official ones, which many Travellers were reluctant to do, and which in any case had become extremely scarce. But it was also a potential source of friction which sometimes created divisions between new Travellers, when a larger group was approached by a smaller group, since the former sometimes feared they may be evicted from an unofficial site when the group exceeded six vehicles.[11] The Act also created a trend towards a more anonymous looking vehicles, e.g. lorries and transit vans, which were less conspicuous than multicoloured buses when parked in either town or country. Transport and home also tended to be separate, for example using a van and a caravan instead of a combined unit such as a bus, as if the latter broke down, or an eviction was served in the middle of repairs, both the home and vehicle might be lost.

It was sometimes suggested by the authorities and media that Travellers deserved to lose their vehicles, as they did not possess insurance, an MoT certificate or tax for them.[12] Visiting sites in good weather among a sprawl of trailers I could often see vehicles being serviced and repaired, and asking about them or offering help was a ready way to engage in conversation. Several I spoke to said that in the past they had not always obtained the relevant documents because the vehicles were their homes, and were only used for relatively short journeys to festival sites. Moreover, they did not have enough money as they were refused benefits they felt they should be entitled to. However, with increasing police vigilance and threats to impound vehicles for minor infractions, most of the vehicles I could see were at least taxed, probably indicating that the owners had been in recent possession of other necessary legal documents.

ii) Possessions

During the 1970s negative images began to attach themselves to homeless groups, when there was a separation of 'dossers', 'squatters', 'travellers' were contrasted with 'deserving homeless people' at a time when charities were promoting the idea of a deserving single homeless person as being someone who was 'down and out' (Brown, 1981). With regard to the new Travellers, because the charities had earlier promoted the idea that a deserving homeless person was a 'down and out' with little or no education, let alone a vehicle or personal property, Travellers were not considered by the Tory government or right-wing press to be either homeless or deserving. The observation that Travellers on illegal stopping places did not pay rates, could for example be connected with the fact that they might possess a television or other electrical goods. This clearly conflicts with the projection of new Travellers as deprived or deserving, which goes some way to explaining and supporting the negative popular and official reactions to them.

The presence or absence of non-essential goods is of limited significance when assessing wealth in the Traveller community, but material possessions do contribute to the formation of stereotypes. Because new Travellers did not appear to work for a living or, at best, because their way of life was stigmatised as parasitic, any expressions of affluence lend support to a view of Travellers as scroungers, or whose sources of income are of doubtful legality. However, while on sites I noticed that most had little in the way of material goods.

For example, colour television was quite rare and it was necessary to have a portable generator to run it, unless the owner was on a permanent site where electricity was available. Small sets, music systems and/or a radio run on batteries or from the car battery were not uncommon, and similarly with musical instruments.

iii) Domestic Work

In spite of frequent allegations of laziness amongst new Travellers, it seemed to me that for those aiming to be independent and self-sufficient, from sunrise to well after sunset, there was a lot of work being done on site. Fetching water supplies, doing housework, wood collecting and chopping, cleaning, cooking, and looking after children were all everyday tasks, and caring for and restoring older vehicles was a full-time job, with help often being given by those with other skills, such as carpentry, welding and electrical skills, bodywork and painting specialists etc. Dispensing with mechanics and garages was consistent with the objective of minimising dependence on mainstream society. It is also economically sensible, as those on low and irregular incomes could not afford garage charges.

One of the positive aspects of this was that children were able to take part in many household activities, learning how to do things as they grew, helping their parents or other families. In one interview with a group of women Travellers on site, they expressed the unanimous view that they did most of the work, while the men sat around drinking and talking. This was particularly the case with those who had joined the scene in the late 1980s, when there was a sharp increase in homelessness and in the numbers of male travellers unable to look after themselves, many of whom were suffering from addictions and depression, and it is to health issues I will now turn.

4. Health

The health risks associated with living on the road are a widely ignored area of research, and are patchy and ill-understood in comparison with the mainstream health issues of settled communities. Most studies have been concerned with traditional travelling communities, but the risks associated with new Travellers have been subject to relatively little investigation[13] . However, findings were generally confirmed in conversations I had with health service practitioners, members of support groups, and long-term Travellers. These can be summarised by saying that in the 1980s and 90s a delicate ecology characterised the new Traveller lifestyle, and when this was disturbed, those who suffered most were women and children. The effects on health which living on the road may have, can be divided into two categories as follows; greater risks, and greater difficulty in accessing remedies.

a. Risks

Stopping places for the new Travellers became increasingly hard to find, it was necessary to resort to sites which were often dangerous, e.g. alongside refuse tips, busy main roads, and land subject to flooding and contamination. Travellers near tips often suffered from eczema and asthma, made worse by a lifestyle in damp conditions, and conditions such as scabies and impetigo, lice and fleas were common (Hawes, 1997:37). Even the local authority sites can be subject to poor environmental conditions. Inadequate sites are often unsuitable places for food preparation, and poor

diet leads to a lack of nutrition, lower resistance to illness, and in the case of mothers with babies, low breast milk. The presence of dogs on site runs a further risk of infection, when the dogs are in the proximity of food preparation areas, and children are playing in areas where fleas and excrement is present.

Another risk associated with poor sites is restricted access to fresh water, which of course is especially important for hygiene. However, if it has to be begged, from neighbours or requires a long journey to a public toilet in a pub, supermarket etc., it is essential to conserve it and use it sparingly for washing up, washing food, personal hygiene etc. Similarly, in the confines of a trailer, it is often sensible, even necessary, not to carry a lot of domestic equipment. This made for a greater tendency to rely on food needing little or no preparation; fast food, junk food and so on, which was expensive and less nutritious.[14] These practical responses to travelling, combined with a fundamental reluctance to become dependent on larger society, account for many improvisations in domestic life, which could create health risks. For example, I once saw a knife used for chopping vegetables before being used to cut small pieces of firewood, as well as opening a tin of tuna. Low incomes may lead to an occasional salvaging of recently discarded food from supermarket skips, which creates a further risk of gastroenteritis and other infections.

Regarding consumption of illegal drugs, abuse is documented as having a number of long-term effects, most of them serious, for example a lower resistance to illness, psychosis, liver disease, all of which can be made worse in conditions where hygiene is poor, for example while sharing needles. But as mentioned earlier, most Travellers I met seemed to prefer marijuana and ecstasy, rather than heroin, crack and cocaine, but it would be completely wrong to see them as addicts and dealers, even though drug dealing went on and was often focused on in media reports of deviancy.[15] Alcohol was widely consumed and sometimes a source of disruption. The emergence of some Travellers, pejoratively known as 'brew crew' in the mid-1980s, was initially not seen as a major problem while the festival culture was healthy. However, once the pressure from the law, the police, and other communities began, disruptive elements who actively sought confrontation became a liability.

To start with it was contained. Every family had its problems, but the 'brew crew' was a very small element around 1986, and very much contained by the families that were around. But there was a very large number of angry people pouring out of the cities with brew and smack and the travelling community couldn't cope with such numbers. They also provided the media with a target, and helped them tar the whole scene. (TKI 4)

Apart from the risks to the Traveller subculture as a whole, as conditions deteriorated, individual health problems increased. A G.P. I spoke to with several years experience of dealing with new Traveller health commented on some of the most commonly occurring:

... asthma, skin problems such as eczema, mental health problems like anxiety and depression, as well as drug and alcohol problems ... the middle-class Travellers often

reject conventional, allopathic medicine, and prefer homeopathic cures... Contacting them is a problem; there are no phones available to plan or make appointments, and there are usually no previous health records. Washing and bathing is important, but not always possible on unofficial sites. Some of the men are on the run from the police and don't want to present at surgery... those who do are usually women aged 20-30 - they're the biggest primary care group, and men are much more reluctant to present. Unfortunately, for the majority of Travellers it is the same as with poor people's illnesses anywhere... every illness is more common among the lower social classes...

(General Practitioner Informant 1)

The risks for some at-risk groups were shown to be made much greater following the introduction of the Public Order Act of 1986, which made it easier for police to evict Travellers. In one survey (Durwards, 1990), it was found that several local authorities would be willing to evict a pregnant woman from an unauthorised site; just under a third would evict a woman close to birth, and just over a third would evict a mother with a new-born baby. The high proportion of Traveller mothers and babies suffering through the ad-hoc and inhumane evictions led to the founding of 'Safe Childbirth for Travellers Campaign' which petitioned the government to issue safe guidelines in the use of Section 39 of the Public Order Act. A Home Office circular (37/1991) was published as a result, which listed guidance on the serving of eviction notices under section 39, which suggested various points which should be taken into consideration, such as the 'jeopardising of well-being' etc. of the Travellers concerned. However, it also states that this guidance is not prescriptive, and that the decision whether to evict or not remains with the police in charge.

b. Remedies

Among the many responsibilities of local councils there is a duty to all children, pregnant women and mothers with babies, who must have a safe, secure environment and access to health care. There is also a duty to avoid making families homeless. But frequent evictions by the police and unplanned moves obstructed access to remedies, in that remedies for the above-mentioned conditions are much harder to identify if patients do not present at surgery. Women and children often those who suffer most, as it is often ante and post-natal conditions, as well as family planning, dentistry, assessment and immunisation services which require regular checks and follow-up (Black Country Health Group, 1995).

Emphasising the importance of being on a secure settled site, Hennink, Cooper and Diamond (1993) found that both traditional and new Travellers' lifestyle, cultures and degree of mobility were vital determinants in Travellers' attitudes to healthcare and the ability to access it, as living environments impact upon the level of hygiene, rates of accidents, and levels of general health experienced by new Travellers. They emphasised the rates of infectious disease, alcoholism and cardiovascular illness, mental illness, as well as the degree of discrimination experienced at clinics and health centres. The report stresses the relationship of poor environment to poor health, with a

high degree of enteric infections, skin disorders, Hepatitis A and B, and a consistently serious level of accidental injury, occasioned by ingestion of diesel, cuts, burns, and exposure to chemicals and sewage. They also recorded one child fatality, the result of parking next to a busy highway.

In 1989 a study in London highlighted the disparity in access to health care between those on authorised, legal sites, and those on unauthorised encampments. Those on safe, permanent sites had greater ability to register with a GP in the metropolis. Hyman (1989) stresses the importance of outreach work by health visitors to the latter group, as GPs are reluctant to make home visits in this context. Both permanently sited and transient Travellers I met, spoke at length about the difficulties they experienced, getting to surgeries and of the reluctance to visit on site:

We've got phones but they won't come out, and it would be a great help if we can get the kids' vaccinations done on site.

I am not long out of hospital and I worry about something going wrong... there's no way you can get to hospital quickly, and the doctor won't come on site.

We have to fight for everything... why shouldn't we get what is due to us as well?[16]

The important thing to emphasise in all this is that many of these health problems could be reduced or avoided altogether with access to safer sites, and more reliable sources of income, as well as with a more receptive and co-operative attitude on the part of the settled community.

5. Education

The number of children born in to new Travellers over the years has meant that by the early 90s there were children being raised on the road (Martin, 1998). This had not gone unnoticed by the tabloid press, who wrote pieces such as:

Filthy toddlers play outside in the dirt... children faced a terrible risk of illness as they were left to fend for themselves... no children's toys in sight..

(News of the World, 6.9.93)

I was keen to discover the reality with various informants who without exception took the matter of childcare and parenting very seriously. Probably the most comprehensive coverage of the subject of Traveller education is explored at some length in Earle et al. (1994), and the pages of comments, in what was one of the most extensive sections in the book, could easily have come from the conscientious, educated parents of children at a wealthy public school. For example this comment by Traveller parents:

In Cound I found the school very helpful. Very countrified; the teachers quite keen in having the children, the problem being after two days we were forced to move

somewhere else, which was rather annoying, having got them used to the school. We thought we might send them to Dothill, where we were parked outside the local school...

(Traveller quoted in Earle et al., 1994:89)

Local councils have duties to all children who must have a safe, secure environment, and be able to register and attend school. There are basically three possibilities; learning through life, State provision, or alternative education. State education in the form of mobile schools used to be popular option among Travelling communities, though mainlly at a time when there were fewer evictions and more stability. I was told by a health visitor in Buckinghamshire (whose statements are corroberated in journals such as 'Traveller Education') that in late 70s and early 80s there were mobile schools for Traveller children which worked well for all age groups and skills:

... but gradually it became regarded as a second class education... there was an idea that it wasn't good enough. Then, around 1985 the buses were stopped, and Traveller children were sent to State schools. However, both schools and children had difficulties adapting to each other. There was prejudice from the school that "travelling was not the right thing to do". The teachers raised issues of discrimination about gender and disability, but prejudices against nomadism were never discussed... The children were taught in separate units in the state schools, and had to wear a number of different uniforms, kit and coats, (apart from the maintenance of them) which seemed strange to Traveller children. Bullying could be another issue, and not surprisingly, results were poor, and now with league tables, schools are even more unwilling to take children, and the entrance exams make it even harder.

(Health Visitor Informant 1)

Instead, children on site tended to learn though life, or else through alternative styles of education, for example at private schools or at one of the initiatives promoted by Local Authorities. Although these were mainly set up to help traditional travellers, efforts were made to cater for new Traveller children too. For example in1989 Buckinghamshire County Council Education Department produced an internal document called 'Education Services for Travellers' Children: Information for Schools' which promoted awareness of needs and the facilities available to new Traveller children. This extended to a on-site facilities in the form of a team of traveller-teachers, working from a converted ambulance equipped as a classroom for the under-fives. Efforts such as these were supplemented by the Traveller School Charity (TSC), which as well as ditributing information on education rights and children's camps, set up a mobile school for new Traveller children known as the 'Skool Bus'. For some years from 1985 until the early 1990s this brought schooling to children at festival and other sites, producing its own resources for parental guidance on education, as well as special teaching materials for Traveller children and a newsletter, all of which was financed through benefit festivals.[17] However it became impossible to maintain continuity in education due to the increased difficulties of the parents returning to particular area, for example after a winter park-up. The bus was later abandoned in favour of indiviudally owned vehicles, materials and

collective projects.

Learning on site potentially offers a hard but rewarding education, and has many advantages over an inner city education in high-rise flats. The playwright John Mortimer commented once in the Mail on Sunday that:

In fact there are few places in the world more beautiful than the English countryside. To be a child among woods and fields gives you an understanding of changing seasons, growth and decay, life and death. (John Mortimer, Mail on Sunday, 13.3.94)

Providing of course, that the families in question would not be evicted the following day.

Childhood education tends to be practical and communal in the early years, where children learn practical tasks such as cooking cleaning and maintenance from a variety of adults, though reading and writing has to be taught in the traditional way as it is not normally acquired naturally. For this reason, some parents of older children tend to settle to allow them State education facilities where possible. Yet as with health services, education for children is often hard to obtain, where the greatest obstacle is, once again, the disruption caused by sudden, enforced eviction. As with access to health provision, many serious problems could be avoided with access to more secure sites and greater comprehension on the part of the authorities, which allows children access to a suitable, uninterrupted education which recognises their needs.

6. Motivations For Going 'On the Road'.

Travellers travel for many different reasons, and there are now some new Travellers who were born into a travelling way of life. However, the majority chose to go on the road for the first time when in their teens or twenties. I enquired during interviews how the older group members had started on the road, and it became clear that there is a relatively high incidence of the following factors: freedom, independence, politics, nature and romance. But there were also less positive reasons, such as homelessness, escape from intolerable conditions in urban environments, a refuge, or simply that there was no other alternative.

For other Travellers I spoke to, it seemed that to ask the question "why do travellers travel?" was less appropriate than "why do most people live in houses?", especially when many house dwellers spend much of their time travelling to and from work, travelling in the course of their work, moving house in search of it, or in response to the demands of it - behaviour which for many is more dysfunctional and irrational than it may initially seem.

To illustrate these differences, which were also indicative of a range of other attitudinal and behavioural characteristics among new Travellers, I propose a threefold typology showing the variable and frequently interrelated factors which led individuals to go on the road. Investigation shows how participation is affected by a combination of variables

(which, for example, may lead an individual to become a traveller as a lifestyle choice), compared with structural changes such as rising unemployment and declining welfare provision during the 1980s and early 1990s which made becoming a Traveller a preferable option to being unsettled in the city, at least for some individuals. However, in all cases examined it was a functional response to their circumstances. Thus for example, during the 1970s some university educated middle-class Travellers were attracted to the lifestyle for the freedom, and sense of idealism it afforded, while during the 1980s for some disenfranchised rough sleepers it was a preferable alternative to being homeless, unemployed and poor. The typology is based on interviews, observations and existing literature.

a. Pioneers

What's unsettled about the Travellers? They usually know who's who in the group they are living in, and what they are doing... in the last 100 years or so this has increasingly not been the case with the so-called settled societies, who don't seem to know who they are with or why they are where they are... humans have evolved on this planet as Travelling groups. They haven't been settled at all, and every time they've done it someone comes along and carts them off to slavery, or the sea comes and drowns them... and there's nothing settled about the settled population, in fact I'd say they are unsettled and profoundly so, and completely neurotic too. They're so unsettled they're neurotic, and mass neurosis is the one thing to fear. (TKI 1)

This quote is from veteran hippy activist and Traveller Sid Rawle, an eloquent and passionate defender of the movement, particularly of its early years. Such a romantic view of the lifestyle certainly had some truth about it in the 1970s and early 80s, when the first generation of new Travellers freely elected the traveller lifestyle. They tended to be better educated, mostly young men and women from middle and lower-middle class family backgrounds (Heatherington, 2000). They wanted to be free to cultivate an alternative way of life organised loosely around 'new age' beliefs at a distance from mainstream settled society, and took the inspiration from many different cultural sources; eastern mysticism, native American traditions, environmental and pacifist beliefs, anarchism, hippy lifestyles, Celtic Paganism and communal living. Other reasons included a reaction against the instrumental rationality of modern society, among people who find that a life on the road reduces the importance of money, and at the same time other qualities become more important. This usually involves the espousal of values related to living a peaceful existence in harmony with the earth and with nature, and more coherent ideas about living independently and safely outside society, than those who later became Travellers for other reasons.

What seemed to unify such a variety of attitudes, values and beliefs was their rejection of conventional forms of living and behaving, where these were based on an instrumental rationality and competition. The ethos of the first generation of new Travellers were based on co-operation and collectivism, challenging the individualism and competition which Tory economic policy stressed.[16] These and other aspects of the

lifestyle have been extensively described and analysed in work most notably by Heatherington (2000), McKay (1996) and previously by Rojek (1988, 1989), and Garrard (1986a, 1986b).

However, research on the Travellers tends to pay relatively little attention to an important feature which distinguished these groups from other, later generations. This was their capacity for organisation and group solidarity. During the 1970s and early 80s there were a number of enterprising activities, for example the regular organising of free festivals, and the management of an economy which depended on them. There was also the organising and maintaining of a number peaceful protests and camps at several nuclear sites between 1981 and 1985, and also pressure group activity with English Heritage over the use of Stonehenge. These all required networking and enterprise, and one of the most important organs of communication was through the creation of publications such as Festival Eye, which served as an important source of information on issues such as commercial and free festivals, campaign groups and charities for education, the Skool Bus, articles on legal rights and the progression of court cases, as well as news, comment, cartoons and a host of photos from recent events. The overall level of organisation required was expressed neatly by Sid Rawle:

Spontaneity requires a lot of organisation. Travelling can support a situation from birth to death - this is what gave it its strength. It may fail a lot of the time, we haven't got cemeteries yet but even that will get sorted out as members get older and dying more common. (TK1)

The lifestyle choice provided social meaning and personal satisfaction for the 'Pioneer' travellers, as evidenced by their enthusiasm for the way of life, and a level of organisation which served to minimize dependence on goods and services of mainstream society. There was also an ingenuity and flexibility of consumption patterns which made it possible for them to spend very little on some requirements, such as shelter and clothing, which allowed enough money for other things. However, there were often problems on site, many of them stemming from a growing drug culture:

Part of the free festival ethos was 'bring what you expect to find'. We tried to keep commerce out of it, but the drug dealers broke that... you can stop people selling cups of tea but not drugs... It became a problem, the idealism, and reality came along, as reality tends to do... the pioneers go about with all the best intentions about how to build Jerusalem, and the scumbags come along and try to live in it... in the mid-1980s if not before there was a lot of money to be made as a travelling drug dealer. Before that they stayed in the locality. They weren't anything much. Drug dealing wasn't traveller. Suddenly they found there were huge amounts to be made from this. And we entered the era of the medieval brigand. Huge amounts of young men armed to the teeth. Those of the first generation didn't see it that way. Our axes were for cutting wood and our tyre levers for levering tyres. It was all as innocuous as that. But it was different for those protecting drug dealers, so some problems developed there, at the same time as Thatcher started on us, and we had to face two problems at the same time. Dealers also

loaned money to people, to get their vehicles repaired and so on, so they had power over debtors too.

On the decline of the scene:
Those who didn't want conflict started to do organic farming or moved to Spain, Ireland or Portugal. The creative thinkers didn't want to fight with the government, you'd be crazy if you thought you'd win. They started withdrawing in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The spirit of the situation started to fragment as there were no longer the people with the vision to lead it... places that were full of vehicles that wouldn't move, and sites were full of 'junk'. In the early days we worked very hard to keep heroin off the site, but in the last ten years (approximately 1987-97) it's become quite a common thing... now it's more individualised, not projected as a culture of alternative fairs and festivals. (TKI 1)

In the mid-1980s the gradual encroachment of the authorities, the removal of sites, the rapid evictions, the loss of festivals and the presence of drugs all combined to upset the delicate ecological balance of the lifestyle, and damage the Traveller economy. The following quote illustrates the attractions of life outside Britain in the mid-1990s.

We decided to get out of England when there was no possibility of going on the road without having the van stopped, the family searched and quite possibly losing everything. We'd really had enough, the hassle, the police, stroppy farmers and smacked up kids on site... with a baby you have to be more careful. Britain's become an intolerant place, confrontational, and everywhere has got so tense and dangerous. In Spain you can take it easy, travel around no-one bothers you. People are easy going and even go out of their way to help you, in a way that wouldn't happen in Britain.... even the police helped us last week when we needed a chemist. There's a year round calender of festivals and we are hoping to get by selling small ornaments grape-picking and doing odd jobs. (T.I.10 and T.I.11)[9]

Once again, the level of organisation allows the lifestyle to continue in a way which is functional for the participants. However, the Travellers were far from being a homogeneous group, and while it would be possible to distinguish between sub-classes of 'Pioneers', for example between those who had been on the road since the 1970s and dwelt in tipis, and those who had joined more recently and dwelt in old vans, a sharper distinction can be made between those described here as 'Pioneers' and new elements who joined and came to characterise it in the 1990s.

b. Refugees

The 'Pioneers' are contrasted with those in the non-organised part of the traveller groups, many of whom had gone 'on the road' as a response to conditions in the inner cities during the mid-1980s. While the 'Pioneers' were found to adhere to specific sets of ideas, values and practices, and demonstrate a level of organisation which could be described as that of a coherent subculture, such as seeing travelling as a means to an end, an opportunity to develop an alternative type of community, or develop a

personally fulfilling way of life, others whom I will label 'Refugees' did not.

This second class of new Travellers came to be made up of those trying to escape difficult personal circumstances, and where the 'safety net' of the welfare state has been inadequate, weak, in need of repair, or failed altogether. Often young and unemployed, motivation to travel was seen as a favourable alternative to living in lodging houses. Many in this class did not see themselves as long-term travellers, and saw a life on the road as a temporary measure, and simply wanted the government to act in the field of housing and employment to create more favourable conditions for settled living.

Martin (1998) in his work on generational differences among new Travellers, shares Heatherington's view that early Travellers were essentially 'dropping out of society', but adds that in the late 1980s there were significant numbers of young people who took to the road because they 'could not get in', i.e. who were denied full citizenship and were effectively squeezed out of society. To support his argument, he cites several Thatcherite measures introduced to avoid increasing welfare costs, for example the effects of the Social Security Act of 1986 (which took effect from April 1988). These aimed to encourage young people to remain at home by cutting income support for those under 25, and withdrawing benefit for those 16 and 17 year olds who refused to enlist on a youth training scheme (Redhead, 1990:87). Citing work by Hutson and Liddiard (1994), Martin further argues that Part III of the Housing Act 1985 was influential in the decision of some young people to go on the road. He points out how this piece of legislation required several criteria to be met before homeless applicants could be rehoused; namely that applicants must have a local connection, must not be intentionally homeless, and must demonstrate that they fall within a number of priority categories (Hutson and Liddiard: 1994:34). Thus changes in both housing and social security legislation made it more difficult to qualify for welfare entitlements, and Martin argues the reductions in benefits led to:

... an abrogation of the social rights of citizenship which was a direct consequence of the then Conservative Government's adoption of monetarist economic policies in the face of growing international competition and the increased demands of capitalist profitability... As they would otherwise be homeless, living in squats and other makeshift accommodation, unemployed or in dead-end jobs, the younger travellers have assumed the status of economic refugees (Marcus, 1993:85). (Martin, 1998:746)

However, in the same discussion Martin goes on to describe the values of the younger, more recent Travellers as broadly conformist, commenting that:

Travellers, therefore, feel as though they have risen to their responsibilities and have done so enterprisingly by providing their own homes... This is not only because they have done so in accordance with the government's line on responsibility and enterprise, but in the current climate of curbing public spending, they have done so in an economical way. (Martin, 1998:747-8)

While these findings partly confirm those of Martin regarding the 'economic refugees', around 1987 the group became subject to still greater internal differentiation, with the presence in the countryside of some whose behaviour and attitudes was demonstrably different to either the 'Pioneers' or 'Refugees'. Even though this group was largely ignored by other researchers, they received maximum exposure in the press, where they were said to be typical of Travellers in general, even though they were a small minority. Both in the press and among other groups of Travellers they were most commonly known as 'crusties' or 'brew crew', but also as 'giro-gypsies', 'soap dodgers', 'drongos' and 'mutants', names which emphasise dirt, and an alien or sub-human nature. In this study I will refer to them collectively as 'Outcasts', after Mary Douglas's use of the term.[20]

c. Outcasts

These were a distinctive class of younger males from urban areas without families or attractive work prospects who were often bitter about their circumstances, and resentful of the government and other forms of authority. This was expressed through strange appearance and anti-social behaviour, for example such Travellers were frequently identified by their fondness for filth-encrusted military surplus clothing, which was often worn with unlaced military boots, long matted dreadlocks, the 'look' being set off by a dog on a string lead. It was common for some males to contribute to a common fund to buy strong alcoholic drinks, such as 'Special Brew'[21], which were then consumed together in an atmosphere contrived to boost their self-image, often within conspicuous sight of passers-by. This traveller type became commonplace at festivals and on the road by the late 1980s, where they tended to cultivate an outsider's appearance that can be described as resistance through dirt and militant self-degradation, which often involved drink and drug abuse as well as public obnoxiousness.

While some 'Pioneer' travellers adopted what a pronounced ecological attitude to nature and the countryside, seeking to live lightly and harmoniously on it, 'Outcasts' appeared not to care about the environment, and their attitudes and behaviour generated conflict not only with the authorities, but also with others on the road who found their behaviour irresponsible, and the source for much of the hostility directed against travelling groups of all kinds. The following quotes give some idea of the hostility generated:

In a way I look at it like an Indian encampment, where you get people riding their horses through. You've got the braves and the warriors and different tribal elders and this whole pecking order. And you get loads of reckless and wild people who couldn't care a fuck getting involved in all these scenes... You look at some of them at a festival who are really fucking dirty because they want to be looked at. They want to say "look at me everybody"... I mean, you don't have to be like it at all... You can clean yourself with a saucepan of water, have a shower...

(Dave Brock, 'Festival Eye' magazine, Summer 1989:37)

Thousands of people used to go to the Free Festivals from virtually all over the country. In my view, the main reason they gave up and the festivals started to disappear is because the events themselves, and the Travellers' movement within it couldn't and didn't want to deal with the aggro and thieving of a nasty but significant minority, and this happened in the late 1980s. (Editor Informant 1)

Not only did many new Travellers dislike these elements; others on the road also expressed the disgust at the hostility they garnered for travelling groups as a whole. The following quote expresses the speaker's dislike of:

... their sponging, their laziness, their filthy lifestyles, their provocative flouting of the laws of the land, their drug taking, their music, the way they rip up hedges for firewood, their dangerous vehicles, their begging, their filth again, the length of their dreadlocks...
(Quoted in McKay, 1996:49)

But the quote comes not from a member of the local Conservative Association or the National Farmers' Union in Wiltshire, but from a member of the Gypsy community, who clearly believed, as did many others, that those behaving in such a way were representative of the movement.

Who then were these 'Outcasts' and why did they take to the road? To understand what caused them to take to the countryside it is necessary to take into account how thousands of people 'at risk' and in need of professional care and a sheltered environment were set in motion by Tory policies of the 1980s and 90s.

Those in this group had problems which marked them out as difficult, often with weak interpersonal skills, were incapable of looking after themselves, and often had special needs; in a word they were vulnerable. This stems from a number of causes, for example poor mental health, addiction problems, and difficulties experienced after leaving sheltered institutional settings such as prisons, hospitals, or the armed forces. On release, these individuals have much more difficulty in adjusting to the demands of a regular, settled life unaided than, for example the 'Refugees' described earlier. A brief discussion of the pathology of this kind of homelessness will illustrate the point.

In the second half of 20th century there was a decline in the number of psychiatric bed numbers, as mental health professionals began to pursue a policy of rehabilitation through resettling patients in the community. In the late 1980s hospitals began to close; 100 of 130 large English and Welsh mental hospitals closed in 15 years, and some 50,000 places were lost between 1980 and 1988 (Marshall, 1989). In theory, care continued within the health and social services. There was also an uncoordinated network of private and voluntary sector provision in the form of hostels, family carers and support from the community mental health teams. But inevitably, many slipped through this flimsy protective net, after leaving hospital with the price of a railway ticket and the address of a boarding home in a seaside town (Burrows, 1997).

There has been considerable research into the mental health of single homeless, much of which has highlighted the problems of mental illness among them (Timms and Fry, 1989; Marshall, 1989), with levels of between 10% and 60%, depending on researchers' definitions and approaches (CHAR, 1993). A separate study reported 30-50% of rough sleepers in England and Wales with a background of mental illness in the early 1990s (Harvey, 1999:61). A study by Anderson (1993) reported mental health problems of 28 per cent of people in hostels and B&Bs, 36 per cent of day-centre users, and 40 per cent of soup run users, compared to 5 per cent of the general population. Taking into account age and gender, eight times as many people in hostels and B&Bs, and eleven times as many people sleeping rough reported mental problems, compared to the general population. In addition, one in eight people in hostels and B&Bs, one in five at day centres, and one in six at soup runs had stayed in a psychiatric hospital at some time in the past.

Further evidence suggests that many others were made homeless following adverse changes in the housing market and the labour market, which made it increasingly difficult for those with special needs to find suitable accommodation (Liddiard, 1999:83). The needs of those requiring further support were jeopardised by interpretations of the Housing Act of 1985, which was supported by a Code of Guidance to determine whether or not an applicant for accommodation was homeless. This included a duty to accommodate those with a priority need due to 'vulnerability', where the case turned on whether or not a person could cope without danger of injury or harm (Lowe, 1997:26). But such an extreme test was clearly unsuitable, as for example ex-offenders released from prison were not regarded as vulnerable by some local authorities, and neither were those leaving the armed forces, and mental institutions (Lowe, op.cit.). Yet many were in need of sheltered accommodation and after-care, because after long periods of living in a protected environment and having things done for them such as budgeting, shopping, cooking, etc., many had difficulties trying to cope with everyday living. This can be made worse by poverty, loneliness, and anxiety about coping by oneself. In the case of those from military backgrounds it can be worse, as notions of masculinity can interpret a willingness to ask for help as a perceived weakness (Higate, 1997).

In such cases traditional hostel accommodation was usually offered, but was often unsuitable for several reasons. Living alone in a small room, and sharing grim, poorly maintained facilities with others who were often in need of care, created what could be a threatening atmosphere. Readily available drugs and nothing to do all day, especially given the near impossibility of obtaining employment at that time, usually results in further decline (Carlisle, 1997). The alternative was sometimes short-life local authority accommodation but this too, often carried many risks which made it unsuitable, for example it was often in squalid areas where vandalism, burglary, and joy riding were commonplace, while the alternative of better quality accommodation in the private sector required a large deposit, which made it prohibitive. Better quality hostels also had many petty rules, such as a curfew and not allowing guests (Carlisle, 1997). Finally,

many hostels, local authority and private sector accommodation would not allow pets, and some applicants were not prepared to give up their dogs.

Those abandoning accommodation, however unsuitable, had little sympathy from Margaret Thatcher:

There is a number of people who choose voluntarily to leave home; I do not think that we can be expected, no matter how many there are, to provide units for them.

(Hansard, 7.6.88, vol.134:713)

Thatcher placed responsibility on the homeless to look after themselves, and despite the fact that many of the traditional options such as hostels were plainly unsuitable, those refusing an offer or abandoning them, or for example, those leaving the forces voluntarily, were classed as voluntarily homeless. In one study, 20 per cent of local authorities considered the termination of a short-term let was intentional (Butler et al., 1994).

The main alternative was to go on the streets, and in the late 1980s there was a growing population of rough sleepers who were severely institutionalised and unable to cope with the demands of settled life, for example those released from prisons, children's homes and other institutions (The Children's Society Report, 1994). The same report showed that only 2 of 98 travellers stated they had an existing alternative to travelling, while none believed they had realistic access to current authorised sites (Children's Society, op. cit.).

Shelter, the charity for the homeless, estimated that 8000 people could have been sleeping rough in 1991, nearly four times more than the official figures, as it does not include those whose homes are insecure, temporary, or those forced to share a home when they are in need of their own. Nearly one million had applied to join the homeless lists in 1991, but failed to meet criteria designed to ensure accommodation went to only those in the direst need (Malcolm, 1993: 12). For those in an unstable, unsettled condition, the pavements of the city centres provided a refuge, company, safety in numbers, but also risks. Many drink to escape the problems and pain of homelessness and studies have shown up to 30% of single homeless have problems with alcohol. But in the late 1980s heroin was becoming more widely and cheaply available in many British cities. Moreover, at a time of public spending cuts, the social services were under-resourced to tackle the problem. Consequently, many combined their time on the streets with stays in hostels, drug rehabilitation units or prison, and often found it difficult to obtain stable accommodation for the previously mentioned reasons, as well as 'challenging' behaviour which often got them banned from hostels (Fitzpatrick et al., 1999). But some were able to cope better than others on the streets, for example ex-soldiers, as their military training and experience has made them more adaptable to conditions of wet and cold, spending days at a time without a bath and in dirty clothing, they are more resilient at dealing with difficult conditions (Higate, 1997). While some slept on benches and in doorways, to the chagrin of the authorities, collections of

informal tents and shelters sprang up in several British cities, such as Bath, Glasgow, and at Waterloo and in Lincoln's Inn Fields in London.

Some of the people there are more mental than I am. All bloody mad they are, should be in hospital. People who are genuinely homeless should be in that place.

(Timmy, visiting Lincoln's Inn after staying in a hostel)[22]

Friday night could be boring, But then again, if you've got another tin of glue, it could be special. (Dave Slowey)[23]

At a time of high unemployment the rough sleepers depended on social security payments and begging. But pedestrians, shoppers and tourists found the behaviour of these dirty, unkempt, often mentally unstable and drug-addicted young men threatening.

... yet the Crusties of Bath are, with their counterparts at the opposite end of the social scale, the smooth lawyers and the medics, considerably more redolent of the city Jane Austen knew than anything the tourist is likely to see.

(Reader's letter, The Independent, 23.11.91)

The local authorities were urged to evict them, and official harassment as well as antagonism and aggression from drunk, often violent passers-by led some to become rough sleepers in the countryside, where according to sensational media reports, there were many others like them.

Travelling offers company and freedom. It's an extended family. Favours are done and repaid, you trust people. It's like one big happy family, an open-air hostel. (TI 13)

But there was also a darker side, exemplified by Traveller Informant 18 who summed it up in the following quote:

Everyone in travelling has some kind of damaged psyche, no-one had childhood dreams of growing up and becoming a Traveller, for God's sake - but out here a lot of damaged souls can co-exist, prosper, and find some sense of community they weren't able to bring into their lives before... In a matter of minutes we know a lot about each other, and ignore everything else nearby. (TI 18)

The above quote from one of my informants who broadly conforms to the 'Outcast' pattern. It contrasts well with the view of TKI 3, a 'Pioneer' who describes the same but more formal experience of hooking up with a 'Pioneer' group, who were far choosier about their neighbours and co-travellers:

You can go along and live with a group... no-one might talk to you for a couple of months and you decide to go away again, you do things wrong and no-one's told you the rules, so someone growls at you. (TKI 3)

Within the sociological literature on Travellers, the 'Outcast' category appear to be accorded no particular significance, yet there is much evidence to suggest that this category, sometimes referred to as 'crusties' or 'brew crew', were the most significant in the study of alleged deviancy among Travellers as a whole. This is because from around 1985 in the media and in politics, such a figure came to symbolise new Travellers even though the element barely existed until 1988. The reasons for this appear to lie in the process of deviancy amplification. Until the mid-1980s the early 'Pioneer' was part of an 'underground' phenomenon. As was shown earlier, most lived in an essentially peaceful, organised and generally law-abiding way, which respected the environment. But most of the public only became aware of the new Travellers when articles began to appear in the national press around 1984, when incidents attracted national media attention in the press, on television and in Parliamentary speeches. These focused on violent confrontations; the evictions of the mid-1980s at Nostell Priory and Rainbow Fields Village at Molesworth, the 'Battle of the Beanfield' in 1985, and the eviction at Stoney Cross in 1986, and subsequently on the annual clashes with police, as some tried to reach Stonehenge after the site had been sealed off over the summer solstice.

As is shown in Chapters Four and Six of this study, in press and in Parliamentary circles a narrative was prepared which, while not being a complete misrepresentation, was certainly exaggerated. Reports presented the new Travellers as deviant, as brigands, pirates, a mobile force which was essentially part of an outcast army. But the effect was to become self-fulfilling, as in the late 1980s a new class of itinerants appeared, made up of vulnerable and disturbed beggars and urban poor, who had been evicted or had fled from urban areas. Dirty, anti-social, and with no respect for the environment, they seemed to be enacting a story which had begun as a press fantasy. Once in the countryside these urban beggars were reclassified in the press as part of the 'New Age Travellers', as they were mobile, and seemed to fit the earlier press description. This tended to reinforce the media stereotype of new Travellers, which served to further alienate local authorities and local communities from travellers of all kinds.

7. Concluding Remarks

Despite all the negative images and rhetoric which attached themselves to the early 'Pioneer' travellers, evidence points to an absence of the kind of anti-social attitudes, values or behaviour which the media were keen to apply to them. Displaying an impressive degree of organisation, they wanted to live peacefully on secure sites, and took steps to avoid drug problems and maintain an orderly atmosphere, free from harassment by the wider community. This is partly born out by the findings presented here as well as by existing research, most notably by Rojek (1988, 1989) and Heatherington (2000).

But in the mid-1980s at a time of political division and attempts to tackle what Thatcher saw as an 'enemy within', the behaviour of a small minority was introduced by the Tory press as part of a dangerous and oppositional culture of resistance. A popular narrative

unfolded which established all travellers as anarchic and dangerous, in a way which was designed to justify harsh measures to combat and defeat the new 'threat'. But the rhetoric in the press and parliament was powerful enough to be amplified towards the end of the 1980s when some of the poorest, most marginal and in need of care either left or were evicted from urban hostels, squats and pavements, and took refuge in the countryside where they emulated the media stereotype. Yet they were disliked as much by other new Travellers as by Gypsies and the settled community, because of their associated problems of crime, drugs, violence, and the bad reputation they garnered for the movement as a whole. This amplification of deviancy changed the nature of the Travellers' scene in ways that Rojek, Heatherington and Martin have not explored.

Notes

[2] Traveller Key Informant (TKI) 2
[3] See Chapters Four and Six.
[4] For more examples see Chapter Four on press coverage.
[5] These are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
[6] The given meaning of the term or nickname 'Crustie' is 'rebarbarative' and 'recalcitrant' (OED). It may also be based on metonymic transfer from the crust of port wine, and possibly refer to encrusted mud and dirt on clothes and limbs.
[7] I noted how in some cases, income could be earned in a local currency. This was set up by establishing lists of skills in certain areas, for which a set rate would be paid, the rate being expressed in an 'abstract' local currency, e.g. 'Deans' in the area of the Forest of Dean, where under a scheme known as 'Fair Shares' five Deans was the rate for an hour's work. Thus, if a member of the scheme contracts a builder who does a job of 10 hours, the member can either write a cheque for 50 Deans which the builder can use to purchase other members services etc., or alternatively the member can barter and settle the account by providing some other service. In this way an unofficial system of credit and debit based on trust and reciprocity is established among the scheme's members.
[8] Magazines of the time such as the weekly Exchange and Mart give an idea of the kind of vehicles available and the prices.
[9] The legal manual 'Wilkinson's Road Traffic Offences from 1973 or 1975 includes information on changes in motoring law. See also any edition of 'Stones Justice's Manual' (published annually).
[10] This information was gathered from interviews with various long-term Travellers. In the mid-1990s when I was visiting on site, vehicles were much more conventional in appearance, due to the need to keep a lower profile.
[11] Traveller Key Informant (TKI)4.
[12] See for example, police comments on the programme 'Seven Days at Stoney Cross' by Channel Four.
[13] One exception is a study carried out by Vicki Stangroome in 1993, entitled 'Investigation into Policies,
Priorities and Resources Available to New Age Travellers, the Hippy Convoy' Health Education and Primary Care for New Age Travellers, 1993. This was privately published by Holdsworth Computer Graphics / Prontaprint, and is available from Prof. Thomas Acton at Greenwich University, London.
[14] While on one site, those present pooled their cash to get a take-away pizza. At over £8, a much cheaper and more nutritious meal could have been prepared. However, as there was no gas at the time, it was a quick and easy if not cost-effective solution.
[15] Marijuana was readily available, though I was never offered anything stronger.
[16] Comments gathered while in conversation with various Travellers on site near Leominster.
[17] See for example the article in Festival Eye, Summer 1989, p.32-33 by Richard Cotterill, who was involved in the project from the beginning.
[18] The quotation *"There is no such thing as society, only individual men, women, and their families"* was originally given in interview to 'Woman' magazine in 1987, and is quoted in Sampson (1989).
[19] Interviewed in Spain in 1996.
[20] For Douglas (1966) 'Outcasts' are those with no place in society. She draws an analogy with released prison inmates or discharged mental patients; people who were living outside society, in the margins, who experience difficulty re-entering society.
[21] A very strong lager beer (9 degrees) made by Carlsberg; in the 1980s and 90s, along with others such as Tennants, it was cheaply sold and widely available.
[22] Quoted in Malcolm, (1993:11) a report into the homeless encampment in London's Lincoln's Inn Fields.
[23] Quoted in Malcolm, (1993:11) a report into the homeless encampment in London's Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Chapter 6

Official Perceptions, Surveillance and Control of New Travellers.

1. Introduction

In this chapter the interpretations and reactions of the police and politicians to Traveller incidents in the 1980s and 1990s are analysed. Official perceptions of the new Travellers played a crucial role in their being labelled as deviant, and the style of policing of the Travellers in the mid-1980s is shown to have been the product of the government's strategy of using aggressive, pro-active measures when dealing with public order disputes and left-wing militancy. This was matched by the rhetoric in Parliament, where the Tory benches were quick to demonise new Travellers and justify tough measures against them.

In the early 1990s the anti-traveller rhetoric was maintained among the Tory benches, particularly in the elaboration of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (1993), but in contrast, policing became more moderate. Evidence suggests that the police recognised they were unable to prevent the inevitable consequences of failed government policies, and in a bid to maintain their legitimacy among the general public, the aggressive, paramilitary tactics which had characterised public order policing in the 1980s were dropped. The Travellers and others in the countryside were increasingly seen as a product of unemployment and social neglect, and strategy became more concerned with surveillance and prevention of offences, marking a return to more traditional methods of 'consensus' policing.

2. Policing the New Travellers in the 1980s

Within the Conservative Party of the late 1970s the dominant view was that democracy had become decadent, and permissiveness and tolerance were leading to chaos and a left-wing totalitarian state, and it was amid a perceived breakdown of law and order that 'Thatcherism' emerged (Gamble, 1994:65-6; Hall et al., 1978:227-323). On being elected in 1979, part of the Tory strategy was to place emphasis on the strength of the police and on a respect the importance of private property (Gamble, 1994:62). To combat the growth of opposition and unrest, Thatcher introduced new public order legislation, created to make it easier to deal with those she termed the "enemies within". To this end, various groups, including the miners, trade unions, football hooligans, black youth and students were all portrayed as society's folk devils (Brake and Hale, 1992; Hall, 1983; Scraton, 1987). Pressure on them was heightened by a new rhetoric on law and order in the press which "tacitly legitimated" attacks on those outside "respectable life" (Brake and Hale, 1989:140).

But during the early 1980s the police had been shown to be inadequately prepared in terms of equipment and tactics to deal with major incidents of public disorder of all kinds, whether against football hooligans, skinheads, or outbreaks of violence against the police themselves. This was shown to be the case in particular during the riots of 1981, when

police had no systematic theory of crowd control, no defensive equipment against missiles and incendiary devices, or even protective headgear.[1] However, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) soon began to assert itself, independently developing a national policy in law and order, and ways in which public order issues were to be dealt with. The new approach focussed on new measures of surveillance and techniques of dealing with public order. The former involved using ACPO guidelines to maintain low-level surveillance which instructed officers not just to watch for crime, but to be part of the front-line in an intelligence system created to gather information on the everyday lives of ordinary people. This would be filed away and used to prevent crime in order to anticipate or pre-empt disorder (Finch, 1989:290-1). Information was processed at a National Reporting Centre, set up at Scotland Yard in 1984 to direct units of every police force. It was controlled by a single police officer, the president of ACPO, who had the authority to override the authority of local Chief Constables, in a policy which critics said amounted to an attempt to reshape existing procedures and law by an undemocratically chosen body.[2]

As well as surveillance, new measures were introduced which changed police conduct in dealing with public order disputes. This included a secretly developed Riot Control Manual which gave instruction in methods developed by the Royal Hong Kong Police, and practised by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland. These tactics were subsequently incorporated into what became known as the Tactical Operations Manual (Northam, 1988). The main issue was that police were trained to act as paramilitaries, in what Scraton calls a 'first line response, rather than a last line of defence' in policing of all kinds, regardless of the whether those involved were football hooligans, Greenham women, pickets, or terrorists. He comments that:

Folk devils such as soccer hooligans, race rioters, black muggers, Greenham women, animal rights protesters, Scargill's army and Irish terrorists have been summoned and conflated... and used as evidence that the 'Kingdom's unity' is threatened by a broad alliance of 'enemies within'. (Scraton, 1987:182)

Without any consultation with the Home Office, the courts, or government law offices, the new operational techniques were fully implemented during the miners' strike of 1983-4 at Orgreave, where there was a major confrontation with around 10,000 pickets. The major difference compared to other public order incidents was that police were heavily armed and protected, which allowed them to ride aggressively into the crowd on horseback, in the words of the Tactical Operations Manual "creating fear and scattering it" (Morris, 1989:154).

In May 1985 a White Paper on Public Order was announced which promised the police a range of new powers to deal with what it called 'a rising tide of lawlessness', which specifically mentioned that people needed to be protected from the 'enemy within'. It assumed that constitutional, fundamental public rights of assembly, for purposes such as demonstrations, marches and public meetings, reflected interests opposed to those of the wider community. The document also proposed the absolute, operational discretion of chief constables, enabling them to act without any consultation with police authorities in such cases. Normally, this would have been the decision of democratically elected

members of the police authorities, but under the new proposals the chief constables would not be responsible to them.

Meanwhile, after defeating the mineworkers, attention turned to the new Travellers. As was shown in Chapter Two, even though they possess little economic or political influence, vagrants of all kinds have historically been presented as a significant source of threats to order, governance and authority. The non-sedentary group is so tiny that they can be easily be marginalised by almost everyone in society, regardless of their class, age, religion or language, which allows members of those groups to see themselves as a united 'us' (ni Shuinear, 1997). As Reiner has stated:

Police activity has always borne most heavily on the economically marginal elements in society, the unemployed (especially if vagrant). Studies of policing in all industrial societies show this to be constant. (Reiner, 1991:271)

Moreover, the new Travellers were nomadic people who often passed through the territory of settled 'tribes'. In 1984, at a festival at Nostell Priory, West Yorkshire, riot police ransacked Travellers' homes and made 360 arrests. This was followed by more 'direct action' in February 1985, with the eviction of new Travellers from the US air force base Molesworth, Cambridgeshire, where Travellers had parked up over winter. The event was made intentionally dramatic, with the presence of the Cambridgeshire police, military police, and around 1500 soldiers from the Royal Engineers, who put up a barrier of razor wire to seal off the site. But the eviction which generated the most publicity was the infamous 'Battle of the Beanfield' on 1.6.85, in which new Travellers were violently intercepted while attempting to reach Stonehenge. Prior to the festival the Daily Telegraph (1.4.85) ominously announced that:

A police task force, using tactics that curbed the violent excesses of the miners' 'flying pickets' during the pit strike, is to go into action in June to protect Stonehenge.

Three weeks before the festival, road blocks were put up around the site and on June 1st the police joined forces with the Ministry of Defence and childcare departments of the local Social Services to disperse the Peace Convoy. This involved the wrecking of mobile homes and arresting the occupants. The Observer reporter Nick Davies went to join the convoy, and wrote of:

... women and children being hit with truncheons ... a mother dragged out of a shattered window ... broken heads, broken teeth ... a whirl of destruction. (Observer, 9.6.85)

Eleven of the convoy children were taken into care and there were over 500 arrests. Some 150 vans and buses were impounded and many were destroyed. It was the largest single civil arrest in British history. Yet within months all charges of unlawful assembly were dropped against 241 of those arrested. There was no explanation for the excessive use of force, or why *... as part of the contingency plan, a small team of firearms officers were on hand.*[3] Subsequently, there were 24 appeals for wrongful arrest, assault and damage to

property, all of which were successful, and an award of £25,000 damages was made. Yet these were not resolved for seven years, and there was no public enquiry. Although ITN had a film of events, the most incriminating shots 'disappeared' before they could be shown. The aggressive harassment and arrests continued, with each public order situation exploited to create a climate of hostility towards Travellers. The following year on 9.6.86 came 'Operation Daybreak', the highly publicised eviction from Stoney Cross, on the edge of the New Forest. A total of 125 vehicles/homes were seized, and there were 42 arrests. Over 400 police were involved, 146 vehicles, 2xJCBs, 4x16 ton trucks, a reconnaissance aircraft, at a total cost of £400-500,000.[4]

With the Travellers being subject to levels of surveillance approaching that of terrorist surveillance in Northern Ireland at that time, it becomes pertinent to ask how they were actually perceived by the police and politicians. We can begin by saying there is some evidence to suggest that, as with any organisation, a variety of views on Travellers were expressed among officers which were not necessarily the views of their leaders. Comments made in the television documentary *Seven Days At Stoney Cross* (BBC 2, 1986) give some clues to attitudes when rank-and-file police officers give their opinions of the new Travellers, whom they are about to evict. These are decidedly moderate, with such comments as *"ideally we wouldn't be involved"*, *"they shouldn't be pushed from force to force"*, *"something should be done"*, *"should we interfere in their lives?"* and *"they should have somewhere to go"* are all stated to camera or overheard 'in off'. It may be suggested that officers were 'coached', in order to give responses which would not give offence, however more vigorous views are expressed by the Chief Constable for Hampshire John Duke, when he variously describes the new Travellers as *"anarchists"*, *"warriors"*, *"invaders"*, *"blackmailers"*, as well as alleging *"intimidation"*, *"their unwillingness to accept the conventional rules of society"*, *"anarchy at its worst"* and *"rampant lawlessness and reckless disregard for peace."*

3. The View from Westminster

Similar attitudes towards the Travellers were expressed by various members of the Conservative Party in the Parliamentary debate following the eviction at Stoney Cross on 3.6.86. The Home Secretary Douglas Hurd made a statement to the House of Commons, denouncing Travellers as:

...nothing more than a band of medieval brigands who have no respect for the law or for the rights of others. (Hansard, 3.6.86:733)

evoking an image of lawless bandits or robbers, whose mobility, like pirates on the high seas, makes them outside the law i.e. beyond the reach and the jurisdiction of any local authority, and therefore outlaws. They (the Travellers) were accused of inflicting harm and distress on law-abiding citizens, and there was confirmation from the Home Secretary of the way in which the police were increasingly acting independently:

I am in no doubt about the resolve of the police to deal as they judge best with the criminal

offences committed by the convoy... The chief constables in the areas concerned know of their duty to enforce the law and of the wide powers they already have. It is for them to make their own judgments about the use of those powers under the operational independence that they have. (Op.cit.:734)

The local Tory MP Patrick McNair-Wilson expressed his disgust at the new Travellers, commenting that:

...many of the vehicles in which this anarchic group travels, with its own legal adviser, are untaxed, untested and uninsured. Why cannot action be taken to remove these vehicles from the road? (Op.cit.:734)

In a subsequent debate, Gerald Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if, following police action in dealing with unroadworthy vehicles belonging to members of the hippy convoy, he later intended to take similar action against unroadworthy vehicles in London, and if he would call for reports from all chief constables on the action they are taking on this matter. Giles Shaw replied:

No, enforcement of road traffic legislation is an operational matter for individual chief officers of police. (Hansard, 16.6.86:413)

No such measures were adopted, which offers further evidence that police action was motivated by a desire to victimise the convoy, rather than any wish to promote road safety. Instead, the Conservative party was more concerned with assisting private rural interests. Douglas Hurd, Secretary of State for the Home Department commented in his speech after the Travellers' eviction from Stoney Cross:

... we are discussing with the police, and in meetings held this week with the National Farmers' Union and the Country Landowners Association, whether some further strengthening of the law is required, and, if so, what form that change should take.
(Hansard, 3.6.86:734)

But amid promises to introduce new laws against Travellers, there were also concerns that the police could become the Tory party's bailiffs, who would be called to evictions whenever there were complaints from local landowners. Cases seemed likely to multiply if the wide interpretation of the existing laws on breach of the peace, obstruction of the highway and criminal damage were removed, as at the time they allowed the police to use their discretion in bringing charges. Labour MP Donald Anderson expressed his concern that the law on trespass would become criminalised (op.cit.:737), while Eldon Griffiths expressed his wishes that the police would not be used as the private agents of landowners, and also pointed out that:

... it is far more difficult and causes far more casualties, especially to the police, to remove these people from land which they have no business to occupy, than preventing them from going there in the first place. (Op.cit.:738)

The Labour MP Clive Soley stepped in to argue that an agreement had almost been reached last year between the Ministry of Defence and the Department of the Environment for a long term solution which would accommodate festivals and the Travellers:

If the Home Secretary persists in using the police as if they were the Tory Party's private army, he will continue to whip up hostility within the police, because the police do not like being used in such a role when it is not necessary, any more than the farmers like their land to be used. (Op.cit.:738)

But two days later, Mrs Thatcher promised *...we shall be delighted to make life difficult for such things as hippy convoys.* (Hansard: 5.6.86)

The events between 1984 and 1986 had a major influence on the willingness of the government to put the lifestyle to an end, and similar rhetoric was used in support of measures introduced against Travellers in the Public Order Act (1986), which included a tightening up the trespass laws. Section 1 included the provision of a 4 mile radius exclusion zone around the Stonehenge, reinforced with razor wire, road blocks, police dogs, helicopters and thousands of police. Other sections, notably section 13 (popularly known as the 'Hippy Clause'), gave powers to the police to harass Travellers in any location by continually moving them on. Section 39 represented a significant strengthening of police powers, with two points in particular affecting new Travellers. These allowed police to direct trespassers to leave if there was damage to property on land, and/or if there was unlawful trespass by twelve or more vehicles. Evictions could take place at any time of day or night, and gave police powers to arrest people who failed to leave, and to impound any homes, vehicles or remaining possessions. This facilitated quicker evictions, and ensured that Travellers moved around in smaller groups, with a fine of £1000 or six months in prison for transgressors.

Following the enforcement of the Act on 1.4.87 and the suppression of the Stonehenge festival, the Travellers largely disappeared from the press. However, negotiations and attempts to reactivate the Stonehenge festival continued, as the gathering which was of key importance to the Traveller economy and lifestyle. But the increasingly hostile political climate had a dramatic effect on the new Travellers, frightening away many of the families integral to the community balance of the festival circuit, which left only a concentration of 'hard core' individuals who were prepared for a confrontation with the police. In consequence, successive police operations backed by the Act became stricter in an attempt to stop anyone reaching the stones. In both 1987 and 1988 the solstice sunrise at Stonehenge was greeted with the bizarre sight of hundreds of riot police, who were baton-charging sun-worshippers away from the National Trust land adjacent to the monument, while a druidic ceremony carried on regardless within the circle. But with these exceptions, press interest in the Travellers waned throughout the late 1980s, while the commercial and fully legal event at Glastonbury became the focal point of the traveller year.

4. Policing the New Travellers in the 1990s

In 1990 Thatcher was replaced by John Major, however there was no evidence of a shift back to "one nation" Toryism of the post-1945 consensus. The country was still politically polarised, and there was increasing anxiety over a series of public order issues. A litany of names appeared in the press associated with endless lists of crimes in particular areas, for example the Meadowell Estate on Tyneside, described by the popular press as Britain's crime capital, followed by Manchester 'Gunchester', and Bootle on Merseyside as its second and third cities. There had been the case of Suzanne Capper, a young girl who was tortured to death, and there had been the murder of the infant James Bulger by two juniors, Thompson and Venables. There had been Poll Tax riots in London, as well as others in Ealing, Cardiff and Oxford, and in other localities around Britain. Discontent continued in the early 1990s, following the release from prison of the Guildford Four by the Court of Appeal, the vindication of the Birmingham Six and the Maguires, the troubles of the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad, as well as the referrals back to the Court of Appeal of Judith Ward, and of the three men convicted of the murder of PC Blakelock at Broadwater Farm, along with numerous other revelations and allegations of malpractice.

While the police were frequently accused of arresting and imprisoning the wrong people, another source of decline in public confidence in the police was their inability to protect people from crime. The 1980s saw inequality and social divisions grow considerably. In 1979 the top 20% of households earned 37% of post-tax income, but by 1988 this had grown to 44%. At the same time, the share of the poorest 20% fell from 9.5% to 6.9% (The Guardian, 7.1.92:2). Crime rates remained in their phase of 'hypercrisis' and between 1990 and 1992 there was a record breaking increase in the official crime statistics almost every quarter. Although some of this rise can be attributed to a rise in reporting and recording of crime, much of the increase reflected a real growth in victimisation, and it was a combination of ineffectiveness and revelations of malpractice which contributed to a lack of confidence in the police (Reiner, 1992:264), as well as from an increasingly vocal public and media who demanded that the government act against perceived increases in crime, especially against property crime.

Dissatisfaction with the police was most clearly expressed in two opinion polls conducted in the late 1980s. The Guardian of 18.11.89:22, comments on MORI poll for the BBC 2 'Newsnight' programme in 1989, which reported that public confidence in the police had plummeted compared with 10 years earlier. Only 43% had a 'great deal of respect' for the police, compared with 83% of a national sample asked the same question in 1959 for the Royal Commission on the Police. Similarly 14% had 'little respect' compared with only 1% on 1959. According to the survey, 63% of respondents said they believed that the police bent the rules to obtain convictions. Even the Sunday Times commented that, as the 1980s drew to a close, the police were held in lower public esteem than at any time in their history (19.11.89).

Discontent with policing was manifest not only in urban areas but in the countryside too,

which was again becoming a 'locale' of conflict, as landowners who had for centuries seen themselves as custodians of the countryside and been accustomed to deference and compliance, were increasingly challenged over environmental and conservation matters by groups favouring direct action, such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Hunt Saboteurs, Earth First, CND, the Ramblers Association, as well as numerous rural sympathisers, who all sought to protect it from business development, pollution, damage, bloodsports, road building and so on. Tension was further heightened by the emergence of a number of 'alternative' lifestyles, and coalitions of protesters such as the new Travellers and 'ravers', who, despite the abolition of the Stonehenge festival, had continued to hold gatherings especially around the south-east of England.

Over recent years a remarkable network has grown up of travellers, dance people, squatters and protesters, especially road protesters... It has grown up organically, people meeting and discovering common interests, goals and friendship networks. Travellers have marquees that are used at outdoor dances as well as at free and commercial festivals. Dances take place at road protest sites... The result has been a creative epicentre built on energy and idealism; a pooling of resources to create something out of nothing.

(Malyon, 1994:vii)

Although the Public Order Act (1986) had created problems for new Travellers, it did not destroy the lifestyle, and seems to have even had the unintended consequence of creating support for a movement whose members had now been labelled in the press as anti-authoritarian, counter-cultural "New Age Travellers", who represented the antithesis of 'Thatcherism'. For many young and disaffected living in urban areas, an oppositional stance in a 'bedsit on wheels' was seen as a functional alternative to scratching a living in a decayed inner-city. The press image had served to amplify the phenomenon, which returned to the press headlines in the early 1990s, and became especially intense between the 22nd and the 29th of June 1992, when there was a large illegal festival of new Travellers and Ravers at Castlemorton Common. This was attended by between 20,000 and 30,000 according to police estimates, and over the week-long event there were 100 arrests, mostly for drugs and *"making a noise"* (Blakey, 1992:1043). Amid what the police themselves had called *"an unholy alliance"* (Blakey, 1992:1043) there was public shock and outrage that the police had done nothing to stop the event, despite allegations of damage to fencing and trees, and a policeman's ribs being allegedly broken in a scuffle. There were also complaints about the mess left behind, and "*the noise; constant thumping noise*" (Blakey, op.cit.) was also criticised.

5. From Pro-active to Re-active Policing

While the familiar anti-traveller rhetoric continued in Parliament, and appeared to be entirely in keeping with the government's attitude in the 1980s towards the 'enemy within', there was a change in the late 1980s in policing of the Travellers and others which was exposed at Castlemorton. Proof of this change could be seen in a small number of articles which began to appear in police journals, whose opinions were much more circumspect than those expressed in Parliament or the press. For example, Superintendent Tony Stanley,

writing in the Worcester Sub-Division Annual Report 1991, appears to see the Travellers not just one of policing, but as a community problem. He comments:

Increasing demands have forced us along the road of reactive policing... the police must always be in a position to respond in sufficient numbers to all emergencies, but the way we respond has to be by general consent... public disorder cannot be dismissed as being purely a police problem and I look for assistance in their area from other agencies and the public at large.

In 1992 following the Castlemorton event, there was further evidence that the 'hard line' taken by ACPO in the 1980s was softening somewhat. In an article entitled 'Our Common Cause', the author David Blakey, Chief Constable of West Mercia comments that:

All forces are now on notice, but even so, dealing with this problem is much more than a matter for the police alone. How to prevent more Castlemorton Commons without creating a police state, will be a matter exercising many minds this summer.

(Police Review, 5.6.92:1043)

Blakey's comments were put into context by John Baxter, a law lecturer writing on events at Castlemorton who wrote:

ACPO sees the problem as a social one and has handed the problem back to the government ... if the myriad of social problems which underlie the growth of the Traveller-raver phenomenon are ignored, continuing erosion of the rule of law should be expected.

(Policing, vol.18/3, 1992:230)

Two years later in 'The Police Review' of December 1994, Alan Beckley, the Chief Inspector of West Mercia confirmed the views which colleagues had expressed earlier:

No amount of legislation is going to make the Travellers disappear ... the problem is a social one, the new powers are entirely discretionary, and they should be used sparingly ... It is important to realise from the outset that Travellers on land are not solely a policing problem. There is a large amount of social policy here which is not solved by heavy handed tactics. In my opinion they should only be allowed to leave land where they are camped on land for short periods, and unless they are causing a level of nuisance which cannot be controlled, they should be tolerated.

Following their frustration at having to move Travellers around the country, there was even support for permanent transit sites from a number of police sources. The Chief Constable of West Midlands Police, Mr. B. Hadfield, who formerly chaired the Chief Constables' Public Order Committee is quoted as follows: *The idea of permanent sites with all facilities has to be considered ... perhaps we should see if a piece of land near Stonehenge can be found for these people to gather on every year. If we do not consider solutions like that, we will simply go on playing parcel with them.* (Quoted in Earle, 1994:68)

This changing pattern of policing in the 1980s, has been analysed by Reiner (1992), who argues that the benevolence of a Tory government towards the police in the early and middle part of the decade was an attempt to control the consequences of the crime, violence and disorder, which was occurring on a scale unprecedented since the 19th century. But the inequality generated by the Tory government's social and economic policies caused long-term unemployment and political polarisation, which in turn caused greater problems for public order policing. Significantly, this actually undermined their quest for legitimation, which in Britain has traditionally been based on consensus policing. He writes that:

The Conservative government's social and economic policies generated rapidly increasing inequality, long-term unemployment and political polarisation. The vaunted return to 'Victorian values' was above all a return to the spectre of the "two nations" invoked by Disraeli, and of levels of crime violence and disorder unprecedented since the 19th century. (Reiner, 1991:261)

One consequence was the growing numbers who had nowhere suitable, safe or legal to go in urban areas, and left for the countryside, many of whom were the 'Refugees' and 'Outcasts' described in Chapter Five. Their presence was exposed at the Castlemorton event, which was presented by the government as symptomatic of a progressively deteriorating situation, which required further measures to prevent another 'disaster' on a similar scale. Acutely aware of the need to react, and be seen to react, the police set up 'Operation Snapshot', an intelligence gathering exercise on Travellers and Ravers, designed to establish a database of personal details of festival organisers and 'hard-core' new Travellers, registration numbers, sites and movements. To monitor the north of England, a traveller co-ordination unit known as 'Operation Nomad' was established in Penrith, and the information from both units was fed into an ongoing intelligence operation known as the Southern Central Intelligence Unit (SCIU) operated from Devizes in Wiltshire, which held meetings with constabularies from all over Britain. Information was then circulated amongst various government agencies, especially police officers, the Post Office and the DSS (Earle et al., 1994; Kenrick, 1995:124).

Surveillance operations were facilitated by a number of technical developments throughout the decade, such as the introduction of computers for example the Police National Computer (PNC) which listed cars seen at demonstrations, as well as vehicles belonging to those who the police wished to keep under surveillance, enabled the new Travellers and other groups to be subject to closer observation (Manwaring-White, 1983:58-9). The introduction of high resolution video cameras also assisted in surveillance throughout the decade, following their introduction at football stadiums for crowd control purposes (Uglow, 1998:95).

Meetings were held between relevant parties to exchange and discuss the information gathered. While interviewing the former editor of 'Festival Eye' Magazine (E.I. 2), I was shown photocopies of documents which revealed that Operation Snapshot had estimated

around 2000 new Travellers and 8000 traveller vehicles in the UK in 1993. The documents also contained minutes of a meeting for members of the Operation held at Devizes on 30.3.93. Those present included constabulary representatives from those counties with high numbers of new Travellers. These were: Avon and Somerset, Bedfordshire, Devon and Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Dyfed-Powys, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, South Wales, Gwent, Staffordshire, Thames Valley, Warwickshire, Surrey, Suffolk, West Mercia, West Mercia, West Midlands. There were also representatives from the Ministry of Defence, and the National Criminal Intelligence Service, while apologies were sent from the Hampshire and Essex Constabularies. The objectives of Operation Snapshot included the development of:

... a system whereby intelligence could be taken into the control room, where the most up to date intelligence was to hand ... capable of high speed input and dissemination of information.

The minutes from the meeting also reveal that all present were asked and agreed to provide the SCIU with: *... any information, no matter how small on the New Age Travellers or the Rave scene.*

Although some ten years later in 2003, this may appear as rather comical, redolent of a scene from the comedy film 'Carry on Constable', the consequences of close surveillance were rather more serious, particularly concerning benefit entitlements which became increasingly difficult to obtain for travelling communities. This was a process which had begun some years earlier in 1986, when a Working Party Report on Itinerant Claimants prepared for the DHSS in 1986 had advised that:

In the interests of advance warning and the safety of staff, we recommend better liaison with the police.

Later in 1993, an internal Benefits Agency Bulletin (Issue 24/93) headed 'New Age Travellers' and marked 'Not to be Released into the Public Domain' stated:

Offices will be aware of the adverse reaction from the media following the treatment of claims from this client group last summer (Castlemorton). Ministers are concerned that the Benefits Agency and the Employment Services take all the necessary steps to ensure that claims from this group are scrutinised carefully.

The bulletin reported that a National Task Force and strategy produced by ACPO for dealing specifically with New Age Travellers had been set up to:

... *monitor the movements of such groups of Travellers* and to *inform relevant district managers of their approach and numbers.*

In the back of the bulletin is a list of telephone numbers for all the regional police contacts in the Northern New Age Traveller Co-ordination Unit and the Southern Central Intelligence

Unit. Every constabulary in the country, including the Ministry of Defence Police, had at least one and usually several co-ordinators. Also included in the bulletin was a possible itinerary of festivals for summer 1993.

As the police had been monitoring the new Travellers for several years it becomes pertinent to ask just how they were seen, in particular the question of alleged Traveller 'criminality' and whether or not it was as great as the surveillance, the legal measures taken against them, and the rhetoric actually suggested. As was shown in Chapter Four of this study, they were regularly referred to by the media in terms which suggested their criminality, but there is very little research to support this. One study into Traveller 'deviancy' researched each of the forty-five constabularies within England and Wales, including the Transport Police and the Ministry of Defence Police (Hester, 1999). The author comments on the difficulties of gathering information on arrests, 'process offences' (offences dealt with by way of reporting for summons rather than by arrest) and complaints from the public. This was because 75.5% of those interviewed in the study said that their forces had no records which would identify new Travellers with regard to arrests. In addition, 91% said they kept no records for 'process offences' or of complaints from the public which could be attributed to New Age Travellers. Thus, little measurable data on the actual problems caused by Travellers appears to have been kept by the constabularies in question, which may lead us to suggest that despite the government rhetoric to the contrary, there was little that was unusual or distinctive about Travellers or Traveller offences, either in the frequency or degree of seriousness.

The study also tried to develop an official picture of the problem through information from Intelligence Units, constabulary annual reports, and a questionnaire sent to individual officers. Researching police annual records between 1990 and 1993, it was found that 36 per cent had references to new Travellers but again, the references were not quantifiable. Results obtained from the Intelligence Units in Devizes and Penrith show a very low number of actual reported arrests in 1993 and 1994 (72 in 1993, and 93 in 1994). The majority of these arrests were for possession of controlled drugs, many of which included cautions. In contrast, the example of finding a Kalashnikov AK47 rifle and high-value drugs was a counterpoint to the otherwise minor nature of criminal activity attributable to the Travellers. Notwithstanding this last example, findings appear to show that there is little empirical evidence to connect police, media, or government comments about Travellers with criminal activity.

Another part of the study involved administering a questionnaire to individual police officers, which provided information on the ten most frequently quoted problems. There were 159 returned questionnaires, and the results are summarised below in Table 1.

Table 1. Police Perceptions of New Travellers

Number of police with personal experience of a problem		%
1. None	50	31
2. Drugs	23	14
3. Traffic	20	13
4. Trespass	18	11
5. Unco-operative or abusive	17	11
6. Having no fixed abode	17	10
7. Theft and kindred offences	15	9
8. Public order	14	9
9. Begging	11	7
10. Dogs	10	6

Source: Brown, 1995:99

This information is seen to be all the more revealing in the light of the ways in which new Travellers were represented as a major threat to public order, for this was the justification for the police engaging in surveillance and covert methods of intelligence in order to monitor suspect groups and individuals, and that failure to prevent action would lead to more resources being spent in dispersing groups. Whilst drugs appear high on the list, the majority of police officers reported no problems with new Travellers, and the study therefore suggests that the responses by the government the press and the police were wildly out of proportion to the actual number of offences committed by Travellers.

6. Parliamentary Debates on New Travellers in the 1990s

Despite a softening of the police rhetoric, the government's did not. Parliamentary comments were not limited to allegation of Traveller crime or the ways in which they spoiled the natural beauty of the countryside. To justify their general criticism, there were suggestions that, unlike the Gypsies and others, the Travellers had no legitimate reason, either ethnic or economic, to be there in the first place. Support for the Gypsies could be heard from within the unlikely quarters of the Tory Party in the speech by Sir Cranley Onslow, who laid before the House a romantic, fundamentally false version of Gypsy life, in an attempt to expose the Travellers' lack of credentials.

The traditional and genuine Gypsy, whom many of us remember in our childhood, is much rarer nowadays. One does not often find ladies in straw hats and long black skirts offering to sell one clothes pegs or bunches of violets that have just been picked from one's hedgerow. The pattern has changed. There are not so many opportunistic gentlemen

offering to do a job and saying, "I've got half a load of tarmac, squire, and would be glad to do up your drive". Even that traditional Gypsy activity seems to have diminished. (Hansard, 5.2.93:585-6)

Similar rhetoric came from Lord Kenyon:

True Gypsies have been with us for centuries. They have been tolerated - indeed welcomed - into the rural community where they regularly assisted in the harvest and did other casual jobs around the farms and houses. But today they have acquired their parasites, the hippies or drop-outs - generically referred to as New Age travellers - who do not work, who do not want to work, but who believe that, because the Gypsies have the apparent right to roam the countryside at will, they can do the same as the local taxpayer. They are the ones who are so unwelcome in the countryside. (Hansard, 24.5.94:1176)

John Sykes added:

I am not talking about the old romantic show people - the old Romanies. I am not talking about the fortune tellers ... new age travellers ... they are dirty, lazy dropouts, whose dedication to their way of life extends no further than the nearest benefit office, followed closely by the nearest pub ... people who stand up for Travellers are standing up for loafers and spongers, hiding their position behind a veil of wishing to preserve the Gypsies' way of life at all costs. (Hansard, 24.5.94:620-621)

The most illustrative material of the Tory position is in the Parliamentary debates surrounding the Traveller-related sections of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (1993), which became law in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Tory MPs began by demanding tougher legislation, claiming the police were passive in dealing with some Traveller behaviour because the laws were too lax. For example Bowen Wells lamented that:

As candidate for Hertford and Stortford, I was appalled by the desecration and lack of respect for property, and the inability, or unwillingness, of the police to do anything about it. (Hansard, 5.2.93:614)

But marking the debates was a hostility to the Travellers and the ways in which they were perceived as threatening to a rural way of life. For example, following the incident at Castlemorton, Michael Spicer complained that:

... new age travellers, ravers and drugs racketeers arrived at a strength of two motorised divisions, complete with several massed bands and, above all, a highly sophisticated command and signals system. (Hansard, 2.9.92:688)

Tory MP Judith Chaplin complained that they had been shopping in Hungerford, were strangely dressed and had offended local people, driving them out of the town centre which was to the disadvantage of local shopkeepers (Hansard, 5.2.93:618). David Maclean

complained of the *"damage and destruction"* (CJBSCB-C:534) as well as the way that Traveller crime was an extension of the perceived link between Gypsies and criminality (Lord Kenyon, CJB20L:474-7). Nigel Evans added that:

The new age travellers displayed some dreadful antics: they invaded peaceful countryside, decimated peaceful villages, went on the rampage and had raves lasting two or three days, showing a total disregard for the area. (Hansard, 5.2.93:623)

The irony of all this is that amid rising crime rates and riots in urban areas around Britain, the tone of the debate suggested Travellers were invading some remote colony, bringing to mind suggestions not only of 'two nations', but of two countrysides, and when David Nicholson went further, commenting that with levels of fear of the new Travellers in the West Country so high that the spectre of revolution loomed (Hansard, 5.2.93:638), it appeared to be the final proof.

Amid the hysterical Parliamentary rhetoric, it may be wondered if there were any interventions on behalf of the new Travellers. The Labour benches, with the notable exception of Jeremy Corbyn, were conspicuously silent, in a posture which they have maintained since 1991 on such matters. This can be explained by analysing the ways in which the Labour Party changed its stance on issues of law-breaking and order-defiance in the 1980s and 90s. Until the 1980s the Labour Party was closely associated with a number of libertarian causes which can be divided into four areas. These include support for labour and the trade unions; a belief that crime and disorder were inextricably linked with social and economic distress; support for demonstrations and marches, and a long-standing association with libertarian causes (Downes and Morgan, 1994, 1997). The authors observe how from the late 1960s (when being tough on law and order began to be used as a means of attracting electoral support) until the 1990s, there was a dominant belief within the Labour party that its historical associations with libertarian causes and other issues outlined above, were an electoral liability. Since 1979 the Tory party had been making political capital over being strong on issues which the public felt threatened by, while Labour party was seen to be 'soft on crime'. The new Travellers, the peace camps, and the oppositional currents of counter-culturalism which opposed the Thatcher government in the 1980s can be seen as closely linked with these causes, which resurfaced again (albeit in different forms) in the early 1990s. However, in order to compete with the Tories on issues of law and order, after 1992 New Labour moved to drop its historical associations,

... by distancing the Party from the militant wing of trade unionism; by a sequence of policy papers heralding a crackdown on incivilities, hooliganism, and crime in general; by not opposing the 1994 Act legislating against travellers, hunt saboteurs, and 'ravers'; and by forbidding any discussion by shadow ministers of changes to the drugs laws, even to the point of reprimanding those who sought to reopen discussion on decriminalising cannabis.
(Downes and Morgan:2002:299)

Hence, when the Tories proposed tough popular penal measures in the form of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) Labour was coy about opposing them, and

following their election in 1997, introduced further measures which would have been anathema to Labour governments of previous decades.

7. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994)

The event at Castlemorton was one of several in the early 1990s which led to increasing concern about rising crime rates and increasing public disorder, discussed in Part Four of this Chapter. This continued through into 1993, when a Times leader of 18.12.93 expressed public anxiety about:

... a wave of disquiet about crime, borne upon a tide of government unpopularity. The litany of horrific cases ... has helped to keep crime high in the list of public concerns.

Keenly aware of public opinion, at an earlier speech to the annual Conservative Party conference in October 1993, the then Home Secretary Michael Howard announced a '27 point crack down on crime', and to this end a new Bill was introduced to discuss the elaboration of what would eventually become the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994). Howard was staunch proponent of the government's 'back to basics' approach, and was instrumental in elaborating the Act, which included a wide range of measures designed to address and deal with the problem of rising crime and disorder not through any analysis of socio-economic factors, but through increasing the powers of the police and courts.

With regard to the Travellers, provisions in the new Act gave greater powers to evict and to remove trespassers such as new Travellers and unauthorised campers from land, to remove from land those who are organising or attending raves, and to remove other 'disruptive trespassers' (including 'hunt saboteurs' and other protesters) who obstruct, disrupt, or intimidate those taking part in other lawful activities. This applied to common land, highway verges, byways, green lanes and other minor highways, which included many of the most favoured locations for Traveller sites. A key element was a strengthening of the powers contained in the Public Order Act 1986, s.39 which gave the police power to direct trespassers to leave if they have damaged the land itself (as distinct from the property on it), or if they have six or more vehicles there. The relevant provisions of "aggravated trespass" (s.68, 69) and "trespassory assemblies" (65, 66) were made sufficiently wide to catch the activities of groups protesting against road-building and other environmentally controversial land-development projects (The Observer, 19.6.94). The Act also empowered police to stop and turn away pedestrians and other vehicles who were heading for the site of a rave or a trespassory assembly. Trespass in England and Wales was formerly a civil rather than a criminal offence, but the new Act now made court injunctions unnecessary, thus speeding up eviction times.

But the most contentious matter affecting travellers of all kinds was s.80, which repealed Part II of the Caravan Sites Act (1968), which had imposed a duty on local authorities to provide sites for Gypsy encampments. It also removed the Treasury's power to pay grants to local authorities to cover the capital cost of building and maintaining Gypsy sites. This marked a return to the pre-1968 position, namely s.24 of the Caravan Sites and Control of

Development Act 1960[5], and resulted in widespread concern among civil liberties and support groups that the change would result in the police being employed to confront and move on Gypsies and others, who had nowhere else to go.

The main groups which Part V of the Act, headed "Public Order: Collective Nuisance on Land" was specifically concerned with, are mentioned by name: squatters, Gypsies, hunt saboteurs, road protesters and raves. Although there were no obvious connections between them, they were conflated by the government in response to the problems they were causing for the Tories of the Shires. This provides the clearest sign of the government's intention to collapse the distinctions between the various target groups, who are simply described as a "collective nuisance". Such direct labelling is unusual in legislation, which previously had allowed for changes in procedure rather than naming the target. The effect of naming specific groups could also suggest that the public order sections of the Bill were much more of an exercise in public relations than a legislative necessity, having the effect of scapegoating certain sections of society in order to assuage public concern over the moral and economic uncertainties which had begun to prevail in the early 1990s, and which the 'Back to Basics'[6] programme had weakly hoped to address.

David Wastell, who was at the time the political editor of the Sunday Telegraph, saw a link between the Criminal Justice Bill and John Major's strategy:

Like US President George Bush, and Vice-President Dan Quayle's notorious 'Family Values' platform, it represented an attempt to evoke a vision of the long-lost (or perhaps never was) moral, orderly England. At its core, the Criminal Justice Bill appeals to traditional country Tories, who have had hippies on their property and want them stopped. (Wastell, 1995)

The passage of the Bill through parliament was delayed by several months, as several provisions met strong opposition in the House of Lords, where numerous amendments were made. The government then recalled the Bill to the Commons to reverse their effect, in particular the preservation of local authority duty to provide sites for Gypsies. Objections were not confined to the House of Lords, and objections came from unlikely quarters as the National Farmers' Union, the Country Landowners' Association as well as the National Trust, the Town and Country Planning Association and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Clements and Campbell, 1997). The effect was to significantly increase police powers in respect of the control and dispersal of various forms of 'collective trespass or nuisance on land'. But the Association of Chief Police officers opposed the repeal of the duty to provide sites, and the effect of the legislation which was "to 'criminalise' the act of living in a caravan" (op.cit.:67), and no doubt, put more pressure on the police to carry out evictions. There were numerous public demonstrations against the Act's provisions, in particular against those of aggravated trespass. In one such demonstration on 19.10.94, riot police confronted protesters outside the House of Commons and according to the press some 2000 police prevented a full-scale assault on Parliament. However, there were only 12 arrests.

First introduced in December 1993, it received Royal Assent on 3rd November 1994. The writer and activist George Monbiot considered the new trespass law as 'the greatest victory this decade' of the landed gentry and other major landowners. He continues:

The new act is another act of enclosure, a further assertion of exclusive rights by those who claim to own the land ... The argument most often advanced by the Country Landowners' Association in favour of the Criminal Justice Act is that travellers damage hedges, fields, and features of historical or scientific value. Yet, every year throughout the 1990s, country landowners have overseen the loss of 18,000 kilometres of hedgerow.

(Mackay, 1996:203)

8. Concluding Remarks

Even though the new Travellers had been around since the mid-1970s, there was little proof that they were collectively responsible for any serious, organised criminal activity. Evidence suggests that most new Traveller offences were relatively few, and usually for low-tariff offences such as trespass, obstruction and vehicle/road traffic infringements, with most of those arrested being discharged afterwards. However, if new Traveller offences were <u>not</u> indicative of law breaking on a large scale, as is suggested here, how can the reaction of the police be explained, with the setting up of extensive intelligence operations, and the exclusion of Travellers from some counties and areas?

The reaction of the police needs explaining through the context of policing during the period under consideration. During the 1980s the rigid enforcement of law and order served the interests of a Conservative government which was attempting to subdue opposition mainly from the political left. The new Travellers were identified as part of an 'enemy within', and were taken on and dealt with by the Thatcher government as part of a crusade against counter-cultural tendencies of all kinds. For Hall et al. [7]:

It is at such times of 'crisis' that the capitalist state assumes total social authority ... over the subordinate classes ... in such a way that ... *it shapes the whole direction of social life in its image.*

(Hall, 1978:216)

This exceptional moment calls for an "authoritarian consensus" (p.217), in which the government manages to convince the rest of society in the form of the press, the general public, the courts and law enforcement, that the real crisis is not the crisis in the social and economic organisation or management of society but one of law and order, where the real enemy are those who are destroying society because of the ineffective ways they have been dealt with in the past. In a very similar way, Thatcher's pronouncements on law and order, the authoritarian populism of the government, and the rhetoric of law and order in the press, enhanced the power of the police, and found expression in tough new law and order legislation, most notably with the Public Order Act of 1986, and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994.

Moreover, scapegoating the Travellers helped distract attention from the more complex

underlying causes of discontent, especially in counties where there were local tensions stemming essentially from political and economic conflicts and contradictions; local Tories were pitched against Westminster Tories in a struggle to limit the commercial exploitation and despoiling of the rural environment. Free markets and privatisation were causing a decline in public services in rural areas. The old establishment of farmers and landed gentry was locked in a burgeoning movement for the preservation of the countryside, with groups such as Friends of the Earth, Earth First, CND and the Ramblers Association, in a struggle to protect it from business development, damage, bloodsports and so on. More generally, the contradictions between Tory policies popularly expressed over ten years through 'Victorian values' and 'Back to Basics' was in stark contrast to the stark realities of high unemployment, escalating crime and violence, negative equity, welfare dependence and homelessness, and all the personal consequences they had for all those affected.

But early experience at key incidents such as Molesworth, the Beanfield and Stoney Cross showed that evictions proved costly, dangerous and difficult to achieve, as well as damaging to the reputation of the police. The latter was a particularly sensitive issue in the late 1980s, brought about through a series of miscarriages of justice, aggressive policing of industrial disputes such as the miners' strike, and perhaps most importantly, an apparent inability to deal with soaring crime rates. The traditional idea of consensus policing was being lost, resulting in a serious decline in public confidence in the police, which damaged their quest for legitimation. Moreover, there was an awareness among chief constables that government policies had actually contributed to increased lawlessness and a growing mobile 'underclass'. The symptoms of social neglect and decline were becoming increasingly manifest in the countryside, where a small but influential groups of wealthy rural Tories demanded the police act to remove the Travellers and others from their woods and estates, in a fashion which would have amounted to their becoming a private army of bailiffs. The police were unable and unwilling to enforce every rule and be used in this way, and consequently tended to become more concerned with surveillance in an attempt to prevent Traveller festivals and encampments. Thus police sensitisation to these may have operated indirectly, in the sense that they were spurred to action not so much out of conviction, but by making a concession towards government and popular hostility through the conspicuous surveillance of marginal groups. In this way, they attempted to satisfy the public and the government that they were attempting to do their job properly.

What the new Travellers came to symbolise was clearly more important than what they actually did, in terms of trespassing in fields of southern England. If the new Travellers had done all they were said to have done, in the way of violence, damage to property, inconveniencing and annoying others, and clearly they did a lot of those things, it is clear why such rule breaking was responded to punitively. But the level of the perceived threat to the community, and the magnitude of the response was clearly felt to be much greater and more direct, in terms of an invasion which had to be protected against, systems to warn communities of their likely arrival, the police presence and so on. It is thus necessary to understand that these responses were as much to what the Travellers stood for as what they actually did, and this will be explored in the final chapter.

Notes

[1] Morris (1989) notes how in 1976 at the Notting Hill Carnival, the police had been obliged to use dustbin lids to defend themselves from missiles.

[2] See the documentary television programme 'Secret Society' by Duncan Campbell (BBC2:1987) where these issues are discussed by the then ACPO President, James Anderton.

[3] The quotation is part of a written reply from Giles Shaw to Clive F Labour MP, reported in the Observer of 28.7.85.

[4] Estimates made in the BBC2 documentary 'Seven Days at Stoney Cross' (BBC2:1986)

[5] Section 24 of the 1960 Act bestows a power on authorities to provide caravan sites, rather than a duty.

[6] The so-called 'Back to Basics' campaign was launched at the Party Conference in Blackpool in 1993. It allegedly had five elements; self-discipline, respect for the law, consideration for others, responsibility for oneself, and responsibility for the family. For Major, some people had lost sight of these values and needed to return to them (Sunday Times, 9.1.94:11). The campaign quickly foundered amid charges of hypocrisy, when it emerged that the campaign was a thinly veiled attack on single mothers, some of whom had had children by Tory MPs.

[7] Hall (1978) and his colleagues identified a series of moral panics to do with permissiveness, vandals, scroungers, drug abusers, which characterised the 1960s and early 70s. Ironically, the new Travellers were identified by the press as typically embodying all of them.

Chapter 7

Moral Action or Moral Panic?

1. Introduction

When research began on this topic in the mid-1990s relatively few studies had been carried out into the new Travellers, and none had analysed the question of their 'becoming deviant' and the processes involved. My contribution to a literature of the field has been to build up a picture of these, and their association with the deviant labels linked with being a 'new age traveller', and to analyse how the characteristics of Travellers and responses to them changed over time. This concluding chapter summarises the points put forward in this study and relates them to a theoretical position, in particular I will relate it to the literature on moral panics. Finally, I will offer some inferences and suggestions for policy.

2. The Making of a Moral Panic

The attribution of deviancy to vagrants has been a recurring feature of English life since the middle ages, especially when the government was fearful of internal dissent, and the history of Travellers of all kinds in the 20th century has been largely one of contempt and hostility. While some travelling groups have slowly gained legitimacy because of their ethnic characteristics and others because of their occupational traditions, during the 1980s and 90s the new Travellers suffered a multiple denial, having neither the human rights accorded to an ethnic group, nor the characteristics of the traveller whose work demands mobility. However, this does not explain why the reactions towards them took the form that they did and what prompted the control culture's response, from the first incidents of Traveller harassment in 1984, to the 'coda' of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994).

At the beginning of the 1980s Travellers were hardly known outside the small groups who identified themselves as such, yet as we have seen, only a few years later hundreds of troop reinforcements were sent to oversee their eviction from Molesworth. This, and the 'Beanfield' incident, and later in 1992 at Castlemorton, are the most complete examples and are probably the most striking for the level of hysteria involved. There is no doubt that the presence of Travellers was responded to by residents in many locations as the social equivalent of a plague of locusts, with locals aiming where possible to prevent an invasion, protesting to the government and taking legal action in the form of court injunctions. Yet by the mid-1990s the new Travellers had virtually disappeared from the public consciousness, remaining for most people as folk devils of the past.

Their behaviour suggested something more than that of ordinary yobs from the inner-cities who had been associated with delinquent behaviour in the past. The early 'Pioneer' Travellers appeared to be articulate and organised as well as mobile, and the characteristic style of dress with ethnic clothes, the long unkempt hair, the ramshackle vehicle which doubled as a home, the collectivism of travel in large groups, could all give the initial

impression of a degree of counter-cultural organisation, and hence a greater threat. Moreover, at a time when neo-liberal values were in the ascendancy; economic individualism, materialism and aspiration, allied with a neo-conservative nostalgia for a moral golden age, their conspicuous rejection of these values created an
unease and hostility on the part of authorities, towards actors who both symbolically and physically, were 'out of place' in the sedentary, spatially organised and highly symbolic counterpoint to urban excess and depravity - the countryside of the south-east of England. Not only were most Travellers to be found in a bedrock area of conservative values and Tory support, but they were also based in areas which were trying to adjust to a new range of structural pressures stemming from rampant exploitation and economic decline. These characteristics together represented not simply desire to be different, but something much deeper and more permanent - for example the 'alternative' or 'permissive' society. They threatened the boundaries of the settled society by blurring them with other marginals and outsiders. In this way they appeared more unsettling and potentially more threatening than if they had conformed to a simple folklore image, for example of the football hooligan living in an urban area.

The patterns of behaviour and the responses of the authorities, press and local community to the new Travellers are similar to those described in Cohen's study of the mods in the mid-1960s. His introductory chapter concludes with a theoretical overview of the mods and rockers panic based on categories derived from research into social responses to natural disasters (Cohen, 2002:12) and is summarised as follows:

1. *Warning:* during which arises, mistakenly or not, some apprehensions based on conditions out of which danger may arise. The warning must be coded to be understood and impressive enough to overcome resistance to the belief that current tranquillity can be upset.
2. *Threat:* during which people are exposed to communication from others, or to signs from the approaching disaster itself indicating specific imminent danger. This phase begins with the perception of some change, but as with the first phase, may be absent or truncated in the case of sudden disaster.
3. *Impact:* during which the disaster strikes and the immediate unorganised response to the death, injury or destruction takes place.
4. *Inventory:* during which those exposed to the disaster begin to form a preliminary picture of what has happened and of their own condition.
5. *Rescue:* during which the activities are geared to immediate help for the survivors. As well as people in the impact area helping each other, the suprasystem begins to send aid.
6. *Remedy:* during which more deliberate and formal activities are undertaken towards relieving the affected. The suprasystem takes over the functions the emergency system cannot perform.
7. *Recovery:* during which, for an extended period, the community either recovers its former equilibrium or achieves a stable adaptation to the changes which the disaster may have brought about.

With some adaptations the model could be applied to a number of situations where

Travellers were present, which were characterised by the hysterical reaction of politicians and police, press sensationalism, local solidarity, the threat of invasion and moral pollution, and closer attention and surveillance. As a result of this attention, their presence was more likely to be recorded, there were fewer safe places to park, and therefore it was more likely to result in confrontations and conflict in the form of court orders and evictions by police and bailiffs, and eventually the introduction of harsher laws.

As with the mods and rockers, there was an amplification of deviance, as by the late 1980s, the early 'Pioneer' travellers were joined by those unemployed and often homeless from urban areas. This included some of the poorest, most marginal and in need of care, who either left or were evicted from mental hospitals, urban hostels, squats and pavements who took refuge in the countryside, where they further heightened collective visibility, by living out the popular image of an idle, drug-fuelled refuge on the road, which for a time at least, was funded by the taxpayer and well away from the forces of law and order. Their conspicuous lack of organisation, the public hostility stemming from the press reaction and the apparent willingness of some groups to live up to this deviant 'reputation' further damaged attempts at self-representation or ability to protest at harassment or mount appeals to hold festivals, all of which the movement had done in the 1970s and early 1980s. Consequently, new Travellers suffered the reaction of local authorities and interests often through the notoriety of a minority, which in turn fuelled the worst excesses of the tabloid press and politicians, in a circular model of amplification described by Cohen (2002:12). This builds on the counter-intuitive analysis of Wilkins (1964) that when some forms of deviance are reacted to in this way, a minority would actually be reinforced in their behaviour, rather than being dissuaded from it through punishment and a sense of shame.

Although the Travellers were associated with a particular way of life, it was not very clear how they actually lived or what they had done, which may have increased rather than decreased the chances of an extreme reaction. Scapegoating and other types of hostility are more likely to occur in situations of maximum ambiguity (Cohen, 2002:162), which allow rumours to fester and suspicion to develop; that there is no smoke without fire and so on, which allows people to assume the worst. In the absence of hard facts, the media moved to fill the information gap, and was instrumental in creating and maintaining a moral panic over the new Travellers. The intense hostility of certain sections of the press could be understood in terms of the intimate relationship of these papers to the Conservative government, which responded to market pressures by competing with each other to present dramatic and shocking narratives and spectacles with a strong moral content. A popular narrative unfolded which was designed to frighten the settled community, and their 'baptism' as the 'Peace Convoy' and later as the 'New Age Travellers' effectively bestowed upon them the label of 'folk devil', part of an oppositional culture of resistance. Images of conflict, violence and depravity, portrayed the Travellers as dangerous, scrounging, and so on, and sought to vilify them and justify police action, in reports of events where conflict was likely or had happened. Finally, a general attitude was formalised in various government debates on 'the Peace Convoy problem', or the 'New Age Traveller problem', which in turn justified the introduction of harsh measures to combat and defeat the new 'threat'.

A press campaign reached into virtually every dwelling in the UK to spread the idea of the 'Traveller as demon', who violated private property and the sanctity of the countryside, in what were masterpieces of sensation, distortion and showmanship. For example in the Sun, one headline was *Hippy may face murder bid charges* and followed on with *A HIPPY leader is expected to be charged with attempted murder following the bloody battle of Stonehenge* (The Sun, 3.6.85). But the story was not taken up by the other newspapers, and the Sun said no more about it on subsequent days. This kind of reporting, in which a rumour, a suggestion or a supposition flair up for one day and then disappear from view, being neither taken up nor denied, is one of the regularities identified by Cohen (2002:28-30), and shows how images are made to present the phenomenon much more sharply than in reality. Although it is not possible to talk in terms of a 'true reality' which could have been reported, no other explanatory frameworks were suggested, and this denied readers an in-depth perspective. This all served to increase the pressure on Travellers, particularly from Westminster, local councils, police, residents' groups and so on.

One possible difference from the subjects of Cohen's study is that in some respects the new Travellers were more threatening; they involved the encampment in the locality for more than a weekend by people with a clear commitment to values and practices which were regarded as alien and dirty by the locals, and who sometimes vastly outnumbered the local population, for example at Castlemorton. Sometimes the locals were successful in preventing the Travellers gathering, for example at Stonehenge. Yet the overall outcome can be said to be similar, in the sense that many Travellers have been harassed out of existence, or else retreated to remote upland areas on legal sites, or migrated to other, more Traveller-friendly countries.

This draws attention to another similarity shared with subcultural groups of recent years; that the new Travellers were largely passive / impotent in their inability to deal with panic reactions, and participated in a passive way in the spiral of stigmatisation and hostility. The point at which it might have broken down yet did not, was on occasions, for example at Stonehenge in 1985 when the organisers and new Travellers began to negotiate with the local community and authorities to get permission to hold the festival. This may have reduced the unpredictability of the threat posed by traveller festivals etc. in terms of whether the 'disaster' would take place and with what local impact, as negotiations centre on reducing the impact.

After the introduction of new legislation in 1986, and a temporary improvement in economic conditions between 1986 and 1990 the new Travellers largely disappeared from the press and political speeches. Tension subsided, although the festival scene continued and the number of Travellers grew. But the techniques and processes of news production meant that a complement of labels, vocabulary and narrative had been prepared and set ready for future incidents, and in the early 1990s another economic recession provoked a similar cycle of events.

It has been asserted that participants in subcultures desire a moral panic for the recognition and confirmation it provides for the underground status of subcultural practices, and these

enhance the 'subcultural capital' to be derived from participation (McRobbie, 1995:565). But the measures taken against the new Travellers such as the raids by riot police, arrests and fines, came to be bitterly resented by participants. Many would have rather occupied sites in out-of-the-way places where they were not going to upset the locals, and would rather have parked-up on common land or council land than private property, but this was much more difficult to do. Small numbers of travellers even attempted to get on to official sites, only to be told their types of vehicles could not be accommodated. Therefore, because the probable consequence of notoriety and publicity was closer police surveillance and unwanted attention from the local community which could result in arrest and the loss of one's home, it could not be said that publicity or negative attitudes in any way contributed to the self-identity or reputation of new Travellers.

3. How Did It End?

In addressing the question of how the panic over the Travellers' ended I will separate the interests of the mass media and public from the Travellers themselves. Looking firstly at the former, the brief answer is that there was a lack of interest, as it was felt that something was being done about them. When the first panic over the Travellers subsided in the mid-1980s, the Stonehenge festival was prohibited and the Public Order Act was introduced. Even though the Travellers remained and numbers continued to grow, other new and newsworthy phenomena forced themselves into the headlines, in particular an improvement in the economy, which contributed to less official interest in scapegoating new Travellers and other groups until the early 1990s, when amid worsening economic conditions, the press and government resuscitated a familiar, aggressive narrative, and the panic was renewed.

However, wider social changes combined to diminish public interest. Firstly, in the early 1990s, the major structural changes, many of which Thatcherism had come to be defined against, such as immigration, gender equality, and the rights of minorities, were all more widespread and commonplace. This contributed to a greater fragmentation of society through more diversity, where this was constituted by a plural of lifestyles, identities, values and moral positions. When these are allied to the instability and uncertainty caused by the deregulation of the economy, unemployment, the erosion of the welfare state, rising crime rates, a growing underclass, it provides the conditions for what Beck (1992) terms 'risk society', a greater tendency to make one's identity through individual experiences, and therefore a greater tendency to practise and respect lifestyle differences (Giddens, 1991). Because of these changes, the

...hard and fast boundaries between 'normal and deviant' would seem to be less common.
(McRobbie and Thornton, 1995:572-73)

By the early 1990s the effects of this political and social fragmentation could be seen in parts of the English countryside. There, the new Travellers and ravers were joined by ranks of roads protesters, animal rights activists and others, whose diverse interests were united by mutual opposition to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, and its implications for the

curtailment of liberties and lifestyles which many Travellers and other minorities were faced with. The founding of pressure and lobby groups, self-help and interest groups against the implications Bill, as well as the ways in which the new Travellers and their support groups had come to contest the views of the media, created a greater diversity of voices and opinions in the press, and a more even contest in the reporting of events in the mainstream press. Changes in technology, and a greater democratisation of communications were brought about by technological advances in small-scale and DIY publishing, all enhanced the potential for self-representation and diffusion of ideas, information etc. This was an important development as it enabled the new groups and their representatives to provide a significant body of opposing perspectives and through their diffusion, contest the moral panic over their actions (McRobbie, 1994:213).

A related point is that there was a growing belief on the part of the public that the disparity between the rhetoric of government propaganda and the right-wing press, and the kinds of reality which people experienced daily, through high unemployment, high crime rates, more repossessed homes and single parents, was growing ever wider. As was shown earlier, the harsh realities of the time came to affect almost everyone, and it was not just the poor and marginal, but also those who were very much on the inside of society who began losing their jobs and homes, which made the alleged criminal trespass on the land of some of the most affluent in some of the most wealthiest areas of the country appear trivial in comparison.

This has implications for moral panic theory. Until the early 1990s a panic based on the 'disaster' model required a 'monopolistic' view of media control of information. In this analysis, if a disaster suddenly strikes, (in this case an 'invasion' of a rag-tag of vans, lorries and buses), the public depended on the media to provide them with information about it (except for those in the small towns and villages who actually saw them and witnessed them at first hand). It was therefore susceptible to the impression created by vivid imagery and selective presentation of facts which, with previous and additional knowledge, they may have discounted. But in the early 1990s the 'folk devils' and their representatives were better able to contest the proposed sanctions and control in journals and sections of the mainstream press. Unlike in previous years they put up resistance to stories with a moral panic 'angle', contesting the moral guardians' version of events with their own, questioning and challenging the prejudiced assumptions and opinions of those most closely allied with the Thatcher government. This was particularly important given the relative absence of a strong and vocal opposition to the Tories from the Labour Party at that time.

In this way, support groups and others were able to more effectively oppose, contribute to and shape the debate about the Travellers and others, contesting what they perceived as stereotypes and misconceptions.[1] These developments support the views of McRobbie and Thornton (1995) when they point out that today's more sophisticated and fragmented media impede the development of spasmodically occurring moral panics, rendering this aspect of the original notion out of date. The changes also raise interesting questions for further research about their links between the Travellers and others, and how they began working together in a new alliance of pressure groups against the Criminal Justice and

Public Order Bill.

Turning now to the 'disappearance' of the participants, by 1988 there were several strands in the Travellers' scene; some of the original actors had simply matured and grown out of it, while others had simply given up, often after being put off turned back or blocked by the police before even arriving at their destination, and then being continually pushed around and harassed in the fields and lanes, searched and refused service in bars and shops, as well as being frightened off or deterred by actual or threatened control measures. Those remaining 'Pioneer' travellers had begun merging with newly arrived 'Refugees' who had the ability to organise, but little of the original Traveller ethos, and 'Crusties', who had neither the ability to organise nor the ethos, and it is therefore unsurprising that, apart from a few 'Pioneers', none were able to maintain any generational continuity throughout the 1990s.

A similar pattern of behaviour among participants has been observed in research into fads and fashions; a period of latency is noted when it is followed only by a few, just as in the 1970s the traveller phenomenon was developing well before the media brought it to public attention. Then there is a period of rapid growth and diffusion, followed by a phase of commercialisation and exploitation. Although the Traveller lifestyle was clearly difficult to exploit, there were some minor developments, most notably in popular music with the Levellers and Chumbawumba and with certain fashions which entered the mainstream, for example unlaced paratrooper boots, combat trousers, matted dreadlocks, body piercing, tattoos and other symbols of early 1990s counter-culture. In fact, during the second surge of media interest in the Travellers, the style was sometimes characterised by an exaggerated sense of behaviour by some newer participants, in what sometimes appeared like a final, conscious effort to recreate a style which had been done some years earlier. This supports Cohen's view (2002:171) that amplification stops because the social distance from the original 'deviants' becomes so great that new recruits are put off from joining the subculture. In Cohen's study the only new recruits to the 'mod' phenomenon were the very young or what he terms the 'lumpen', who in the 1990s can be compared to the younger 'Refugees' and 'Outcasts' who, having moved to the countryside from urban pavements and cardboard cities, usually had no access to any other acceptable alternative. This was particularly the case with the latter group, and it was in this way the scene in the early 1990s gradually became part of wider social problem, a poor people's movement predominantly made up of urban 'underclass'.

By 1994 most of the original actors had left the scene altogether, for whom the way of life became preserved in nostalgic memories. Others left for Ireland, Spain, or other Traveller-friendly countries (Byrne and Davison (1994), Earle (1994), Dearling (1998)). A few remaining groups kept to the few available legal sites, while others evolved into what have been called "new tribes" from the 'Spiral Tribe' sound system, to the 'Dongas' environmental protesters (Vidal, 1992; McKay, 1996:ch 5). For those that remained in England, the sensational headlines and panic disappeared from the media, and the only newsprint dedicated to the new Travellers appears to have been in the coverage given to case law.[2] This has involved the testing of the new legal powers and precedent-setting legal

cases which have sometimes served to mitigate the harshness of the new laws. These frequently involved Gypsies, who often suffered the consequences of the new laws aimed at controlling the Travellers[3], and created further tensions between the two groups.

4. Why Did It Happen?

In the moral panic over the new Travellers, the press, politicians and police were 'key' players, and the engineering of a panic by institutional 'elite' groups is one of several types described by Goode and Ben Yehuda (1994). Hall et al. (1978) have advanced what is probably the best-known analysis of an elite-engineered moral panic with their analysis of 'mugging' in the early 1970s. Applying this to the panic over the new Travellers, it is clear that when it first became national news, the Travellers had already been around for some years, but as with the mods and rockers, they were presented as new in order to justify their inclusion as news, and as a result of sensational presentation, public and official concern was out of all proportion to the actual level of the threat.

This begs the question of why the authorities and press mobilised in the ways they did. Anxiety over their presence and 'deviant' behaviour was most acute at a time when a number of new risks seemed to threaten the public, such as high levels of unemployment, riots, an increasing drug problem, the erosion of welfare benefits, and increasing levels of crime and tension in both urban and rural areas. In short, the failure of Thatcherite economic policies. This is borne out by closer analysis of a number of key indicators of economic performance. Between May 1979 and the fourth quarter of 1982, the gross domestic product fell by 4.2 per cent. Between May 1979 and February 1983 industrial production fell by 10.2 per cent, and manufacturing production by 17.3 per cent. Unemployment increased from 1,253,000 to 3,021,000, an increase of 141 per cent. There were 9,453 more policemen, but crime had increased by 28.6 per cent. Taxation and public expenditure had not been reduced, and the economy continued to decline. In the field of public order, things had also got worse, with riots in many British cities in 1980, 1981, and again in 1985, inspired by the economic recession, the decline of the inner cities, immigration, racial prejudice and crime (Sked and Cook, 1993).

But the mid-1980s witnessed a growing tension and conflict not only in urban areas, but in the countryside too. As discussed in Chapter Three, by the mid-1980s much of rural Britain in the south-east had become the 'locale' of a complex matrix of interests, all connected with its commercial exploitation. The forces of monetarism had been unleashed onto the countryside from Westminster, which led to rural residential developments, business and retail parks, tourism, leisure and entertainment services and so on. But this had met with resistance from other Conservative groups at local level, such as wealthy ex-urbanites and landowners, together with their representatives at parish level, their Members of Parliament and their organisations, who believed that the countryside's quality as an amenity could only be retained if access and use by other groups could be restricted. Moreover, the damage done to land by new Travellers was less than those done by farmers with modern farming practices and land management practices, where local farms were organised and run in order to maximise profits. The same could be said of local community facilities, such as bus

services, banks, shops and so on, where many had been closed due to their unprofitability.

Despite the problems, the misdemeanours of a few travelling hippies received more attention than the deeper, complex and more pressing causes of economic decline and mismanagement. For example, in 1985 news of the Travellers filled the newspapers, as hundreds of police were sent to destroy, impound and move them on, for committing in most cases, the civil offence of Trespass. As was shown in Chapter Four, the press reports echoed the fear and loathing of vagrants in earlier centuries, which brought to the public mind a series of 'respectable' fears about dirt, dishonesty and danger which the new strangers constituted. In this way, a debate on protecting the public from Travellers was presented as more urgent than other social issues, such as the failure of public provision for jobs, housing, social security, apart from the need for temporary sites and so on. To resolve the situation, the Government looked to the Criminal Justice system, which sought to re-establish authority through repressive policing. During the 1980s the Chief Constables repeated the Tory government's tough line on Travellers using the rhetoric of an 'enemy within', and the government tacitly approved of its measures to act independently to remove these threats.

However, between 1986 and 1989 the economic slump went into remission when there was a brief economic boom. The pound was strong, unemployment fell, and after the government removed restrictions on money lending and share dealing, the financial sector boomed. Credit was easy to obtain, taxes were cut, and share prices rose quickly when newly privatised public industries such as British Airways and British Steel and all the public utilities, e.g. gas, water and telecommunications, were floated. Concerns with public order disappeared, and the moral panic over the Travellers subsided. But in the third quarter of 1990 a new recession began to bite, and the same year also saw massive riots in London over the Poll Tax. Crime rates soared between 1990 and 1991, showing unprecedented growth, both in rate of increase and absolute terms, and unemployment grew to over 3 million. The economy began to spiral downwards: in 1991 48,000 businesses failed - a record number - and more did so in 1992. In the same year 75,000 homes were repossessed, with more in 1992. More than a quarter of a million people were already at least six months behind with the mortgage payments, and by mid-1992 the recession of the early 1990s had become the longest in post-war history. The economy shrank by 2.5 per cent, in 1991 and shrank again in 1992. Interest rates fell but were still at ten per cent. Inflation was at 4.3 per cent, which meant that real interest rates had in fact gone up. Finally, the trade deficit for 1992 was over £7 billion pounds, a record amount at the time.

The problems which the economy was suffering were particularly severe for all those stranded by social and economic forces, but the responsibilities of government were minimised through the self-reliance expressed through John Major's 'Back to Basics', a resuscitated version of Thatcher's Victorian values'; two strategies underpinned by a morality of individualism which reduced the expectation that government would provide for those in need. This placing of responsibility on the individual for their own welfare was explicitly used to decide whether or not individuals were deserving of benefits. For example, with regard to housing single mothers, during the 1990s there were suggestions

that some women were deliberately getting pregnant in order to 'jump the queue' and gain direct access to local authority housing, but the Housing Minister Sir George Young emphasised that placing individuals and families in accommodation according to the urgency of their needs, should not necessarily be the key issue:

We don't believe that someone who needs urgent help should subsequently take precedence for long-term accommodation over others on the waiting list...

(Independent, 21.1.94)

and that: ... *homelessness should not necessarily mean priority for getting local authority homes.* (Financial Times, 19.1 94)

In fact for a brief period it seems entirely possible that among poor and long-term unemployed women, some were deliberately getting pregnant to obtain settled accommodation, while their partners were retreating to hostels, the pavements and then the countryside as 'crusty', 'Outcast' travellers.

However, it was not only the urban poor who were affected by the recession of the early 1990s, but also many poor rural dwellers, agricultural labourers and owner-occupier farmers. As was discussed in Chapter Three, many village communities suffered from a withdrawal of public expenditure and declining or non-existent private and public services, from pubs, shops, banks, to police stations, post offices, bus and train services. High levels of unemployment and homelessness all indicated profound levels of social exclusion, which ultimately manifest itself in terms of personal stress, depression, and conflict with others. At the same time, the old establishment of farmers and landed gentry were increasingly confronted and challenged by a burgeoning movement for the preservation of the countryside which favoured direct action, such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Hunt Saboteurs, Earth First, CND and the Ramblers Association, as well as numerous rural sympathisers, who all sought in their own, sometimes conflicting ways, to protect it from business development, pollution, damage, bloodsports and so on, in order to preserve the idyll and make it available to all.

Many rural areas fared differently in the 1980s and 90s, but it was shown earlier that the part of Britain where these tensions were most sharply experienced was within the so-called 'Golden Horn', in the Home Counties, and in the central south of England, a 'bedrock' site of Conservatism. But due to the proximity of Stonehenge and other sacred sites, as well as the location of other traditional fairs, it was also a popular area for Travellers. Moreover, as was shown in Chapter Five, the Travellers' scene had evolved and the 'Pioneers' of the 1970s and 80s had been joined by growing numbers of 'Refugees' and 'Outcasts' who shared none of the original groups' ethos of living independently from settled society and in harmony with the environment. The anti-social elements heightened their potential as 'folk demons' and offered them as a sacrificial 'scapegoat' for all social anxieties produced by the changes to a severely destabilised society. By exaggerating the threat, identifying a common enemy and demonising them, talking tough and taking tough measures against them, the Government attempted to unite a diverse range of rural interests, while ignoring

the root causes and consequences of unemployment, rising crime rates, inflated house prices, dependence on state aid etc. This is summarised in the following table, in which public anxieties are contrasted with Traveller oppositions. It adapts a chart created by ni Shuinear (1997) on sedentary-Gypsy oppositions.

Table 2. Public Anxieties and New Traveller Stereotypes

Public anxieties	'Deviant' Traveller stereotypes
Tory policies based on free markets and self-restraint.	'Hippies', collectivism, hedonism.
Aggressive, pro-active policing. Rising crime rates.	Counter-culturalism, subversives and 'anarchists'.
Unemployment; people want work but can't find it.	Travellers unwilling to work, content to scrounge.
Forced dependence on state aid .	Begging, welfare scrounging and prosperity from drug dealing.
Deteriorating housing provision. Struggling to afford a mortgage. Negative equity.	Self-created squalor; becoming voluntarily homeless.
Violent crime in town and country.	Mobile threat to settled communities' families, property etc.
A feeling that nothing makes sense, everything is impersonal and changing too fast.	The myth of a golden past when traditional travellers were welcomed because they were useful, contrasted with the now total loss of their economic function and identity.

While there appears to be extensive evidence of an orchestrated campaign over the Travellers engineered by ruling elites to deflect attention away from the economic crisis particularly in rural areas, employing the concept of a moral panic to explain such a reaction has been criticised on some grounds. One of the main criticisms has been put forward by Waddington (1986), who criticises Hall's argument that the crisis over mugging in the late 1970s was generated to divert attention from the crisis in British capitalism. Waddington claims the concept is a "polemical rather than analytic concept" (op.cit.:258), and while this criticism may be applicable to the work of Hall et al., I make no such claims in this study that the crisis over the Travellers was indicative of deeper structural contradictions which were symptomatic of a crisis in capitalism. However, Waddington also comments that:

the principal difficulty .... of the panic is in *establishing the comparison between the scale of the problem and the scale of the response to it... Conceptually, the notion of a moral panic lacks any criteria of proportionality without which it is impossible to determine whether concern about any... problem is justified or not.* (op.cit:246)

As Goode and Ben Yehuda (1994:43) have observed, for the criterion of disproportionality to be met, there has to be some sense in which the response is out of proportion to the putative threat. If this is applied to new Travellers, although inconvenience and disruption was present in some southern county areas, usually in the form of trespass, damage to land, and problems with local landowners, for example at Molesworth, the type and degree of seriousness of the offences were usually so minor as to not to merit the extreme official response which it did, as has been argued at various points throughout this study. Moreover, as was shown in the Chapter Four on press coverage and in Chapter Six on the police and parliamentary responses, descriptions of Traveller behaviour as brigands, vermin, marauding hordes etc. were designed to inspire suspicion and fear, rather than express a rational point of view or articulate any intelligent discussion.

With regard to the alleged problems caused by the Travellers in comparison with other issues, e.g. rising crime, unemployment and homelessness, the response was clearly disproportionate in the sense that, despite the seriousness of these social problems and the negative effects they were having on communities and individuals, they were rarely mentioned as such, and tended to be presented as unavoidable and even necessary in Thatcher's quest to refashion the economy and, at its most ambitious, the country itself (Hall, 1988:71). Yet the Conservatives had produced some of the worst social conditions in Britain since the Second World War in terms of homelessness and poverty, and punished with harassment, fines and imprisonment, those who devised their own solutions. To suggest that someone's home could be justifiably confiscated for a parking offence is unprecedented in the history of any culture, regardless of its attitude towards vagrancy.

Finally, further evidence of disproportionality is present in the sense that the reaction to the Travellers has not been constant. In the 1970s and early 1980s they were largely ignored by the authorities, and stories were rarely mentioned in the national media, as has been mentioned at various points in this study. Where there was inconvenience, litter, drugs, noise and nuisance, it was reported as such and dealt with accordingly. In this way a sense of proportionality attached itself to the events, which in the 1980s and 90s was conspicuously missing, and in these and other areas the response to the travellers could clearly be unambiguously established as an irrational and disproportionate one, which in the case of the new Travellers, negates Waddington's objections about moral panic *"lacking any criteria of proportionality"*.

The moral panic around the new Travellers is thus able to offer a number of perspectives on the ways in which Thatcherism has been analysed, which derive from the specific issues this particular panic raises; sedentarism and vagrancy, the English countryside, the 'production' of crime, the role of the media and the ways in which they combined to produce a particular

'morality' tale, one which offers part of a long-running commentary on British society.

5. Implications for Policy

As Travelling groups were projected as deviant and laws were passed to dissuade them from travelling in numbers, they became more dispersed. Groups were usually far apart from one another, and organisation and communication between them was impaired. They were increasingly unable to negotiate the use of special facilities with the local council or landowners, and conditions deteriorated. It is unnecessary to point out that all people have to live somewhere: if they are refused sites, harassed and evicted, they move on, but they do not disappear from existence. Much of the conflict arising in respect of the Travellers was about a symbolic threat; they were identified as a problem, the causes simplified, the key participants stigmatised as dangerous, criminal, polluting aliens and so on, either explicitly or through the use of metaphors. It may therefore be thought that one of the simplest and most straightforward measures would be to ignore the Travellers, on the basis that there are certain forms of 'deviance' which should be left alone, as the kinds of behaviour the nature of the offences and the degree of seriousness, when compared with the cost of controlling it, is just is not worth attempting to enforce. However, we have already seen in Chapter Five some of the consequences for health and education of Travellers communities when they are marginalised, and this kind of passive, utilitarian 'solution' is likely to push the Traveller lifestyle further into marginality, and indirectly into illegality through a lack of available resources. Therefore, the need is not for a passive solution of 'laissez-faire' but for pro-active policies and measures which give people the right and recognition to live a travelling lifestyle which can be freely practised with all the facilities necessary.

The most important need is for a secure home. From the Travellers I met it was clear that the Traveller home, just as for anyone in the settled community, was the base from which a person organises their existence in society. Relationships with friends and family, communication by post with social agencies, voting rights, sleeping patterns, warmth, storage of possessions, cooking, and membership of a community and neighbourhood, are all linked with a fixed residence. As soon as a person loses these things through eviction or confiscation of their vehicle/home, or is condemned to live precariously through a lack of adequate support, a range of complications are clearly added to their lives. If they have friends or family with whom they can stay, they may avoid some of the worst aspects of homelessness, but the pressure from having to 'impose' on friends or family, and the difficulty of organising work, mail and storage, bring stress and anxiety. This requires them to devote a great deal of energy just to basic existence, and can result in feelings of fear, inadequacy and depression.

The Traveller scene is not hermetically sealed; it is necessary to interact with them, and one way in which the problems described in this study could be solved would be by a radical overhaul of the provision for travelling communities. In recent years attempts to ameliorate conditions have been through the social services, the Department of the Environment, the Highways Agency, and the Department of Health, the Department of Education. In other words, the approach has been fragmented. This led to patchy and inefficient assistance,

which forced many communities into conditions which were often unsuitable, dangerous and illegal. Therefore, the need is for Travellers to be given a voice in the provision and planning of facilities and services and a co-ordinated effort is required to meet the needs of Travelling communities through consultation with representative bodies, with a statutory requirement for local authorities to consult the relevant organisations and provide sites of a good standard, which are properly maintained and provided with a full complement of educational and health facilities. In some countries, for example Spain, this is already the case with Gypsies who have their own councils and representative bodies, and who are given a voice and vote in local decision making.

But even if a co-ordinated social services approach exists, there is still a need to combat historical prejudice. Any study of an aspect of poverty involves the researcher in close contact with the subjects, their circumstances and in sentiments shared with them, and one lasting feeling when looking back on time spent with Travellers is the gap between the experiences of the people concerned, and the terms in which politicians, the settled society, and the media in particular, discuss the issue. Part of the reason for this is that, as was shown in Chapter Two, for many centuries vagrant travellers have been shrouded in mystery, waiting for whatever fantasy the settled society wished to place on them. In the past, literary accounts had a strong influence on social attitudes to vagrants, as did the propaganda put out by governments who wanted to scapegoat vagrants of all kinds. However, during the research period it was not only literary and historical fantasy which the Travellers had to combat, but also the government and media, who together contributed to fill the information gap surrounding them. The exposure of the simplification involved in the images in the media and in politics has been an important part of the analysis of this study, and has been dealt with at some length in Chapter Four. But instead of waiting for whatever fantasy the settled community wished to place on them, it would seem important for the Travellers to combat ignorance and prejudice by representing themselves through their organisations and other sympathetic bodies in order to dispel the negative attitude which surrounds them, and in this way present the way of life in an authentic and truthful manner.

More generally, it may also be useful to promote awareness of the politics of the media and the way in which the deployment of powerful metaphors can lead to the assignment of negative identities, and affect public attitudes and behaviour, especially when they refer to phenomena about which little is known. An interesting example illustrating this point can be found in the work of Susan Sontag, who has analysed the use of metaphors in discussions of illness such as cancer and tuberculosis among medical and psychiatric practitioners, as well as in literary accounts, and how they serve to create a fantasy about them. She argues that illness is not a metaphor, and the healthiest way of being ill is to resist such thinking, commenting that:

... the healthiest way to be ill is one most purified of and most resistant to metaphoric thinking. (Sontag, 1978:1)

This suggests that the metaphoric representation of a particular issue may affect how people respond to it, a view developed in subsequent work (Sontag, 1989) when she

discusses the harmful effects of AIDS metaphors, and how they suggest an apocalypse in social terms, and therefore threaten not only the victims of the disease, but also society. To combat this, she concludes that it is essential to learn more about the particular illness, and in so doing there will be a greater probability of the metaphorical system disappearing through the development of positive attitudes towards it.

Applying this to the new Travellers, it was shown in Chapter Four how most of the sedentary society was conditioned to view Travelling communities through the 'prism' of the mass media, where metaphors such as 'scum', 'marauding invaders', 'plague of locusts' etc. are repeatedly invoked to present them as lazy, dangerous, scrounging and so on. Given the media's reluctance to show any restraint in language use, it is only through public education that people can be made aware of their potential effect, and a less prejudiced and more balanced viewpoint promoted. This needs to start in schools, where positive images of travelling communities of all kinds need to be promoted, just as they are with other minorities, and the ways in which language can be used to marginalise, made clear. In this way it may be possible to combat the folklore, history and superstition which, in the 20th century at least, has for the most point conspired against travellers of all kinds.

As I forged relationships with subjects, I discovered that the world of the Travellers is not only a product of mainstream society, but a parallel universe where all the challenges - economic, political and social - which mainstream society has to contend with at the end of the twentieth century, exist. Continuities are therefore present, and by studying people's lived experiences and analysing the prevailing attitudes towards them, it makes it possible to understand why the lifestyle attracted the attention it did. But I end this study as I began it; as a sympathetic outsider, for whom one of the most relevant aspects of the study has been to recognise the importance of the new Travellers as a critique of the kind of society the Thatcher government tried to promote. The search for a more authentic and satisfying way of life has provided the motivation for many movements and subcultures, and in attempting to fashion an alternative existence in the way they did (and some still do), the Traveller way of life has a value as a practical statement of how ordinary lives might be lived and the ways in which problems of everyday life can be dealt with.

Notes

[1] McRobbie and Thornton (1995:568) also point out that these niche and micro-media have sometimes attempted to incite their own moral panics, citing cases involving the Socialist Workers Party and British Nationalist Party, both of whom in 1993 attempted to alarm their readers with moral panic discourses.

[2] See Clements and Campbell (1997).

[3] For example R. v Wealden District Council ex parte Wales, reported in The Times of 22.9.95, which raised the question of whether an eviction order was binding on others who came and settled on the site once it had been served. Mr Justice Sedley held that it did not, and only applied to those on whom it was served.

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Appendices

a) Sources of Original Data: Interviews

As stated in Chapter One of this study, much of the information presented here was gathered from respondents in a series of semi-structured interviews carried out between 1997 and 1999 on sites in the south-west of England. In some cases this was tape-recorded with their permission, in others it was recorded in note form either during or after the session. In all cases respondents knew the purpose of my interest and were willing to supply information in relation to the areas covered.

Total number interviewed: 30 Refusals = 5

b) Question Guide

i) Short Interviews

Short interviews were conducted, focussing on and probing for the following information. The wording is deliberately informal, typical of the non-standardised interview.

- Can you tell me how you got involved with living in the road, how you got your first trailer and so on?
Probed for: Time on the road; views of changes in the scene over the years.
- What started the official hostility?
Probed for: Their view of police; media coverage; political reactions to the Traveller scene; injustice of the law.
- What about those people who give the scene a bad name; who causes the trouble? How should they be handled?
Probed for: Local or out of town; social background; ordinary folk or delinquent types; how they lived compared to other Travellers.
- What are the advantages / disadvantages of living like this?
- How could the present situation be improved?
- Advice to anyone doing it now.

ii) Long Interviews

As with shorter interviews, an informal non-standard style was adopted, focussing on and probing for responses in the following areas:
- Personal circumstances, jobs and accommodation before going to live on the road.
- Personal experiences of life on the road. What they like / dislike about it.
- Respondents' level of education / skills / and means of income; their attitude towards claiming benefits etc.
- Respondents' general health; health of others on site and any other problems.
- Respondents' political views / general outlook.

c) Personal Information

i) Ethnic origin: in all cases respondents were white and British.

ii) Gender: Male 21 / Female 9

iii) Approximate ages of interviewees (stated or estimated)

16-20: Male 2 Female 0

21-24: Male 2 Female 2

25-29: Male 4 Female 2

30-34: Male 7 Female 3

35-44: Male 4 Female 2

45-49: Male 1 Female 0

50+ : Male 1 Female 0

d) Traveller informants cited in the text

Brackets indicate the abbreviation used in the text. Quotes by Key Informants were obtained during 'long interview' schedules (see below). Other Travellers quoted in the text are referred to as Traveller Informants (TIs), whose quotes were obtained from 'short interview' schedules.

(TKI 1) Traveller Key Informant 1, Male, 50s. Long-term Traveller and festival organiser (Sid Rawle). Interviewed in Coleford, Monmouthshire, March and April, 1997.

(TKI 2) Traveller Key Informant 2, Female, 40s. Ex long-term Traveller and festival attender. Interviewed in Coleford, Monmouthshire, March and April, 1997.

(TKI 3) Traveller Key Informant 3, Male, 30s. Traveller and festival attender. Interviewed in Monmouth, April, 1997.

(TKI 4) Traveller Key Informant 4, Male, 30s. Ex-Traveller. Interviewed in Leominster, November, 1998.

(TKI 5) Traveller Key Informant 5, Female, 30s. Traveller and festival attender, Interviewed in Leominster, November, 1998.

e) Non-Traveller informants cited in the text

(EI 1) Editor Informant 1, Ex-Traveller and editor of Festival Eye magazine (Andy Smith). Interviewed in Hatfield, Hereford and Worcester, November, 1998.

(GPI 1) General Practitioner Informant 1, Male doctor experienced in treating travellers, Bethnal Green, London (James Hardy). Interviewed in February, 1999.

(HVI 1) Health Visitor Informant 1, Female health visitor working with the Buckinghamshire Gypsy / Traveller Project (Christina Diamondopoulos). Interviewed in May, 1998.