

Norman and dope: spot the difference.

## Legal Dope: Norman's Hot Potato

Conservative MP Norman St John-Stevas strolled from the House of Commons chamber last Wednesday afternoon, summoned by a constituent. In the central lobby a colourful group including punks, hippies, miners from Doncaster and besuited solicitors surrounded stewards wearing red cannabis leaf armbands.

The constituent, a prototype hippy, blue jeans, long curly hair, donkey jacket festooned with badges, approached Stevas to ask what he intended doing about the cannabis laws. 'A political hot potato,' Stevas was reported as commenting. Earlier, conservative colleague Sir Brandon Rees-Williams had reputedly boasted some high degree of knowledge on the subject. 'You can't be MP for Kensington without knowing a lot about cannabis.'

The lobby was organised by the Legalise Cannabis Campaign to coincide with the passage of the Criminal Justice Bill through Parliament. The all-party Parliamentary Penal Affairs Group are proposing that magistrates should no longer be allowed to imprison for cannabis possession. The group will be introducing an amendment to this effect after Easter. In the lobby 144 MPs were called out by constituents, 43 emerged. Around half agreed to vote for the amendment.

In the House of Lords the Marquess of Tweeddale has been demanding full legalisation. Drawing on experience and what he has read he assured the assembled nobility that 'cannabis may induce one to be idle, silly and sexy, but very rarely, if ever, nasty.' Charles Cokayne, now sporting the title Lord Cullen of Ashbourne, replied for the Government that any relaxation of the law

'could lead to an increase in its use, and surely none of us would want to encourage that.'

Three years ago the Government's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs recommended removing the power to imprison for possession from magistrates, as well as lowering other penalties such as the present 14 years maximum for supply and cultivation. Recently the Council produced another report on health effects of cannabis which was unable to prove whether the fragrant weed can harm or not. They recommended yet more research but reiterated their previous belief that penalties should be reduced. The Home Secretary is disregarding this advice and has said he opposes penalty reductions.

The Legalise Cannabis Campaign claims that government opposition to reform is encouraging police abuse of cannabis laws as a pretext for selective searches and raids. Coordinator Andy Cornwell stresses that cannabis was one major pretext both in the Black and White club raid in Bristol and Operation Swamp in Brixton. This year raids on the Mangrove Club, Notting Hill, resulted in an angry demonstration outside Harrow Road police station. Concerning penalties, Marylebone magistrates may hand down average £8 fines for possession, but a man in Scotland was recently sent down for three and a half years for growing 44 plants in his loft. (Tim Malyon)

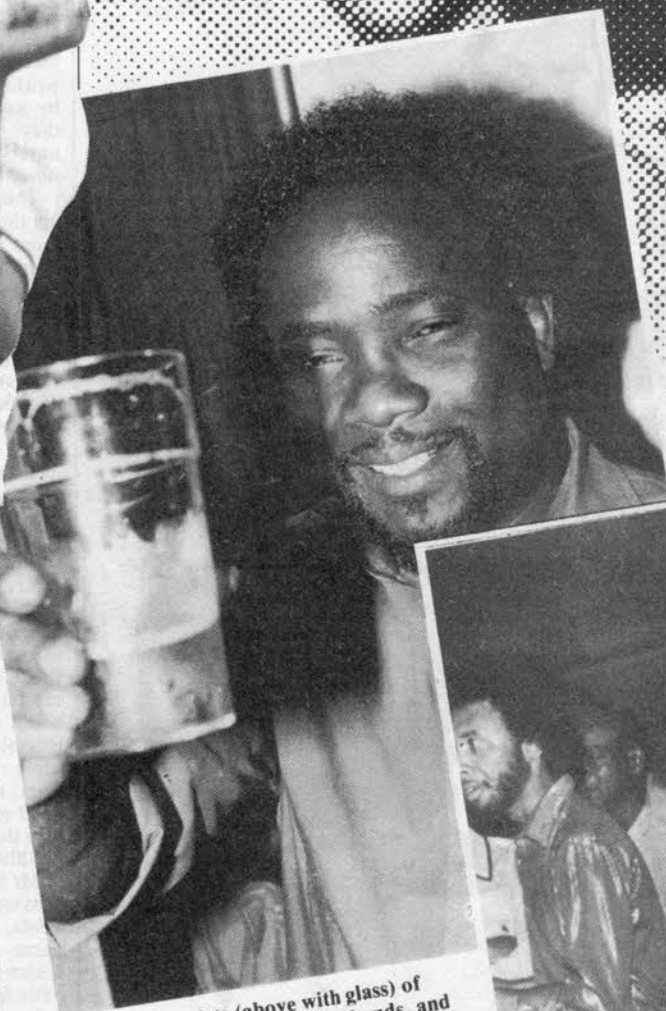
*'Report of the Expert Group on the Effects of Cannabis' is available from the Home Office, price £3.10, or the LCC, who have also published a critical analysis of its findings in their latest newsletter, price 50p, available from 1 Elgin Avenue, London W9.*

This weekend the carnival arrives in Notting Hill. We sample the mood, taste the food, talk to a band, look in the shops and walk the markets.

NOTTING HILL  
SPECIAL



Randolph Baptiste (above with glass) of Ebony, one of the top Carnival bands, and Winston Joseph on (on drums). Top left: Carnival in action.



# 'Back To The People'

Steelband floats, and masked dancers are the focus of Notting Hill Carnival. For more than ten years the Ebony Steel Band have been beating some of the finest pans (drums), and producing stunning costumes. TIM MALYON and WILF WALKER talked to band members.

'CARNIVAL', observed Randolph Baptiste, 'is a renaissance of past and future culture. It tried to bring culture back to the people.'

Part of that culture is Ebony, formed in 1969 by Baptiste, with Cap James and Winston Joseph. Since then they have grown into a 30-piece orchestra.

Once they were called the Relatives. 'Everybody is related', explained Baptiste, 'it's a family affair.'

Five families make up the music section. The youngest member, 15-year-old Wayne Lewis, 'beats' with father, two nieces and his cousin.

'Nearly every young boy in Trinidad is in a steel band', explained Wayne. 'Growing up in Trinidad, I used to play "pan". When I came to this country, my cousin joined Ebony and asked me to come along.'

As well as the music section, 150 people are involved in carnival costume creation. This year the theme is 'Gathering of the Tribes.' The band used to make their own instruments as well. Now, requiring more precision, all the drums, each covering a range of three octaves, come from Trinidad, except for the huge base pans, which are still homemade.

Despite a continuing steel band tradition in Trinidad and other Caribbean islands, supported by young people, Ebony's audiences in this country don't often reach beyond older black people, and a few whites, a totally different audience to that attracted by reggae. When we saw them perform at the Harrow Leisure Centre, during the First Festival of Caribbean Music, they were only allowed to beat a half hour set, stopping just as they were truly warming to the task.

Sessions associated with carnival are different. The day after Harrow they packed the Notting Hill Tabernacle with a highly appreciative audience of young black people, many involved in carnival preparation.

Little radio, television or record company interest in calypso music, the staple repertoire of steel bands, undoubtedly contributes towards the lack of a wider youth audience through the year. 'Could radio give us one hour a week, a fair share, to see if people like steel band and calypso music?' asked Cap James. 'If calypsos were projected on the radio, everybody would be acquainted. And once you are acquainted with something you get a certain satisfaction from it because

you can identify.'

In 1976 the Inner London Education Authority introduced calypso into their music curriculum, which, say Ebony members, has helped. But still they have to include a majority of western tunes in their repertoire to please middle class white audiences who book them most of the year. 'English Country Garden' beaten on the pans in hotel bars hardly attracts the youth.

Further problems confront the band, most of whose members hold down full-time jobs, when touring. They must face loss of work time, and huge costs in moving 30 people with instruments. Despite Arts Council and Council of Racial Equality grants, they recently lost £700 after travelling to a Penrith steel band jamboree.

Despite such problems in beating to a wider audience, Ebony are attracting more members then they can accommodate, although one white policeman who played in carnival with them has now dropped out. Members do not need musical training, but must be prepared to dedicate considerable time to rehearsal. 'The key is intuition and rehearsal,' commented Baptiste. 'You don't have to tell your brain to lift your hand, you just lift your hand when you feel like it.'

And the carnival? Baptiste warmed to the subject. He'd like the procession to go on for longer, from five in the morning until ten at night, with stands and a circular route so more people can see. He'd also like more prizes available for floats and costumes, since such enormous energy is devoted to making them.

He's a great believer in the healing power of carnival. 'We have our teething problems, bottle and stone. But steel bands and carnival can do what politicians can't, link people up together in constant merriment. The freedom is so electrifying that prejudice doesn't come into it. Carnival is the best form of race relations going.'

'We are a very imaginative people. Just because you didn't go to university doesn't mean you can't project what you have within. Carnival gives a person a chance to establish their artistry. Carnival represents two days of freedom where you can freak out, you don't think about work, you drink and you merry yourself.'

# CARNIVAL

# How Harry Won £2000 Off Sir David

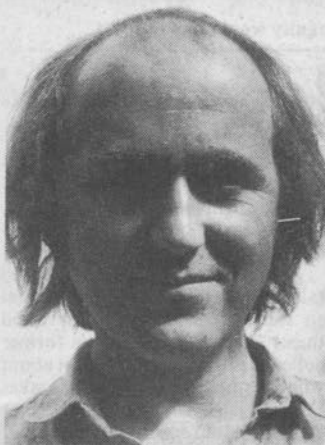
Last Wednesday at Westminster County Court, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir David McNeen, was ordered to pay £2000 damages, the maximum the jury could award, to Harry Podlewski, for assault, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution. The decision was both a victory for Podlewski, who has been patiently fighting for four years to clear his name, and illustrates an important alternative remedy to the widely discredited police complaints procedure.

Podlewski was arrested on charges of obstructing the police in the early hours of March 12 1978 during a drink and drugs raid. Some 150 people were enjoying a benefit party in aid of Release, for whom Podlewski was working, at the Elizabeth Garret Anderson Hospital.

No drugs were found, nor drink confiscated. The six people charged with obstruction and/or assault on police were subsequently acquitted. One obstruction case was dismissed by Hampstead Magistrates because they considered it too minor a matter. The police were clearly embarrassed.

As well as 'E' Division uniformed officers, the Special Patrol Group No 1 Unit was present—in plain clothes. Former Inspector Alan Murray was in charge of them. Thirteen months after Murray assisted

with the EGA raid, schoolteacher Blair Peach died in Southall from massive head injuries inflicted, say at least 10 witnesses, by a police officer. Murray was in charge of SPG No 1 in the area where Peach died, and featured with five other men from the Unit on the Anti-Nazi League's 'Wanted For Murder' poster. Demands for a public inquiry and disciplinary action following Peach's death got nowhere—and Murray has now left the force,



Harry Podlewski: pursued the case

and works as a silversmith in Scotland.

During the Southall investigation, Murray made significant changes in his version of events, and his final version conflicted with that given by another SPG officer on the scene, Inspector Hopkins. In the circumstances in which Podlewski found himself at the EGA, there were also key discrepancies between the three SPG officers' accounts of what had occurred. Murray, and two other former SPG officers, Det. Sgt. Chapman and PC McIntosh allege that Podlewski obstructed Chapman whilst he and McIntosh were trying to search another man for drugs. Murray and McIntosh claim Podlewski grabbed Chapman's arm



Inspector Murray: now a silversmith in Scotland.

and jumped on his back. They both demonstrated different alleged holds in court on Podlewski's somewhat nervous solicitor's clerk.

Podlewski denied the obstruction during his May 1979 trial at Inner London Crown Court, and was found not guilty. He was then granted legal aid to pursue a civil action against the police for damages.

During last week's civil action, Lord Gifford QC, counsel for Podlewski, accused the three SPG officers of 'covering up the truth and saying things they know to be untrue.' Podlewski was arrested, Gifford said, 'to get him out of the way,' after he had approached Murray to see the search warrant. Podlewski hardly had time to see the warrant and was then grabbed from behind by uniformed officers and bundled into the police van.

After the case, Podlewski's solicitor, David Caleb, revealed that an official police complaint about the arrest had resulted in no action against the officers involved. The Director of Public Prosecutions had refused to bring charges of assault and perjury, nor would there be any disciplinary measures taken. Caleb said that he and many other solicitors were 'completely and utterly disillusioned with the complaints procedure' and felt it to be 'a waste of time. The complaints procedure needs taking away from the police.'

Lord Melchett, who is a trustee of Release, has tabled a question in Parliament asking if, in view of this verdict, any action will now be taken against the officers involved. (Tim Malyon)

# No Sitting On The Fence At US Base

Greenham Common missile base perimeter fence was breached last Thursday night by members of the newly-arrived peace camp (see *CL40*) and some construction equipment spray-painted and disabled.

The following morning base

bulldozers razed an acre of trees inside the fence which had protected the wire-cutters from the view of the guards. In retaliation angry campers then sledgehammered 61 12-foot concrete posts supporting some 180 yards of perimeter fence. Ministry of

Defence police watched this operation without intervening.

The police did drag away demonstrators blocking the base gate used by construction traffic and made several arrests. Shortly after the sit-in had ended at least 200

police entered the camp, some with riot-visors and arrested people suspected of flattening the fence. There was no violent opposition. Police claim they have photographs of the demolition derby.

On Monday, eight men appeared in Newbury magistrates court charged with obstruction, assault on police and criminal damage. Seven pleaded not guilty and were reprimanded in custody in Reading jail despite angry protests from defence barristers. One man pleaded guilty to obstruction and was given a conditional discharge.

The separate women's peace camp outside the main gate which was not involved in the fence incident issued a press release after the larger mixed camp had first arrived welcoming their support. Some women have since expressed disquiet about possible violence. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which supports the women's camp, has confirmed a bizarre phone-call to them after the fence demolition from the US Embassy alleging that molotov cocktails and a cross-bow were sighted on the mixed peace camp. CND press officer Alison Whyte commented to *CL*: 'this camp is not an organised CND event but an expression of how strongly a lot of people are beginning to feel.'

The mixed peace camp daily newsletter commented after the fence incident that, despite concern about the wisdom of such action, 'taking down a fence is no more of a violent act than putting one up.' The newsletter has continuously stressed the camp's non-violent intentions and is asking more supporters to join them so that it may become permanently established. (Tim Malyon)



Not sitting on the fence: US troops put up new barbed wire fences to replace the uprooted ones.

## How the bloody battle of Stonehenge was inevitable



● One of the 520 arrests at Stonehenge last weekend.

● **'We are going to arrest every single one of the people and have all their vehicles,' said a senior officer on the day before the Stonehenge confrontation last Saturday, local sources say.**

A message was sent to Assistant Chief Constable of Wiltshire Lionel Grundy monitored by local people on VHF radio. The officer in charge of the scene sent the message: 'peace convoy prepared to leave field peacefully. Is this negotiable?' The ACC replied. 'No. Your instructions are to arrest them.'

The convoy had previously offered to drive out of the field peacefully and either leave the county, or return to the site from which they had come.

When ACC Grundy arrived on the site he informed people that if they left their vehicles in the field they would be taken into police custody and 'dealt with'. 'If I suspect you of being involved in some of the offences that have occurred today then you will be arrested. I'm not here to bargain with you.' The offer was unanimously rejected.

What happened next was horrific, the worst incidents of uncontrolled police hooliganism that I have ever seen. That nobody was killed was a miracle. Police were charging moving vehicles, screaming and clubbing people. Senior police officers had previously been informed by several members of the press that small children and pregnant women were in some of the vehicles. At one point I found myself in a group of local and national press journalists screaming furiously at the police to stop. Journalists were unanimous that it was the most violent police operation they had ever witnessed, and have demanded a public inquiry.

Although some officers were overheard after the event discussing how much they had enjoyed themselves, several were clearly distressed. One shocked sergeant who had been in the force 12 years told me: 'I didn't join the police forces to do that—what are they doing nicking women and children? What crime have they committed? There was no breach of the peace here until we came on site. This time we came with sticks and shields, next time we'll have to come with guns.'

A small site in Savernake Forest two miles south of Marlborough on the A346 was occupied last Friday night and several hundred people have now congregated there, with numbers rising. The site is owned by the Earl of Cardigan. Police requested his permission to enter it on Friday, and again on Monday, to clear it. Cardigan refused.

This site now resembles a refugee camp. Hundreds of people have been made homeless as a result of Saturday's action. Day trippers to the site have been offering food, the local WRVS have provided blankets.

The future is bleak. Senior police officers have informed Lord Cardigan that they intended to clear the site if numbers rise too much. Numbers will rise. The word has already spread in London—through leaflets and gatherings at Jubilee Gardens—that Savernake is the congregation point.

'What we have seen so far are only the preliminary skirmishes,' said Don Aitken, chairman of the Festival Welfare Services. FWS in concert with other welfare organisations are demanding that a site be provided to avoid bloodshed.

The only solution short of wholesale violence is an alternative site offer. 'There's something wrong in saying that wherever people go they will be harassed,' Lord Cardigan said. 'A blind man can see that.' Green CBD has made an offer to the National Trust to organise the festival on Stonehenge Bottom, protecting the ancient site and ensuring that adequate sanitation and facilities are provided. Alf Dubbs, Labour's Home Affairs spokesman wishes to question the Home Secretary about Saturday's events. NCCL and Release are sending down observers to the area and a solicitor. They are particularly concerned about the wholesale bail restriction being imposed on people by the courts, demanding that they stay 25 miles away from Stonehenge.

What is absolutely clear to me having watched Saturday's events is that unless an alternative site is found soon, the police will move in once again. And this time people may die. (Tim Malyn)

(Release are requesting all photographers who witnessed the event contact them on 289 1123.)

### We're not getting there

● **British Rail is to close the line from Moorgate to Finsbury Park on Sundays, from spring next year.**

This line was part of the underground until 1975 when it was taken over by British Rail. It is still marked on the tube map.

Four stations on the line will now be closed on Sundays—Moorgate, Essex Road, Drayton Park and Highbury and Islington.

The closure is part of a wider pattern of decline. The economies have been forced on British Rail by government cuts in subsidies to public transport. Suburban services have been relatively untouched but inner London services have been cut back significantly.

By contrast with London's rapidly declining public transport system the Paris metro continues to expand. Five new stations have been opened this year. (Mick Hamer)

### Sounds ominous

● Both of London's commercial radio stations are facing widespread redundancies because advertising revenue is down. And staff—particularly those involved in news-gathering—fear it will affect the quality of programmes significantly.

On Monday morning, Capital Radio workers opening their post over their morning tea and toast found themselves being offered voluntary redundancy in a letter from Capital management. And over at LBC (in Gough Square, off Fleet Street) staff of the 175-person station were discussing the 33 redundancies requested by their management.

According to both managements, economies are being forced on the stations by a shortfall in ad revenue. Neither of them offered theories as to why ads on commercial stations—which currently account for between 2.5% and 3% of all ad expenditure—has fallen off. 'We're simply hoping it goes up again,' said a Capital spokesperson. At LBC, a spokesperson quoted their own economics broadcaster—the iconoclastic Bob Beckman—as saying that radio commercials should be back in favour at the end of the year.

But meanwhile the mood at both stations is not quite as relaxed as the reassuring voices of the presenters might lead one to believe. At LBC, staff took the station off the air for 20 minutes two weeks ago. And staff are very unhappy at the possibility of about a quarter of Independent Radio News—five out of 23 reporters and editorial staff—being axed.

'Effectively, you're just not going to have a credible news service any more,' said one staff member.

Capital maintain that they cannot estimate how many people may be made redundant there, saying that it will affect the programme 'not at all'. Had all members of staff received offers of redundancy, we asked? 'Not senior executives and people like that,' said Capital. It seems that around 17 jobs will go. (Duncan Campbell)

# NEWS

## Westmiser Council

Westminster is London's richest borough. Is it the most heartless? While **BEATRIX CAMPBELL** reports on a council backed anti-rates campaign **TIM MALYON** exposes the homelessness scandal at Bruce House.



Bruce House's welcoming aura and (inset) Stephen Bencze.

Westminster's Bruce House is a squalid 659-bed Victorian single men's hostel. In 1980 it was condemned as unfit for human habitation. Now Westminster Council is planning to axe 247 of its beds. Good news?

Not at all. For Westminster is giving no guarantees that it will house any of the homeless. And Westminster's Social Services supremo, councillor John Bull described Bruce House to *City Limits* as: 'The thorn in my side. I need it like double dysentery.'

The closure plan has met with stiff opposition from the local Labour Party and the Greater London Council's all-party Single Homeless Panel.

Independent councillor Lois Peltz, demanded to know why 'Businesses that made their money on the slavery of these people,' hadn't been approached for financial assistance to rehouse residents.

The council's plan is to sell off part of the building and convert the rest into offices, shops and space for light industry, as well as a 160-bed emergency hostel. This won't open until October 1984. It has also promised to provide a further 240 beds elsewhere by the same date,

although no money has yet been set aside for this scheme.

Whilst everyone concerned agrees that the existing building with its degrading conditions must go, opposition centres around the council's apparent lack of interest in the fate of men affected by the immediate closures. Many Bruce House residents work in low-paid kitchen and portering jobs in the West End.

At the last council meeting, which refused to reverse the closure decision, some 70 placard-carrying Bruce House residents packed the public gallery and heckled loudly. Despite this, the Council added insult to their injury by voting to raise charges in what will remain of the present hostel by between 10-15%, both for food and accommodation.

Residents are particularly incensed by the attitude of John Bull. Apart from chairing the social services committee, he is managing director of the Bond Street Silver Gallery. Bull does not live in Westminster, it is his silver gallery interest which makes him eligible for a seat.

'Bruce House has nothing to do with housing need,' he has claimed, and on a number of occasions he has referred to residents as runaways or

alcoholics.

'Bruce House has got a bad name, now; we've been called dossers, alcoholics, runaways, everything under the sun, which makes it worse for us than ever before. I am pretty sure Mr Bull is the most hated man by us now for those statements.' The speaker was Stephen Bencze, organiser of the Bruce House Residents' Committee. Bencze is a 46-year-old Hungarian, now a British citizen, who was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment in 1953 for disseminating illegal news sheets in Budapest.

The Campaign for Single Homeless People have been helping the residents in their fight. Campaign worker Paddy Coulter compares Westminster's attitude unfavourably with the way in which Camden council has dealt with residents in its similarly huge Victorian single men's hostel, Parker House. 'The first thing Camden did was promise no evictions. They treated residents as human beings who had rights.'

Coulter is disgusted by Westminster's actions. 'We're just speechless with anger. Westminster Council treat people like shit for years, then at the end of the day toss them out on the street, couldn't give a monkey's.' Next

winter they'll be complaining about all those dossers on the streets of Westminster.'

Westminster council's Shirley Porter—who chairs its highways committee—is also running 'Westminster Against Reckless Rates', WARS, backed by local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce is campaigning against the Greater London Council's rating policy.

WARS was triggered by a motion passed on Westminster council.

'It's not a "knock Ken Livingstone campaign",' said a WARS spokesperson. 'There wouldn't be any mileage in that, because he's so popular at the moment.' The campaign has rustled up 8000 signatures so far.

Westminster is London's richest borough, but the complaint is that ratepayers—86% of them are businesses—pay most of their rates into the GLC as a result of the rating structure.

WARS' offices have been provided by a local business. The four full-timers and several volunteers have received a little funding and access to facilities by Westminster council. This has enabled WARS to place a banner amidst Leicester Square's trees, conveniently placed opposite 'Reds'...

## Riot Alert For Spring

'Three thousand baton rounds (plastic bullets) and 1000 CS projectiles of approved types are now held by police forces in England and Wales for anti-riot purposes,' Home Secretary William Whitelaw told the House of Commons in a written reply to Reg Freeson MP on February 25.

And British police forces have now been requested to prepare themselves for the possibility of urban riots starting in April. The contingency planning envisages that the same level of violence and damage is likely to occur as during last summer.

All of this coincides with the publication this week of a pamphlet on the use of rubber and plastic bullets by the Information on Ireland group. Entitled 'They Shoot Children', it details the deaths—ten by August last year—and injuries—including blindness and brain damage—caused by the use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland.

Many of those killed have been



Twelve-year-old Carol Ann Kelly in her coffin—killed by a plastic bullet.

children or teenagers as the tendency is to use the bullets in incidents when stones are thrown at troops or Army vehicles. And in December of last year 52 Euro-MPs called for the banning of the use of plastic bullets against civilians. Whitelaw's reply indicates that plastic bullets are now seen as acceptable for use on the mainland. (Duncan Campbell)

(They Shoot Children is available from Information on Ireland, Box 189, 32 Ivor Place, London NW1 6DA. Send 50p plus 20p p&p.)