

Criminal Injustice

Spend time talking to anyone affected by part five of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, travellers, squatters, ravers, protestors, and there's a phrase that keeps being repeated: "You're not going to believe this but . . ." Most of the stories can't be proved. Some may be exaggerated. Some are unbelievable. But if just 1 per cent of what I hear is true, then I'm ashamed of this country, ashamed of actions and attitudes that bear comparison with South Africa before Nelson Mandela, or the early years of Nazi Germany, when the Reich Central Office For The Fight Against The Gypsy Nuisance was established. There's a sickness in the land. And this is all happening before the new Bill has even become law. I am also ashamed of the Labour Party. Under Tony Blair's direction, as Shadow Home Secretary, the party is sitting in the sidelines making political capital when it should be standing up and defending the rights of those under attack. And it's not only rights that are under attack.

30 May 1994: Sylvia is a 49-year old grandmother. She's been a traveller for seven years, since she bought her bus. "It was a really hot sunny afternoon and I was changing over the batteries on my bus. All of a sudden this car pulled up and about five people jumped out. Then another car pulled up. I could see instantly we needed help, 'cause they were coming for us. The only people on site were a pregnant mother with

a two year old baby, me, Sue, three 16- or 17-year old kids and two adult men, that was all. I went up to them, asking what's happening, why? And one of them just threw this axe at me. It just missed my head. It was just like a wall of men coming at me. One had a big silver baseball bat, another one had a big piece of wood. Another had a scaffold bar. In the end there was probably about 15 people, two cars, and some people came on foot through the industrial estate. They were angry. Their faces were like stone. When you talked to them, their eyes were out on stalks. I was really fright-

ened of their faces. They wanted to wipe this place out. They called us—I don't know—they just thought we were dirty scum.

"There was two of them in my bus, they were smashing everything. I just got hold of the seat of one of their pants and pulled him. I know I got hit—you don't feel anything at the time, but I could feel the blood running down my shirt. I fell against the bus. There was nothing I could do to save my home. They were throwing bottles at the pregnant woman and the baby, she's eight months pregnant."

Shortly after that they set fire to Sylvia's bus, her home. "That bus, I'd just done a fresh paint job, fresh tax, fresh everything. It was all legal, it was singing. All my bus is full of wood, my partner's a carpenter. I'm a potter and an artist."

The bus was burned-out, as was a car next to it. Every other vehicle on the site was trashed: a converted horse box, two caravans, a transit van and nine cars. When I reached the site, at Watlington, near Oxford, a town famous for its freemasonry, only Sylvia and Sue were left on site. Sylvia was waiting for the scrapyard to take away her bus. "I don't like to leave a mess normally. That's my home. I've got to sort out my mess." The last time vigilantes came for her, they shot at her.

Sue is a 34-year old mother of four who has been on the road for 13 years. Her caravan was destroyed in the attack on 30 May.



Alan Lodge

Critical moments in public order policing

1968

Caravan Sites Act recognises the right of travellers to sites.

1974

Last Windsor Festival broken up by police.

First Summer Solstice Festival at Stonehenge.

1975

The 4th People's Free Festival on Watchfield airfield. Only site ever supplied by government so as to defuse furore over violence of 1974 Windsor eviction.

1976

First Convoy from Stonehenge.

1977

Criminal Law Act restricts rights of squatters, but moves for a general criminalisation of trespass are defeated.

1979

Margaret Thatcher becomes prime minister.

1980

First modern inner-city riot (St Pauls, Bristol).

First New Age Traveller Festival (Inglestone Common).

1981

Riots in Brixton, Toxteth and other inner-city areas. (CS gas used in Toxteth).

Peace camps established at Greenham, Molesworth and other bases in protest against cruise missiles and other nuclear weapons.

1982

"Peace Convoy" from Stonehenge to Greenham.

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act introduces licensing for public outdoor musical events.

1984

Last Stonehenge Festival. Start of miners' strike. Police "trashing" of new age travellers at Nostell Priory.

1985

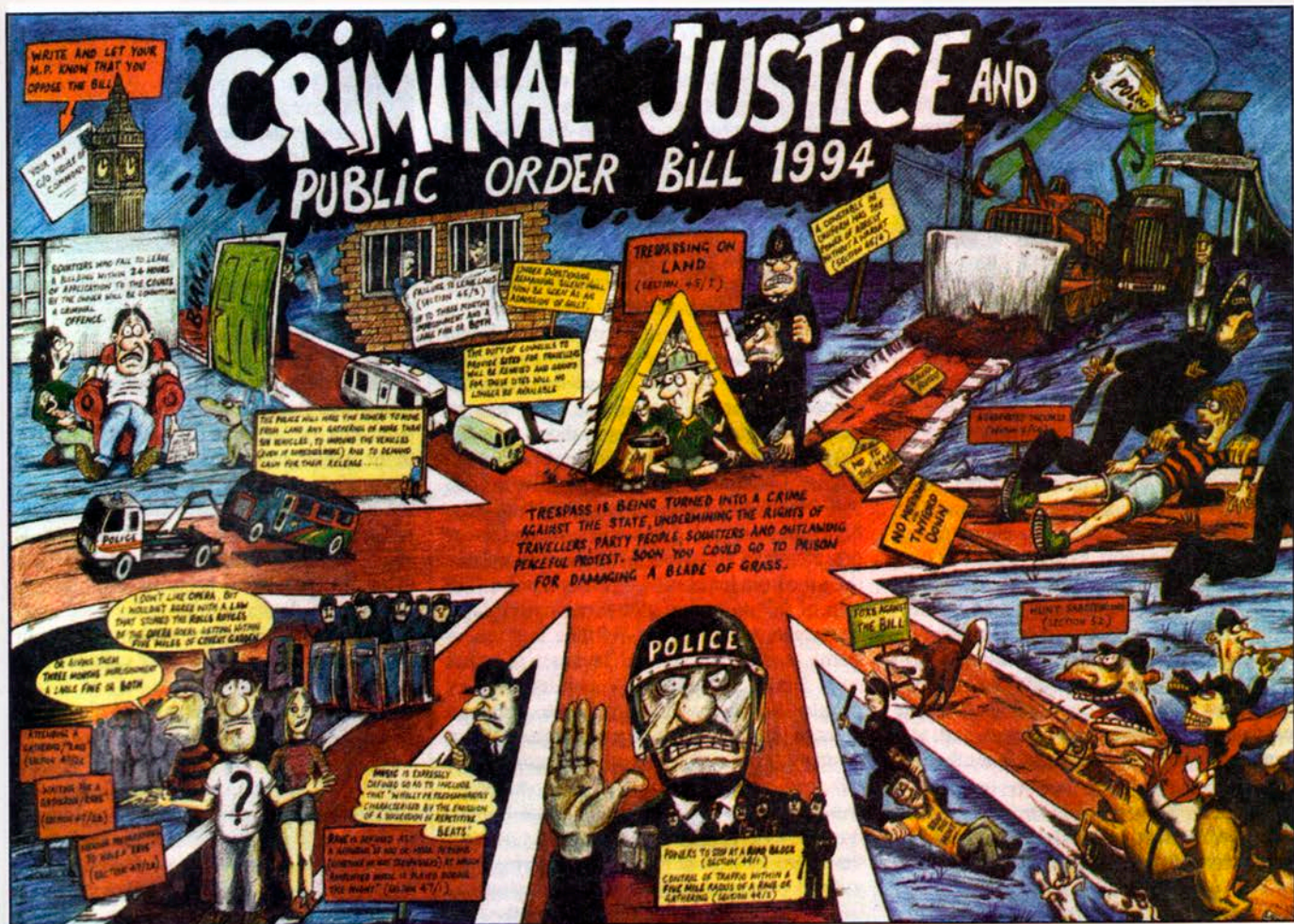
Rainbow Village Peace Camp at Molesworth evicted by thousands of troops and police, with Michael Heseltine in a flak jacket.

High Court (*Moss v. McLocklin*) approves police action in using roadblock to stop striking miners five miles from a pit they intended to picket.

Battle of Orgreave—striking miners are subsequently acquitted of riot and paid damages by the police.

End of miners' strike.

Battle of the Beanfield—more than 500 New Age Travellers arrested and their vehicles trashed as police move to suppress the 12th Stonehenge Festival.



She had owned it six weeks. She used to have a bus. That was burned out a year ago. When I arrived, she was only staying on the Watlington site to keep Sylvia company. Everyone else had left. They were worried the men might come back. "The police said they knew who it was. When they turned up, they saw the men running off. The police said they'd all gone back to the pub, they're

just sitting up there drinking now. And they just left them there. Nobody did anything about it that night. Unbelievable. We could have identified them." I telephoned the Thames police who are investigating the incident. DS Nicklin informed me that no arrests had been made, and were not expected "for at least a couple of weeks." When asked why, he replied

they were busy on a murder inquiry, and did not want to make arrests until all the evidence had been gathered. He admitted that the police knew who some of the men were, and had video footage of them from a surveillance camera by the site. Meanwhile, all the main witnesses to the attack, the travellers, including Sue and Sylvia, have left Watlington. If the police do make arrests

1986

Police attacks on pickets at News International, Wapping.
Police Complaints Authority reports that "excessive force" was used at the Beanfield, but no disciplinary action because those responsible cannot be identified.
Around the summer solstice, Police blockade a Traveller convoy on the A37, seize 130 vehicles at Stony Cross, and blockade another convoy on the A36, arresting 200 people for obstructing the highway.
Public Order Act introduces a new range of offences and a new power (section 39) to deal with travellers.
Notice required to obtain a possession order against squatters is reduced from seven days to 48 hours.

1987

All criminal charges arising from the Beanfield battle are dropped.

1988

Police handling of the summer solstice at Stonehenge results in a riot.
Appeal of the "Tesco 12" restricts police use of section 39 of the Public Order Act.

1989

All defendants acquitted on charges arising from the Stonehenge riot.
Order prohibiting "processions" first used at Stonehenge.
Entertainment (Increased Penalties) Act introduces £20,000 maximum fine for unlicensed entertainments.
Overthrow of communism in eastern Europe acts as a reminder of the power of peaceful protest against unpopular governments.

1990

Poll Tax riot in Trafalgar Square

1991

Twenty four people arrested at the Beanfield are refused damages in the High Court, in spite of jury verdicts that they were the victims of unlawful assault, false imprisonment and damage to their property.

1992

Police attempts to prevent the annual Avon Free Festival end with a large event taking place at Castlemorton Common.

1993

Operation Nomad, involving all English and Welsh police forces, succeeds in preventing the Avon Free Festival.
Operation Snapshot, a major

intelligence-gathering exercise aimed at travellers, is launched.
Road protesters at Twyford Down are defeated by police and private security guards. Protest camps established at sites of other road projects.
Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill published.

1994

Confrontations at Wanstead over M11 extension.
All those accused of "conspiracy to cause a public nuisance" at Castlemorton are acquitted.
Operation Snapshot begets Operation Snapshot 2.
Eviction of large numbers of Traveller sites.

they may now be unable to contact the witnesses in time, as often happens with such attacks. The Watlington vigilantes may get away with it yet.

Some locals were sympathetic, like Liberal Democrat councillor Tim Horton, and Michael Desborough from Scotts Garage, just round the corner from the site. He allowed travellers to collect water from his garage tap and loaned Sylvia a car after the trashing. "I never had any trouble from them. I can't believe people would do that. I just hope something is done."

But Desborough's attitude was not necessarily typical. "None of us want to walk through the village any more," Sue told me. "The woman in the Country Fayre shop, she was nearly in tears. She's from India. She probably understands this sort of thing. But there's a lot of young kids looking away and sniggering. I don't get the impression that the general feeling is very sympathetic at all."

The Watlington incident received no coverage in the national press. The *Oxford Mail* ran an editorial on it, which started as follows: "The attack on new age travellers in Watlington demonstrates the urgent need for action from the government. People are fed up with seeing social outcasts feeding off the state while they are hit by recession, higher taxes and bigger household bills." They did concede that the perpetrators should be caught.

"This sort of thing is being printed in cheap, tacky little papers all the time," commented Sue. "With that sort of thing being printed, you're going to have trouble." She's right. The groups affected by part five of the Bill, especially the travellers, have been subjected to the kind of rhetoric which, if directed against a racial group, would have been taken as an incitement to racial violence. "They call themselves new age travellers," Paul Marland MP said recently, "in Gloucester we call them new age vermin." The villagers of Middlezoy in Somerset are threatening to take their children out of the local school if gypsy children from the proposed transit site there are allowed to enrol. "It could become a little Bosnia," a Somerset county council official is quoted as saying. Anne Bagehot is the national gypsy liaison officer for the Save The Children Fund. "Speaking as an individual, my personal view is that the phrase 'ethnic cleansing' is not over the top. People are talking about scum and wasters and riff raff. There's a hate campaign going on."

Inevitably, police officers have not been immune to this campaign. Under section 39 of the 1986 Public Order Act, traveller groups have regularly been given half an hour to move, sometimes less, and threatened with losing their children. "If you argue, you get arrested. You rarely get charged, just given a good slapping and that's it," I was told by Johnny, eight years on the road after living in squats and now a contract forester. "This year it's got loads worse." He says that at the last five evictions the police have employed a full video team. Operation Snapshot is collecting names, registration numbers and personal



Alan Lodge

details on all ravers and travellers. A Ministry of Defence officer, Gareth Williams, has been working with Snapshot. Johnny recently returned to a site in Hereford, having been away working for a day, to find his girlfriend and six month old baby gone, evicted. He drove over 1,000 miles over two days before finding them. Ravers and squatters also report widespread police aggression. "I was horrified by the reactions of officers to ravers," Chief Inspector Mike Brown from Dunstable police (see "The New Exodus") told me. He describes officers as "quivering with rage" at what they perceived to be the anarchy taking place before their eyes. "If they talked to people more, we wouldn't have such rigid battlelines. I'd have expressed the same opinion about the miners' strike."

Brown is also concerned about the increasing privatisation of the police service, the widespread use of so-called "security firms" who have been openly shown on television assaulting road protestors and squatters. Yet nothing is done. "I've seen swarms of security guards dragging people out of trees. They're not empowered to do that."

Vermin and scum and wasters and squatters and riff raff become subhuman species, and then are treated as such. That's how fascism works. I saw it with my own eyes on the beanfield near Stonehenge in 1985—police officers randomly destroying homes, "screaming and clubbing people, uncontrolled police hooliganism," I wrote at the time. As one shocked officer told me afterwards: "I didn't join the police force to do that—what are they doing nicking women and children? What crime have they committed? There was no breach of the peace until we came on site."

This aggression didn't stop after 1985, and with the new act it will inevitably get worse. "When we were evicted from Binegar Quarry," Johnny told me, "the police had a scary attitude. They seemed to want something to happen. They had full riot gear. They were beating their shields, saying 'we're gonna get you.'" Johnny is not the only one to tell such stories. There is a strong feeling among traveller, road-protest, rave and squatter groups that direct action must be strictly non-violent and very carefully executed. People sense they are treading a knife edge with the miners' strike, especially

Ogreave, and the Stonehenge Beanfield as historical warnings. Local landowner and Tory grandee Lord Cardigan testified at numerous Stonehenge court cases that he was told by a senior police officer the evening before the Beanfield trashing: "We're going to arrest every single one of those people and have all their vehicles." And that was before the new Bill.

Michael Mansfield QC considers the new Bill "the most draconian act this government has put through. Adolf started with the gypsies." He compares it to South Africa before Nelson Mandela with its "banning orders, wherever two or three are gathered together." After the Bill becomes law, as is now almost inevitable, "we will have no effective right to assemble. It's at the discretion of police officers. And all you'll be allowed to do to protest is stay at home and write letters. The democratic right to demonstrate in this country is going down the chute." And he feels let down by the Labour Party, as do a huge swathe of natural Labour supporters. "For the Labour Party to abstain on this bill, when they should be opposing it, is obnoxious. I don't want a Labour Party which is not interested in human rights. If Tony Blair's liable to be the next Prime Minister, then forget it."

Until now there's been relatively little interest shown in the squatter, traveller, raver and protestor parts of the Bill. Lord Avebury's passionate attempt in the House of Lords, supported by the Bishop of Liverpool, to amend the traveller clauses could still succeed. Otherwise the opposition tactics of amending rather than opposing the Bill have been a complete failure.

Journalists, with the honourable exceptions of Duncan Campbell and Simon Fairlie in the *Guardian*, and Camilla Berens in the *Independent*, have generally disregarded the issue, even the London march, usually on the basis that "it only affects a minority". That may be so for now. But once the Bill becomes law, virtually anybody protesting at anything can be arrested, and that means roads protests, factory closures, hospital closures. Traditional Tory voters who have already been involved in such protests may soon find themselves behind bars. Michael Mansfield believes, and I think he's right, that "this law is a piece of political dynamite."

*Open your eyes
And look within.
Are you satisfied
With the life you're living?*

There's another, long-term aspect to this question. Over recent years a remarkable network has grown up of travellers, dance people, squatters, and protesters, especially road protestors. Not everybody in these groups is part of the network. There are many road protesters who have never been near a rave. And it's not an organised network. 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 free and commercial festivals. Dances take place at road protest sites.

At an event like the Hackney Homeless Festival, people from all these different groups meet together. It's a social, political, economic and spiritual phenomenon which has come to be known as DIY culture. The excellent new *POD* magazine ran a whole issue on it. "Who knows when this spirit began to speed up from a trickle to a wave but, certainly in the past few recession-hit years, a network of the skint but proud has slowly been falling into place. The result has been a creative epicentre built on energy and idealism; a pooling of resources to create something out of nothing." The word "tribe" keeps emerging in this context—tribal rhythms, tribal groups, tribal dance.

*We know where we're going
We know where we're from
We're leaving Babylon
We're going to our father land*

Exodus' Glenn Jenkins is right when he says (see the "The New Exodus") "we're at the cutting edge of a way, an answer. It could even be a solution to the decay of Britain plc." DIY culture is indeed a way. The economic green shoots are "bollocks" for an ever increasing minority, so this minority is starting to work together to satisfy its own needs. It's another of CJ Stone's "psychotic" inversions. The lifestyles of these push-outs, the people without a stake in Britain plc, are seen as "the problem," rather than a solution. It's hard to see how Britain will ever return to full employment. And a "downpressed", dissatisfied, unemployed underclass is bad for business and expensive to police. So the "derelict" strategies of such groups as Exodus, or travellers, or people who want to put benders or tipis on their land and live low-cost lifestyles are strategies full of hope for the future. Instead of oppressing such groups, we should be working out realistic policies in order that theirs, and Britain plc's interests, at worst don't conflict, at best work in harmony. Here's the way forward into a free 21st century, rather than returning to the dark ages of riots and oppression and fascist vigilantes.

*Jah come to break downpression
Rule equality
Wipe away transgression
Set the captives free*

Tim Malyon

The Criminal Justice Bill: A guide

The following provisions come into force as soon as the bill is passed (probably about the end of July, although there is some chance that it may be delayed until October)

A. People living in vehicles

Clause 56

This reenacts, with modifications, the provisions of section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986. People who trespass with vehicles or damage property or use threats or violence may be required to leave by police and arrested if they fail to comply. The significant changes are:

- a) The number of vehicles is reduced from 12 to six.
- b) The section is no longer restricted to persons who "entered as trespassers", so people who had permission to be on the land which is subsequently withdrawn (after however long a lapse of time) may be arrested or removed under this provision.
- c) The reference to damage is extended to include "damage to the land". It has been held by the courts that walking across a field constitutes damage. It is clearly impossible to reside on land without causing damage to it in this sense. The definition of damage includes, for example, urination.
- d) In relation to common land, a request to leave made by the local authority will enable the police to act even if no such request is made by the owner.
- e) The section is now to apply to unsurfaced highways.
- f) The definition of "vehicle" is extended to include any structure adapted from a vehicle, and anything carried on a vehicle.

The Clause is not restricted in its application to travellers. Practice under s.39 Public Order Act 1986 has been to regard the requirement of "residing" as satisfied as soon as the vehicle comes to a stop (and in at least one case even before this), although this interpretation could be challenged.

Two people sleeping in a field, whether in a vehicle, in a tent, or without either, would be subject to this section. So would the residents of any caravan site, if the occupants of at least six vehicles were ordered to leave by the owner.

See below under Section D for seizure of vehicles.

Penalty: 3 months and fine

Clause 72

A local authority may also give a direction to leave land (the same power as now possessed by "designated" local authorities under the Caravan Sites Act 1968). The main differences are that this power:

- a) extends to surfaced highways, which the police power does not.
- b) does not require that those concerned be trespassers.
- c) does not require any request by the owner to leave; the absence of positive consent from the owner, or the fact that the land is "unoccupied" is sufficient.
- d) does not require that they have behaved in any particular way other than to be "for the time being residing in a vehicle".
- e) While an offence is committed by a person refusing to leave under either provision, this clause does not provide a power of arrest.
- f) The general defence of "reasonable cause" for a failure to leave, provided under *Clause 56*, is restricted here to "illness, mechanical breakdown or other immediate emergency." It may be important to note that neither pregnancy nor childbirth is an illness.

The Clause is not restricted in its application to travellers. Practice under section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 has been to regard the requirement of "residing" as satisfied as soon as the vehicle comes to a stop. The only case in which this Clause could not be used would be where the landowner has given explicit consent, in which case he or she will have committed an offence under the Caravan Sites Act 1960, relating to unlicensed caravan sites.

Penalty: fine

Clause 73

If a direction under *Clause 72* is not complied with "as soon as practicable", a Magistrates Court may make an order allowing the authority to remove vehicles and property from the land. There is an offence of obstructing anyone carrying out such an order. No provision is made as to impoundment of vehicles so removed, unlike those seized under *Clause 57* (see under Section D below); there is no indication of what is intended to be done with such vehicles.

Penalty: fine

Clause 74

Notices giving directions under *Clause 72* may be served by affixing them to vehicles. No period of notice is required, so a direc-

Forget the other leadership election. This was always going to be the one that matters.

A late rush of votes threatened to turn the expected outcome of NSS's own Labour leadership contest upside down. The last time we reported, it was to say that Robin Cook had taken almost half of all first-preference votes—three times as many as Tony Blair—and that, barring a last-minute landslide against him, he was well on the way to enthronement as the man most NSS readers would prefer as Labour leader.

Well, the landslide nearly happened. Prompted by the rules of our contest (anyone was eligible, even if not standing in the other election; electors had as many votes as they could make a legitimate claim for), both the range of candidates and the number of voters increased week by week.

The final count shows that we received in the region of 1,200 ballots. The number of votes would have been vastly more, had not some of the more extravagant claims to multiple voting rights been ruled out of order by the Election Arrangements Committee.

Principal among these were the claim for a 150,000 block-vote in favour of Arthur Scargill on behalf of mineworkers made redundant since 1985; and the one for the eight million members of Co-op retail societies to be cast in support of Colin Ward (on the basis that "if no one else is voting on their behalf, I will" (thank you, Susan Wooldridge, of Walsall)).

We also thought long and hard about the results of mass meetings apparently held in workplaces around the country. Did 1,000 Society of Telecom Executives' members really turn out to vote unanimously in favour of Keith Flett (with the "appallingly unbearded" Paul Foot as his deputy)? Did the entire membership of Democratic Left really attend a series of "synergy workshops" that came up with the idea of a rotating panel of leaders "representing every section of the community, including the churches, progressive Tories and Liberal Democrats" but

excluding "Communists, Trots, Campaign Group hardliners and other sectarians"? Somehow we think not, and the votes so cast have been disqualified.

We had a bigger problem with a Scottish reader, who shall rename nameless because of his "shameless abuse of my employer's time and facilities to enable me to raise my vote to almost MP status". His boss's photocopier provided the means for 300 votes to be cast in favour of Elvis Costello. Why Elvis Costello? "Unlike Tony Blair, he made a success of his singing career. Songs like 'Shipbuilding', 'Tramp the Dirt Down' and '20% Amnesia' have amounted to a better critique of society than anything the Labour Party has managed in recent years. He really hates the Tories. 'Vote Labour, vote Elvis' would look great in billboard-size letters." Oh yes, and "He's not Tony Blair."

Among others, Ross and Karey Hunter, of Leicester, also turned to the music business for radical inspiration, which only goes to show the continuing connection between rock and roll and politics. Their first votes went to the Levellers "because they have been among the most effective campaigners against the Criminal Justice Bill (although, to his credit, our local Labour MP, Jim Marshall, voted against)". "We know there are five people in the Levellers," they add. "But we want a cooperative leadership."

And so to the result. Counting first preference votes only, it looks something like this. Total votes cast: 8,161,000. Votes disqualified, discounted or otherwise ignored: 8,159,796. Valid votes: Robin Cook, 302; Elvis Costello 301; John Prescott, 163; Tony Blair 74; Ken Livingstone, 61; Gordon Brown, 54; and Margaret Beckett, 52. Adding in second preference votes, Robin Cook is the runaway winner, with more than 700 votes, while John Prescott just pips Elvis Costello for second place.

As the returning officer for this odd constituency, I hereby declare that Robin Cook is duly elected as the next leader of the Labour Party. (And bad luck, Elvis Costello.)

Steve Platt

Labour playing clever

Lord McIntosh of Haringey (Letters, 8 July) is right that Labour peers, as well as Liberal Democrats like Lord Avebury, the bishops, and even some Tories, have made strenuous efforts to amend the Criminal Justice Bill. They've succeeded in putting off Royal Assent until October, although for New Age travellers, squatters, protestors and ravers the bill remains virtually unchanged. I apologise sincerely for not giving my noble Lords due credit in my article on the subject ("Criminal injustice", 24 June).

It is, however, significant that the Labour spokesperson in the Lords replied to my article, rather than Tony Blair, who as shadow home secretary was responsible for the Labour Party "sitting on the sidelines making political capital when it should be standing up and defending the rights of those under attack", to quote my original allegation.

Take squatting. On 9 February, a new clause was added to the bill permitting many owners of squatted properties or their agents to use violence to force entry without authorisation from the courts. Labour backbencher Neil Gerrard MP tabled an amendment during the bill's committee stage in the Commons.

Labour front-bench spokesperson Alun Michael MP failed to speak in support of Gerrard's amendment, and left before the vote. At the bill's report stage in the Commons, Tony Blair barely mentioned this disgraceful clause. And in the Lords committee stage you, my noble Lord McIntosh, told the House: "We are not in any sense being soft on squatters. If I was to suggest that we were being soft on them, Mr Tony Blair would have me shot at dawn."

Doesn't Mr Tony Blair agree with Shelter's statement that "most people squat because they are homeless"? Neither he nor Alun Michael could find time to talk to Squatters Action for Secure Homes (Squash), who were coordinating parliamentary action against the squatting sections of the bill.

But then Blair said in *NSS* last week ("Give them half an inch", 15 July): "I do not believe that Labour's policy should be determined by lobby groups of whatever sort." He also concluded, in self-justification:

"You never satisfy people. People don't want the half-inch. What they want is a yard, and then when you've gone that yard they want five yards as well." To use such language in relation to squatters and travellers is either totally insensitive or obscene.

Every road protestor, squatter, raver and traveller I've talked to recently feels let down by the Labour Party for not clearly condemning the Criminal Justice Bill, especially part five of it, which threatens their deepest beliefs, lifestyles and very existence. They're being scapegoated and demonised, and politicians are scared to stand up for them. They're dismayed that Tony Blair has played clever and abstained on this bill. They're dismayed that the Labour Party has failed to support the rapidly growing protest movement against the bill. And they've asked lots of questions about Labour, most commonly the following three:

- 1) Would an incoming Labour government under Tony Blair's leadership repeal all of part five of the bill?
- 2) If it won't repeal all of part five, which parts will it repeal?
- 3) Does Tony Blair support non-violent direct action as a legitimate means of opposing this bill, which removes the very freedom to public protest?

They look forward to his replies.

Tim Malyon
Exeter

The sensible Tony Blair

Speaking as possibly the only *NSS* reader who is a fully paid-up Bambinista, I'd say that Steve Platt's illuminating interview with Tony Blair ("Give them half an inch", 15 July) was most welcome. *NSS* has, after all, been subliminally rubbishing Bambi ever since he first emerged blinking from the forest.

As to Bambi's failure to align himself to a precise definition of full employment, so what? Before the 1992 general election, Labour neither said nor did not say exactly what it was going to do in office (this was a particular talent of Neil Kinnock's; at least Blair can come out with a clear, declarative sentence).

The party's pre-election manifesto was the usual mixture of windy rhetoric, whimsy and policy nudges, wholly lacking in substantive detail. Then just