

**MEDIAEVAL BRIGANDS?  
SEDENTARISM AND POSTMODERNITY:  
THE SOCIAL CONTROL OF 'NEW AGE TRAVELLERS'  
1985-1995**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to make sense of the ‘moral panic’ that occurred in relation to the phenomenon of ‘New Age Travellers’ between 1985 and 1995. The thesis commences in section I by setting out an historical context of the ways in which travelling people have been treated. This is followed in section II by a description of the events of the 1970s, 19980s and 1990s in Britain relating to hippies and associated groups as well as a discussion on the making of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Section III presents a discussion of the theoretical concepts used the project and acts as a link to the fieldwork in the final sections. The remaining sections examine public opinion, the role of the media in the social control of New Age Travellers, policing Travellers and a view from New Age Travellers themselves by way of an ethnographic study. The project concludes with a model of social control that recognises the relationships between a sedentarist hegemony, the politics of land use (including assumptions on the commodification of land) and aspects of postmodernity and the state as essential explanatory elements of a reaction to contemporary nomadic people.

Dedicated to the memory of

*Michael James Hester*

*1954-1998*



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## INTRODUCTION

On June 1st 1985 police blocked a group of Travellers known at the time as 'the convoy' from making their way to Stonehenge to celebrate the summer solstice. Police then surrounded the convoy, members of the convoy were arrested and their homes destroyed. This event is now known in Traveller folklore as the 'Battle of the Beanfield'. Between this time and the publication of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJ&POA) members of this group and groups similar to them across the country collectively called 'New Age Travellers' were the subject to a high degree of public criticism. To use the term 'New Age Traveller' is problematic. It is, in my view as much a myth as a reality. It is generally unpopular with those it attempts to define and yet the term 'Traveller' is ambiguous, as too is the term 'New' or 'Newer Traveller'. To avoid the term in deference to its potentially insulting usage would be to detract from its power to identify a specific if heterogeneous group. It is therefore with some sensitivity to its selection and without intention to insult that I will use the term in the text of this thesis. I spell the word Traveller (unless quoted from another source) with a capital as an ideological statement. To borrow from Colin Clark, who spells the words gaujo/gorgio (Anglo-Romani for non-Gypsy) with a small 'g'. I am attempting to give some weight to Abel rather than Cain.

The public criticism of this group emanated primarily from the media but also from politicians and a variety of interest groups. Indeed the term 'mediaeval brigands' found in the title of this work was used by the then Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd as a description of 'New Age Travellers'. This project is an attempt to find out how and why

this public criticism happened. In order to do this I have explored the factors involved from a number of perspectives.

## Section I

In chapter one, I provide a brief history of Gypsies in Europe and the UK to expose the reactions of the settled community to nomadic people and to start to explore the Liégeois' (1995) notion of 'sedentarism' as an explanatory concept for social conflict between Gypsies and mainstream society. I also examine the centrality of the concept of land to the real and symbolic threat posed by nomadic people to sedentary society.

## Section II

Chapter two combines a number of themes in an attempt to portray the changing shape of the 'New Age Traveller' phenomenon. It traces the origin of New Age Travellers from the 1970's 'hippie' free festival scene and 'pre-hippie' youth cultures, examining the significance of the counter-culture. The chapter also examines the influence of a number of 'social movements' captured in, and united in opposition to, the 1994 CJ&POA.

Chapter three is a detailed description and analysis of the making of the CJ& POA which provides detail on the perceptions of the 'law makers' through the process of amendment and the influences exerted by interest groups.

## Section III

Chapter four discusses the theoretical concepts and links the previous chapters to the results of the fieldwork found in the following chapters. There is a general theoretical

discussion followed by the theoretical discussions on the role of the media, public opinion, policing and lastly, what I would describe 'subcultural' theory.

#### Section IV

Chapter five is a discussion on the methodology of the project. The chapter presents a case for triangulation as well as a detailed account of the differing methods used to collect data from different sources.

In chapter six I focus on the part played by the press in portraying New Age Travellers between 1985 and 1994. This chapter draws from notions of media amplification, state centred/hegemonic media manipulation and reactions to 'deviance'. It also examines the importance of metaphor and a 'post structuralist reading' of the press narrative. The chapter explores the changing emphases that occurred over the nine-year period. It concludes with some suggestions on how images of Travellers may have been developed by the media and has found themselves in the public's mind.

Chapter seven then tests some of these assumptions by way of a public opinion survey. The chapter extends a concern for the relationship between press and public opinion to a number of other central issues related to the social control of New Age Travellers. These include an assessment of real and perceived threats, attitudinal analysis, the role of the police and an indication of the popularity of a number of measures in the context of the CJ&POA.

It would be difficult to undertake a project of this nature without including a perspective from the most visible agent of social control, namely the police. Chapter eight therefore looks at the role played by the police, their response to New Age Travellers in the context of other environmental influences broadly falling under the rubric of ‘managerialism’ and ‘postmodernity’ and in the context of the rapidly-changing world of public order policing.

Chapter nine is an ethnographic view of the social control of Travellers and highlights, through participant observation, the ideology and lifestyle and experiences of three different travelling communities and their reactions to the process of social control.

## Section V

Chapter ten draws together a number of conclusions from the previous chapters.

## SECTION I

### CHAPTER ONE

#### SEDENTARISM: AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR THE 'NEW AGE TRAVELLERS'

In 1633 ... the self styled Sebastien Lescuyer, of Egyptian or Boëme nationality, was condemned for having been found guilty of calling himself Egyptian, and on this pretext roaming the countryside'. Condemned as of 'Boëme nationality' he was perceived as inevitably dissident, and so was flogged, branded on both shoulders and banished for life after serving the King in his galleys as a convict for the time and space of three years (Liégeois 1987:101).

Like the death of Damiens the Regicide, (Foucault 1977) Liégeois' account of seventeenth century justice seems, to our contemporary sensibilities, horrific. However, perhaps more alarming is the fact that the punishment and prejudice that has greeted travelling people in Europe since their arrival has remained consistently high over the centuries. Whilst penalty generally can be seen to have modified into the more subtle modalities, this subtlety is less evident when examining the reaction to Gypsies, Travellers or vagrants. There are similarities, of course, with the changes seen from a wider view of penalty. This history will be an attempt to chronicle events but hopes to avoid any teleological implications that a simple description can suggest. I hope to set New Age Travellers in an historical context to provide some points of reference for the more detailed examination of their social control in the years 1985 to 1995.

It is perhaps worthy of note that not all Gypsies are nomads and of course not all nomads are Gypsies. Liégeois (1987) suggests that it is a common misconception to think of Gypsies as wanders whom are "...alien everywhere, never 'belonging', ever moving

on.”(1987:51). He describes the many varied lives that Gypsies across Europe live, ranging from geographical boundaries of a few miles to many thousands of miles and from a frequency of travel from a daily basis to a few times in a lifetime. The entire spectrum of lifestyles that are embraced by Gypsies are described by Liégeois. He suggests that nomadism is an essential part of Gypsy identity, even for those who have been sedentarized (a term he uses in preference to sedentary to make the point that it remains a temporary state). He develops this theme further to suggest that nomadism is less about geography than psychology, in the sense that nomadism is a state of mind that rejects geographic boundaries. In his words, “the land of the Gypsies lies within themselves”(1987:56). However, it is fair to conclude that in the modern world, travelling for Gypsies is becoming a tunnel. It is eroding their different perspectives on time and space as the stopping places become fewer and the time it takes to travel from one point to another decreases (what Giddens (1984) has described as distanciation). Like the Pintupi of the Western Desert of Australia the clash of these traditions appears to be resulting in an eradication of alternative worldviews to those of ‘European civilisation’.

I will start by outlining a brief history of Gypsies in Europe. This is then a self-confessed Eurocentric history (although some reference is made to other parts of the world). A description of the experiences of Gypsies in Europe is followed by the particular experience of Gypsies and Travellers in Britain. Geographically, whilst limiting this study to the Gypsies and Travellers of the UK and Europe I am aware that extensive research has been undertaken in other parts of the world on Gypsies and Travellers for

example the United States (including Hawaii) and Canada. For further information on Gypsies in America see Lee (1967); Thompkins (1965); Murin (1949) and Cotton (1968). This account, however, will focus on the relationship between the sedentary and nomadic populations with primary reference to legislative change that has occurred to date. I believe this to be a valid starting point as the history of this group can provide insight into the relationship of New Age Travellers to the sedentary population that have occurred more recently. In using the term nomadic I am aware of the 'East European Gypsy political position', which has found the association an offensive stereotype but defer for the purposes of this work to the position of Liégeois. I will also discuss reactions to vagrants and tramps who represent, albeit in a differing manifestation, a nomadic lifestyle that has provoked similar reactions from the settled population and in some cases for similar reasons.

The history of Gypsies and their relationship to the settled community is a history dominated by conflict. Sexton (1990), whilst acknowledging some positive myths relating to Gypsies nevertheless that Gypsies have consistently been seen as a 'problem' by bureaucratic and administrative 'forces' unable to accept the Gypsies refusal to conform to the norms of sedentary society. George Monbiot places this conflict in the context of a much older tension before the Gypsies first arrived in Europe, at the point when the first communities began to settle rather than to wander.

the conflict between nomads and settled society is fundamental to mankind. Civilisation, from the Latin *civis*, a town's person, means the culture of those whose homes do not move. The horde, from the Turkish, *ordu*, a camp and its people, is its antithesis, which both defines civilisation and threatens it (Monbiot 1995:1).

The conflict that occurs between the settled community and nomadic people has been described in a modern context as 'sedentarism' defined as

that 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).

For McVeigh the notion extends beyond the obvious intentional incitement and includes less tangible ideas, actions and structures which "construct being sedentary as the only possible mode of existence within contemporary society" (1997:9). The prejudice has a long history.

History and literature provide a number of examples of this conflict between the 'stayers' and the 'movers'. Monbiot, for example, quotes the conflict between Cain (the tiller of the ground) and Abel (the herdsman); A more contemporary example is found in the lyrics of the musical *Oklahoma*: "Territory folks should stick together... Territory folks should all be pals". Today the European Gypsies are still threatened, as are the Kurds of northern Iraq, the Bedouin of Saudi Arabia and the Maasai and Samburu of the central east African plains. Many nomadic lifestyles have been eradicated completely most notably perhaps among the numerous tribes of native Americans.

Why this tension should run so deep is difficult to assess. Whether it is the paradoxical mix of envy and fear, or the reminder of our ancestral heritage, as suggested by Monbiot (1994) or Sexton (1991) or a fear for the loss or damage to property 'mixed in' with a xenophobia is difficult to gauge. However, the nomadic lifestyle remains a source of tension between Gypsies and the settled population that has resulted in the eradication of



similar groups in other parts of the world and could lead to the eradication of the lifestyle in Western Europe. In the European context, the threat of waves of migration from the east may be a contributory factor to this deep resentment of nomadic people but it is ironic that the nomads have usually lost out in any prolonged conflict. For example, whilst the Black Huns were able to overrun Europe fairly easily, the more closed land of Western Europe led to the fragmentation of the group which in turn led to the defeat of Attila in Northern France.

In addition to this ancient and continuing conflict running parallel to tensions between nomadic and settled communities, there exists the reaction of the ruling élites to vagrancy and vagabondage. The vagrancy problem of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century was a reaction to the perceived growing problem of masterless (unemployed) idle but able wanderers who were seen a threat to society. Thomas Hobbes, no less, in his *Leviathan* of 1651 (quoted in Beier 1985:6) observed that the greatest danger to England was “that dissolute condition of masterless men...(lacking)...subjection to laws and a coercive power to tie their hands they would destroy society”. This resulted in the development of wide-ranging punitive laws that were,

...designed to entrap the maximum number of offenders. But it also reflected a conviction in the ruling élites that vagabondage was a hydra headed monster poised to destroy the state and social order, for of the vagrants five characteristics the *Leitmotiv* that ran through them all was disorder. (Beier1985: 4)

The appearance of vagrants also resulted in a kind of prototype media amplification of deviance for example Sebastian Brandt’s *The Ship of Fools* (1508), and *The Highway to*

*the Spital House* (c. 1535-6). Moral panic and legislative reaction, helped on its way by some poetic licence is not a phenomenon exclusively confined to a recent history of disorder in English south-coast resorts or in Handsworth Birmingham.

However, what connects vagrants and Traveller/Gypsies, apart from their wandering is the issue of paid employment, evasion of taxation and the stereotypical and often exaggerated links to acquisitive crime.

### **Gypsies in Europe**

Kenrick and Puxon (1972), Crowe and Kolsti (1991) Frazer (1992) and Acton (1997,1998) provide a comprehensive history of Gypsies in Europe and pull together the main writing on the subject to that date. It is generally, though not universally agreed that Gypsies are descended from groups of travelling people. They were the Rom, Sinti, and Kalé who migrated from Northern India, some of whom arrived some time between the 10th and 14th century (Sexton 1990, Kenrick and Puxon 1972 Rehfisch 1977). There is however, some dispute as to the exact time and some writers have claimed the twelfth century, others the fourteenth. The first literary evidence relating to the origins of Gypsies comes from the Persian poet Firdusi (c. 930-1020) in his *Shahnameh* or *Book of Kings*. In Firdusi's account a group known as the Luri were banished by the King of Persia to live a nomadic lifestyle. Liégeois (1983:33) notes that the modern Iranian word Koli refers to "Remnants of the tribe of Hindu musicians who came to Iran during the reign of Bahram Gur...also called Luri or Luli". There are many modern and ancient words that derive from Luli, like *Lul wash* (beautiful face) and *Luli sefate* (behaving like

a Luli, characterised by instability). The Arab historian Hamza of Ishfan in 940 AD provides a similar account of nomads in Persia. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that there were probably waves of migration from northern India that took place before and after the tenth century.

In 1816 Jon Hoyland published his first work on the subject of Gypsy origins and suggested that there were, in the language of Romani people, at least 52 names for every day things that were derived from *Hindoostani*: from this linguistic connection he suggests an Indian source of language. Sexton (1989) also compares the various European words for 'Gypsy', e.g. *Cygany*, *Gitano*, *Gitane* etc., and traces Turkish and Indian similarities. However, according to Sexton, the European words for 'Gypsy' share a common Greek etymology which means simply, 'fortune teller', and provides an early link with the religious or mystic tag of the so-called 'New Age Travellers'. This may have been a general label given to groups of nomadic people, originally involved in fortune telling as a way of earning money on the move, having no ethnic significance. Certainly the connection with Gypsies and the degradation of tarot is perceived by Acton as a "racist invention" (Acton 1998:14).

In support of this general theory Grellman (1783) suggests that Gypsies originated from the Kingdom of Guzrate in the province of Tatta. For an account of the many conflicting theories relating to dual origins and central Indian origin by Woolner in 1915 and Turner in 1927, see Liégeois (1986) and Acton (1998). There are indeed a number of works correlating Gypsy, Hindi, Punjabi, Persian, Kurdish and Greek words that provide

evidence for the Indian origin of Gypsies and that have concluded that there were indeed migrations from India: Grellman (1783), Rudiger (1782), Pott (1844) and Sampson (1923). A notable dissenting voice from the view that British Gypsies are of Indian origin is that of Judith Okely (1983). She suggests the now less-controversial idea that Gypsies originated from travelling people who were formed from landless villains after the collapse of feudalism as well as individuals from along the orient trade routes.

British Gypsies are culturally more complex, and it may be the case, as Liégeois suggests, that there was significant intermarriage between Romany Gypsies Celtic peoples, which makes the investigation of cultural identity even more complex. For the purposes of this study I do not intend to explore definitions of 'true' Gypsies or further explore pre historical considerations. It is in the fourteenth century that the Gypsy's pre-history ends and their history begins as Europeans.

## **Migrations**

Kenrick and Puxon describe the migration of Gypsies in Europe as follows:

Other documents prove that by the end of the fourteenth century a large proportion of the Gypsies throughout Eastern Europe had become sedentary. In Western Europe the lighter skinned Sinti were tolerated as migratory workers and the Iberian Peninsula had a settled Kale community. Small nomadic groups of Rom however, continue to be hounded from place to place in Western Europe even today (1972:15)

By the fifteenth century the main centres of dispersion of Gypsies appeared to be Hungary and Moldavia. The Gypsies then moved north and northwest to occupy Germany. Throughout the fifteenth century Gypsy populations spread through all of Europe and into Russia; there are even examples of migration (some by way of deportation) to Africa and South America. There was a second major wave of migration in the 19th Century when Gypsies migrated out of Romania, having been freed from slavery, into Europe and America. Smaller waves of migration took place in the 1960s, notably from Yugoslavia to Western Europe, Travellers from Ireland to England and Wales and a few years later Ciganos from Portugal to Spain (Liégeois 1987: 47).

### **The Punishment of Gypsies**

Whilst there are accounts of favourable treatment of Gypsies in the fifteenth century, discriminative legislation against Gypsies developed very quickly and remains a current theme today in Britain and mainland Europe. With prejudice, which itself could be based on xenophobia, racism or sedentarism came an almost immediate link with crime or general hostility and with this link arose many examples of anti-Gypsy legislation in Europe. Examples can be found in England 1530 and within the Venetian government 1558; similar legislative processes were also apparent in Scandinavia, for example Denmark 1589 and Sweden 1637. Essentially legislation was aimed at either executing or expelling Gypsies from the country or part of the country concerned. Between 1416 and 1774, 140 anti-Gypsy laws were promulgated in the German states. In Prague on January 7th 1710 Joseph I issued an edict that all-adult Gypsy men be hanged without trial and that boys and women be mutilated. In Switzerland persons with no 'fatherland'

were tortured or, as stipulated in 1580, set loose so that anyone who encountered them might kill them. Gypsy hunts were organised throughout the Swiss Confederation, as in Germany and the Netherlands (Liégeois 1987).

There are many further examples of horrific laws and violent treatment of Gypsies. For a full history of the persecution of Gypsies in Europe see Kendrick and Puxon (1972 and 1995) and Vaux de Foletier (1978). However, by 1899 a Gypsy information office had been set up in Bavaria. Later, in 1905 the government carried out a census of Gypsies, both nomadic and settled, in Bavaria. In 1926 the Bavarian parliament adopted a new law designed 'to combat Gypsies, nomads and idlers' and the Criminal Commission of the Länder provinces endorsed the 16 July 1926 law aimed at suppressing the 'Gypsy plague'. The German measures were similar to those of the French who also developed a census followed by a law in 1912 that compelled all Gypsies to carry identity passbooks; this law was finally repealed in 1970.

The height of prejudice against Gypsies however, was undoubtedly the horror of *Porajmos* or Romani holocaust. Starting in 1933 with the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler, it ended with the genocide of an estimated 1.5 million Gypsies who were classified either as 'asocial' or specifically 'Gypsies'. The classification of 'asocial' tended to blur the edges regarding the espoused reason for punishment and many claim that it was used as evidence in an attempt to cover up the numbers of Gypsies persecuted by reason of being a Gypsy.

*The Porajmos*, or 'devouring', started with registration and moved to the development of a list of genealogies by Robert Ritter's institute. In 1938 a law was passed to counter the 'Gypsy threat', followed by deportation of Gypsies to Poland. On 16th December 1942 an order was issued to send all Gypsies to the death camps; by 1943 this was supplemented by enforcement provision; Gypsies were shipped to Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Chelmno, Dachau, Lackenbach, Riga, Ravensbruck, Treblinka and other Nazi death camps until 1945.

Under the Croatian government of Ante Pavelic Gypsies suffered proportionally more than in Germany; Serbia was proclaimed at one stage to be Gypsy free. Details of the *Porajmos* are horrifically outlined by Kenrick and Puxon (1972,1995), Crow and Kolsti (1991), Wellers (1979), Bernadac (1979), Novitch (1968) and recently by Fonseca (1996).

The other main response in dealing with the 'Gypsy problem' has been assimilation. Often conceived from apparently benign motives, the need for the assimilation of nomadic groups by the sedentary population is a thread, which runs through the relationship of both groups and also remains today. How governments have dealt with Gypsies can be seen, in some respects, as an evolving process. A common-sense view might suggest that as nation states became more humanitarian, the extreme punishments meted out became outmoded as society itself became more 'civilised'. Revisionist historians in the field of social control however, have taught us to be sceptical about the motives for this shift. Taking a Foucauldian view, for example, assimilation can be seen as part of a wider 'gentler punishment' in which Gypsies are drawn into our disciplinary

society in order to be controlled. The threat that Gypsies continue to pose therefore is their resistance to assimilation through organised paid work like their masterless counterparts the vagabonds.

In Spain the process of confinement and assimilation was based on the notion that people were not born Gypsies but rather chose to become Gypsies by following a particular lifestyle. In 1499 the decree of Medina del Campo encouraged Gitanos to find a master and a trade. Spain was not alone in legislating for the abolition of the term Gypsies. Another attempt at mass assimilation took place under Maria Theresa in Hungary in 1761; she outlawed the use of the word *Cigany* and decreed that Gypsies in the future be called new citizens, new peasants or new Hungarians (Crowe and Kolsti 1991). In 1780 the government placed 8,388 children in schools where they became wards of state, and another 9,463 in foster homes. Within a few years all the children had run away from the schools or families. The Gypsies responded with some outbreaks of violence in certain areas, though in most instances they simply left Hungary or other parts of Europe (Crowe and Kolsti 1991).

Assimilation was the all-too-predictable approach taken by the communist regimes set up in post-war central Europe which demonstrated a similar degree of cultural insensitivity to the Gypsy lifestyle in order to fit nomadic people in to the ultra-conformity of socialist state ideology. The fate of young Hungarian women Gypsies remains an area of concern as many are at risk of incarceration due to their lifestyle and ethnicity (Hester 1990).



The domination of soviet influenced socialism across central Europe was additionally problematic to Gypsies. In Czechoslovakia, Law no. 74 of 1958 on the permanent settlement of nomads banned nomadism (Liégeois 1986) but generally the socialist solutions to nomads based on settlement, assimilation, labour and schooling were unsuccessful and ended with the increased incarceration of Gypsies. Similar smaller scale attempts at assimilation were made in England between 1800 and 1850 through the establishment of schools and missions. (Sexton 1989) These establishments, aimed primarily at addressing the need of vulnerable young people, provide examples of how the rationale and methods of assimilation became wrapped up in what appeared to be issues of welfare rather than control.

What seems to be important in binding together these disjointed groups that are labelled Gypsies is what Kenrick (1995) describes as “anti-Gypsy legislation which affects all groups without distinction”. In Britain this has certainly been true of the Irish and Scottish Travellers, the wave of homeless Travellers post 1945 and latterly New Age Travellers.

It is also worthy of note that racism, and particularly white racism, remains an underlying factor in this process of discrimination (See Dunstan and Hobson (1965) on this point). There are references to racism going as far back as the fifteenth century, for example, the monk Cornelius of Lübeck referred to Gypsies as having “most ugly faces, black like those of Tartars” (Sexton 1987: 45). Racism often acts as the grounds for

exclusion, whether it be based on colour, culture or biology. These terms of course can be seen as overlapping, but clearly Gypsies have been discriminated against not only because of skin colour but more importantly through cultural racism epitomised by the concept of sedentarism. Gypsies have also been discriminated on the grounds of 'biological' racism as being literally racially inferior, a debate taken to its conclusion in the 'great devouring' of the Nazi regime.

### **Gypsies in Britain**

The experience of Gypsies in Britain is different to those who lived in mainland Europe. Not only did they not directly experience the *Porajmos*, but also in many other ways they were isolated and therefore very distinct from their European neighbours. The first evidence of Gypsies in Britain is in the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer for Scotland 1505 April 22nd Item to the Egyptians by the kings command vii lib (£700) (Sexton 1989:37). The first entry for England was a reference in the 22nd Statute of King Henry VIII in 1522 where the group was referred to as "these outlandish people"(1989:39). The reception that Gypsies experienced in Britain was generally similar to other European countries - a mixture of romanticised acceptance and xenophobia followed by increasing intolerance. Repressive legislation was passed in 1530, 1554, and 1562. In 1554 English law imposed the death penalty for being "those who or shall become in the fellowship or company of Egyptians". In 1577 in Aylesbury seven men and a woman were sentenced to be hanged after being found guilty of keeping company with Egyptians. Essentially Gypsies were seen as felons and subject to punishment.

Okely (1975) lists a 'progression' of reaction to the 'Gypsy problem'; the repressive aims of early legislation, the conversion of Gypsies to Christianity, assimilation, the education of children, concern over health and sanitary conditions, the provision of sites, preservation of culture. Following on from the early repressive anti-Gypsy law, modern Gypsy history is marked by the Prevention of Crimes Act 1871. This made it an offence to be found wandering with a tent with no visible means of support. In 1871 George Smith, a little known philanthropist published his first work, *The Cry of the Children of the Brickyards of England*; he was concerned with the appalling condition in which Gypsy children worked. As a result of the public interest in the issue and his own personal crusade, the Factory (Brick and Tile Yards) Extension Act of 1871 was passed. Smith published a number of publications mainly on canal people but in 1880 also wrote *Gypsy Life - Being an Account of our Gypsies and their Children*. This work further highlighted the apparently terrible conditions experienced by Gypsies and their children and sought to bring about change by legislative control. This would not have been the first or indeed the last attempt at using the pretext of 'child saving' as a reason for the involvement in the organisation of differing cultural groups. A Victorian middle class worldview regarding the primacy of their particular and moral standards could be seen as yet another version of assimilation with respect to other cultures.

In 1883 George Smith organised the introduction of a Private Bill, *The Canal Boats Act (1877, 46 Vict.) Amendment Bill*. By 1894 he had formulated the *Movable Dwellings Bill* in which he proposed the registration of caravans in the same way he had proposed the

registration of canal boats. George Smith died in 1895 but the momentum to legislate for the nomadic populations of Britain continued.

Before his death however, in 1888 the formation of the Gypsy Lore Society was to provide an anti-assimilationist view to balance the assimilationist consequence of the reformers. The Gypsy Lore Society was the first organised forum in Britain that tackled assimilation as a potential threat to Gypsy culture. In 1909/10 a Bill proposed that “Every movable dwelling shall be registered with the council or county”. Eventually this was enshrined in the *Housing (Scotland) Act 1935*; in the following year the *1936 Public Health Act* restricted offensive trades such as rag and bone; homes could be condemned unfit whether they were tents, vans, sheds or similar structures.

*The Town and Country Planning Act 1947* had clear implications for Travellers dealing in scrap metal and tensions rose again. In 1950 Norman Dodds Labour MP for Erith and Crayford proposed a national survey of Travellers in order to identify the ‘general problem’. Whilst this was not accepted, a survey of Kent was sanctioned to assist in a more national survey to take place *sine die*. The *Highways Act 1959* refers to Travellers as follows, “If...a Hawker or other itinerant trader or a Gypsy pitches a booth, stall, or stand, or encamps on a highway without lawful excuse, he shall be guilty of an offence”.

Five years later the *Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964* required ‘dealers’ to register with local authorities and so presented further difficulties to the Travellers. The *1968 Caravan Sites Act* however, marked an attempt by government to protect the rights of nomadic

people and at the same time control and regulate the provision of sites by local authorities. By 1983 the Act had been amended by the *Town and Country Planning Act 1971*, *Local Government Act 1972*, *Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980* and the *Criminal Justice Act 1982*.

One of the most significant sections of the *1968 Caravan Sites Act*, Section 6, laid down a duty upon every local authority to exercise their power under Section 24 of the *Caravan Sites and control of Development Act 1960* (provision of caravan sites). This was a duty to provide adequate accommodation for Gypsies residing in or resorting to their area. Section 9 of the Act gave powers to the Secretary of State to direct local authorities to provide sites. Section 16 of the Act provided definitions of the terms 'caravan' and 'Gypsies'. Significantly the Act defined Gypsies as:

persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, but does not include members of an organised group of travelling showmen, or persons engaged in travelling circuses, travelling together on such.

The Act gave extra powers to the courts for the prohibition of 'unauthorised camping' in 'designated' areas (Section 10) along with orders for removal of unlawfully parked caravans and their occupants. The Act also gave powers to local authorities for the control or regulation of nomadic people if the local authority complied themselves with Section 6 of the Act i.e. provided adequate provision.

Alongside all these changes in legislation, individual prejudice remained evident. On March 19th 1990 the Conservative Councillor Mrs. Tookey stated in a public address that she wanted to see the filthy, dirty Gypsies recycled and dumped into the sea (quoted in

Crowe and Kolsti 1991: 24). This followed a similar public statement by the mayor of Dartford in Kent who suggested that Gypsies be pushed over the white cliffs of Dover (Acton 1990: 13).

With increasing planning controls bureaucratisation and urban development the Gypsies face difficulties in camping legally even on land which they themselves have purchased or where the owner consents to their presence. Judith Okely (1983) concludes, from her studies of Gypsies, that policies based on the dispersion of Gypsies have proved ineffective and alternative policies of enforced settlement will either fail or bring demoralisation and high costs in welfare support.

### **Vagrancy**

The word vagrant and vagabond are both derived from the Latin *vagari*, to wander. In many ways the terms Gypsy and vagrant are by no means mutually exclusive. Vagrants and vagabonds developed as a result of changes in the ownership of land from feudal times when the villains (from the Latin *Villa* i.e. attached to a house) became detached from the residence of their Lord. Vagabonds and vagrants also share commonality in respect of being masterless-being outside formal structures of authority be they political, occupational and ecclesiastical.

The classic historical account of vagrancy was written by Ribton-Turner in 1887. This work examined the homeless wanderer, the beggar and the vagabond within the social structure of early England. Vagrancy according to Ribton-Turner is viewed as a history

of economic and social oppression. Nearly one hundred years later Chambliss (1964,1976) applied a 'structural conflict' perspective to the origins of this area of criminal law in an attempt to outline the reasons behind the development of vagrancy legislation.

The earliest reference to the 'problem' in the British Isles was in the Roman History of Ammianus Marcellus in A. D. 368. Whilst there were vagrancy laws of a type in the Saxon period the first 'real' Vagrancy Law was in 1349. This in part was due to the effects of the Black Death in 1348 that severely reduced the population putting labour at a premium. The law is thus seen as an attempt to force labourers to take employment for lower wages. Hester and Eglin (1992) note the additional problem of a depleted population caused by the fourteenth century habit of engaging in Holy Crusades and religious wars, resulting in landlords losing some of their serfs who then became a scarce and valuable 'commodity'. Other factors that contributed to the need for vagrancy laws according to Pound (1971) were

- the demobilisation of soldiers after the Wars of the Roses,
- the rising population,
- the increase in unemployment and economic depression arising out of the fall of the demand in textiles
- inflation,
- the enclosure of common land,
- harvest failures, and
- the dissolution of the monasteries.

All of these factors put pressure on the supply of cheap agricultural labour and provided an incentive for legislative control. Chambliss (1976) identifies a 'shift in focal concern' from the legislation of 1349 to the next significant Act in 1530, this shift was away from

a concern with labourers to a concern with criminal activity. The 1530 Statute also increased the severity of punishments it read:

If any person, being whole and mighty in body, and able to labour, be taken to begging, or be vagrant and can give no reckoning how he lawfully gets his living... and all other idle persons going about, some of them using divers and subtle crafty and unlawful games and plays, and some of them feigning themselves to have knowledge of ... crafty sciences... shall be punished...there to be tied to the end of a cart naked, and to be beaten with whips throughout the same market town or other place, till his body be bloody by reason of such whipping (1976a: 76).

Five years later, laws specifically designed to protect property were introduced. These laws included the death penalty for vagrancy. The Vagrancy Statutes in 1743 completed the 'consolidation' of the vagrancy laws, which had started in 1530. The next significant event in the further consolidation of vagrancy legislation was the form of the Vagrancy Act of 1824. The provisions were diverse and aimed at possible criminals, itinerants who would not work, Gypsies who practiced fortune telling and prostitutes. It provided a legislative framework that could be applied in order to prosecute individuals for begging, sleeping out in the open, gambling, exhibiting wounds and other offences. The Vagrancy Act of 1824 (Section 4) specifically refers to lodging in any tent or wagon as a reason for prosecution. Later, just prior to Victoria's accession the 1832 Poor law instituted workhouses in order to cut down on the potential vagrancy resulting from demobilized soldiers from the French revolutionary war (1815)

In Victorian England there were numbers of individuals who would be found tramping the roads ranging from navvies and sailors looking for work or tramping artisans compositors, lithographers, tailors, coach makers, book binders smiths and engineers, steam engine makers. Like the Gypsies, tramps and other vagrants evolved a dual and



conflicting image, romantic and enviable and simultaneously mistrusted and discriminated against.

By the late nineteenth century there appeared to be a need to identify 'professional' tramps (thought to be a threat to public order) this resulted in legislation in 1870 making it an offence for a tramp to apply to the same Casual Ward twice within a specific period. The perceived threat continued to rise until the outbreak of war in 1914 and culminated in the unsuccessful proposal from the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, suggesting that tramps should be incarcerated in labour colonies.

Since 1918, the perception of vagrants and particularly tramps has shifted. Between the wars tramps could be seen as 'economic' as well as 'social' casualties being made up of a range of people facing multiple problems. However, after the Second World War tramps were seen predominantly as ageing single men and alcoholics. Recently, with an increase in unemployment and homelessness especially for young people, the perception has changed again. A number of factors have contributed to this: the effects of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990; decreased benefit for young unemployed people; family break down and sexual abuse. The problem is often seen as one of youth and displaced institutionalised casualties of *Care in the Community*. As a result of these developments the public's image of the vagrant has been contemporised. The young unemployed (masterless) and dispossessed were seen as a dangerous phenomenon rather than an indication of economic and demographic changes in the population. Like the Gypsies, tramps and vagrants too, enjoy contradictory perceptions;

they are both envied and romanticised and yet simultaneously, pitied and feared. They too have been the subjects of legislation and general discrimination in attempts to assimilate or reject. Society has attempted both these 'phagic' and 'emic' responses (Bauman 1993).

## **Conclusions**

Gypsies, and more generally Travellers, face a multitude of stereotypes and prejudices and yet they are often romanticised and envied by the sedentary population. The contrast of the disciplined factory based life style with that symbolised by the erstwhile brightly coloured Vardo remains a strong one. This confusion is contextualised in a long historical tradition of conflict. Gypsies and Travellers have been feared and disliked for thousands of years. The reasons for this are complex and involve symbolic threats to the settled community as well as real ones. Sedentarism captures best the complexity of this range of ideas, actions and structures.

Many writers have linked the identification of Romany Gypsies with white racism dating back to the thirteenth century. The fear of nomads may be simply the fear of strangers who, by virtue of their movement are continually put in the position of being outsiders. Gypsies are also on the margins of society in the figurative sense; they can be seen as having escaped from society's 'proper regulation' and appear to shun the responsibilities that settled people owe it. Their escape from the conformity imposed on the settled community can be a potentially de-stabilising influence. Recently Gypsies have provided an obvious threat to a society based on capital relationships between employer and

employee. On a more practical level nomadic people need space and provide implicit counter claims to sedentarist concepts of land ownership. In an increasingly regulatory world, the space needed for nomadism seems no longer available.

Added to these processes and ideas is the effect of stereotyping and the socialising influences on the settled community who are bombarded with negative and sometimes frightening images of Gypsies. The menace of Gypsies has been firmly planted in the minds of the settled population over the centuries. Solutions to the problem have implemented with varying degrees of relevance and success. History shows us that the initial response to Gypsies, save a very few examples of favour and local generosity, have been characterised by severe measures of control. These measures were based on local and national legislation that commenced fifty years after the arrival of Gypsies in Europe; the ultimate example of this was the unsuccessful attempt to exterminate Gypsies in Europe by the Nazi regime.

Acton (1998) suggests that

These genocidal laws usually come at the point where political crises are forcing the state to mark its territorial and moral cultural national boundaries; arguably the systematic killing of Gypsies can be seen as the defining *rite de passage* in the maturation of the European nation state (Acton 1998: 7).

Grand schemes of assimilation in Spain and Hungary have proven to be futile. The renewed implementation of these schemes by socialist regimes in central Europe and the extreme example of enslavement of Gypsy have proved equally unsuccessful.

Sedentarism and a brief social history of Gypsies and vagrants provide a perspective for beginning to understand the reaction to 'New Age Travellers' in an older context of conflict. As Acton (1998:8) also reminds us, these early slaughters of Gypsies are not some private Gypsy tragedy but part of "a general political history".

Chapter Two examines a more recent history: that of hippies and associated groups. It is suggested that New Age Travellers are an extension of earlier counter-cultures. This construction however, cannot be fully understood in terms of marking out this group for vilification nor indeed in terms of its effectiveness to evoke prejudice, without first grounding it in its deeper, sedentarist context.

SECTION II  
CHAPTER TWO  
AN ALTERNATIVE PROVENANCE THE RECENT HISTORY OF 'THE  
COUNTER-CULTURE'

**Introduction**

In Chapter One I traced the roots of anti-nomadic prejudice and its relationship to the present conflict between 'contemporary nomads' and the dominant sedentarist group. However, there is another, more recent history, that forms the provenance of New Age Travellers. McKay (1996) suggests that New Age Travellers can also be seen as part of a continued and continuing counter-culture that was first manifested in the hippie movement of late sixties. It is not just by happenstance that Travellers were labelled as 'hippies' by the media; there are continuities between the groups. Tracing those connections and society's reaction to previous groups will be the focus of this chapter in a journey through the genealogy of New Age Travellers down the 'Hippie Trail' as well as the 'Gypsy Lane'.

In this chapter I intend to explore the relationship between youth counter cultures and the subsequent societal reactions they stimulated. I will trace the origins of the hippie movement of the mid-sixties, its ideologies and its progenitors. I will focus particularly the relationship between hippies in the context of free festivals, the rave scene and the 'eco coalitions' that arose during and subsequent to the 1994 CJ&POA. This will be an attempt to set into a temporal and ideological context, (to complement the historical context of sedentarism) the New Age Traveller phenomenon.

Lastly, I will describe the relationship between the more overt coercive methods by which Traveller identity was threatened and the mechanisms by which social authority attempted to win and shape consent so that the power of the dominant classes appeared both legitimate and natural (Hall *et al* 1978).

I define New Age Travellers as individuals or groups who, either choose to, or (because of economic and social reasons) adopt a nomadic lifestyle or semi-nomadic and who have arrived at this position in the period from the 1970s to the present. However, in choosing this definition I acknowledge that travelling is as much a state of mind as a physical reality from the perspective of those who choose this lifestyle. To focus therefore on the degree of movement through space and to define as Traveller or non Traveller on those grounds alone is somewhat fruitless.

Many New Age Travellers understandably dislike the 'New Age' tag and prefer simply to be known as 'New Travellers' or better still not to be labelled at all. This view, and the view that any artificial divide between Travelling people was expressed by Richie Coterie in his letter to the 1990 AGM of the National Gypsy Education Council:

I used to believe that most New Age Travellers were of like mind to myself and that I could speak on their behalf but now I know that they are not ALL anything. There are a variety of aspirations and opinions amongst the *New Traveller Groups*. The older ones are migrant workers, harvesting, performing, and being crafty, recycling scrap etc. Some are indistinguishable from Gypsy/Travellers at a distance (Cotterill 1990) (My emphasis).

The variety of names that the newer Travellers originally attracted is some indication of their eclectic nature and unpopularity: Crusties, Drongos, Mutants, Hedge Monkeys, Brew Crew, Hippies, Soap Dodgers, Gyro Gypsies, Brigands and so on. In her

examination of New Age Travellers in the Bristol area, Ellie Jowitt refers to the quixotic definition of 'New Age' given by Alex Rosenburger as:

one of a society more in tune with ecological and spiritual values, and one where food and resources would be more evenly shared (1990)

Vicki Stangroome provides a more pragmatic definition of New Age Travellers:

Individuals and couples who choose an alternative lifestyle for a variety of reasons economic, philosophical and social. They come from every class and background (there is even a Right Honorable on the road) (1993:2).

In contrast to the idea of a shared ideology which essentially attracts, or pulls Travellers on the road, Jim Davis criticises the assumption that New Age Travellers have in the main, *chosen* to leave society at all. He suggests that:

Two thirds of the new age Travellers involved in the study reported that they had been forced into travelling because of the circumstances they had been in.... They included homelessness, family or relationship breakdown, leaving care, leaving prison, insecure housing arrangements, leaving the army, the need to escape from abuse or an abusive partner and financial difficulties (Davis 1994: 5).

Davis felt this was no longer the case for Travellers who were taking to the roads in the early nineties. He suggests that the Traveller lifestyle is a result of choices made in the context of economic survival and also makes the point that Travellers cannot easily choose to opt out of the travelling lifestyle.

It is worth remembering however, that *Out of Site Out of Mind* was published by the Children's Society, partly to publicise the work that had evolved in Somerset and Avon but partly to add opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill. Thus an emphasis on the 'push' rather than the 'pull' factor is understandable. That is not to say that many Travellers were not in fact driven into the travelling lifestyle through economic circumstances.

Vicki Stangroome describes 'younger Travellers' as follows:

(they)... often live a communal lifestyle. They will pool their resources and buy a vehicle and share the running and maintenance costs. There are also many family groups (often extended families), single parents, both men and women and single people.... As the real option for young people dwindles in the cities and towns (less real jobs, training and housing, sense of community, options in further education. I see the number of 'young' Travellers growing despite the Government's efforts to make life difficult for them and to destroy this movement."  
(Stangroome 1993:2)

Perhaps the most succinct discussion on the definition of the group is found in McKay (1996). He describes a continuum from the pragmatic reaction of the first wave of anti-squatter legislation in the 1977 Criminal Law Act forcing people on to the road to the 'economic refugees' of the nineties who had little hope of employment or accommodation. He contrasts this 'push' with the attractive 'pull' of rural living, nomadism, the rejection of materialism and the attraction of contemporary scholar – Gypsies or updates from the fiction of George Borrow.

### **The origins of Hippies**

It was with the backdrop of the quiet generation of mid fifties America that the Beat generation made its mark, exposed to the public by the contrasting views of the media and its literary 'advocates' such as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Gregory Corso. Kerouac in turn followed in the footsteps of Walt Whitman who provides an American benchmark for the alternative lifestyle and eastern mysticism.

Polsky (1976) suggests the Beats of late 50s America shared with the hippie movement the same sense of compulsive disaffiliation from the mores and modes of middle class life and direct political commitment. The Beats were interested in eastern mysticism,



especially Zen and revered contemplation over action or as the more cynical commentators would have it, leisure rather than work. Perhaps most significant of all, the Beats were particularly involved in the use of drugs and more specifically marijuana, an interest that was to be of particular cultural significance to the following hippie phenomenon. The counter culture was preceded by the 'underground', a speleological metaphor that is worth noting for a number of reasons. It links the 'Beats' to the hippies but it also links beats with 'hobos' through notions of the 'underground rail-road' by which freed slaves made their way from the southern to the northern United States of America and by which many hobos travel from town to town. It can also be associated with the 'underworld' (of organised crime) combining conceptually in the subterranean values of David Matza. All of these metaphors contrast strongly with the 'New Age' metaphor, which represents a dawning process and sunlight.

### **Festivals and the formation of New Age Travellers**

Almost all Travellers pinpoint the start of 'New Age Travellers' in 1974 at the first Stonehenge People's Free Festival (Earle *et al* 1994). See also Beam (1976), and Hetherington (1993). The Stonehenge Free Festival originated from the festivals of 1970 onwards including the free festival at the Isle of Wight and the Windsor Free festival of 1972. The first Windsor Free Festival was organised by Ubi Dwyer and attracted between 1000 (Beam 1976) and 7000 people (Earle *et al* 1994).

Alan Beam (1976) described the ideological underpinning of the festival, organised by Ubi Dwyer, as a challenge to the enclosure of Windsor Park by George III and in the tradition of the Diggers of 1649. It was based on a Blakean vision of an Albion Free

State to be brought into being by the holding of the free festival. The election manifesto of the Albion Free State is worth quoting as it illustrates some links between the seventies and nineties. It states:

Christiania, the first free city in Europe has squatted an army camp in Copenhagen...Albion Free State needs its own Christianias. There are hundreds of disused and deserted farms that need liberating and caring for and thousands of empty urban buildings...Even symbolic gestures help...digging up the fast lane of your local motorway for allotments (Beam 1976:161)

The Windsor Festival of 1973 attracted more attention than the first with about 15,000 people attending. In that year a Private Members 'Night Assemblies Bill' was proposed which attempted to control gatherings of more than 1,000 people. This however, was eventually dropped. The early free festival movement was "clearly allied to the squatting movement" (Earle *et al* 1994) and both were (and remain) a response to the problem of homelessness. Both too were to become linked again in the legislation of 1994. Free festivals themselves like Travellers can be have a kind of dual origin that includes the American hippie roots of the 'summer of love' in 1967. They can also be seen to have a far longer English history, that of the fairs of Albion which "date back hundreds of years" (McKay 1996:14). Whilst Native American influences remain very influential in many of the New Age Traveller cultures, the influence of celtic art and literature, the druid religion, and paganism provide a parallel but different influence to groups such as the bender community at King's Hill and the Dongas Tribe.

### **Stonehenge Free Festivals**

Don Aitken (1990) describes the origin of the Travelling movement in England:

The end of the 1970's had established a regular summer circuit. From May Hill at the beginning of May via Horseshoe Pass, Stonehenge, Ashton Court, Inglestone Common, Cantlin Stone, Deeply Vale, Meigan

Fair and various sites in East Anglia to the Psilocybin Fair in Mid Wales in September, it was possible to find a free festival or a cheap community festival almost every weekend. Young people from traditional travelling families began to come into the festival scene and people from the cities began to convert vehicles and live on the road. There had been travelling groups of musicians and other performers for some time (starting perhaps with the Global Village Trucking Company in the early 70's). As a habit of travelling the convoy caught on, larger groups of performers, notably the Tibetan Ukrainian Mountain troupe, were established. They were joined by a wide variety of traders of different kinds. So the New Age Traveller culture was born, emerging into public view at Inglestone Common in 1980 with the 'New Age Gypsy Fair' (Aitken 1990:19).

Following on from the free festivals at Windsor, a summer solstice festival was held at Stonehenge in 1974 organised by Phil Russell (a.k.a. Wally Hope) who was later to become established into Traveller folklore as a kind of founder free spirit. Wally Hope was the subject of a pamphlet entitled *The last of the Hippies* written by Penny Rimbaud which describes his life and death. The name Wally was apparently derived from the Isle of Wight festival when a sound engineer of that name had gone missing. It is suggested that the crowd imitated the call out from the PA system and that chanting the name Wally thus became festival tradition. The name was adopted by a number of festivalgoers including Phil Russell. The Police arrested Phil Russell in May 1975 charged with possession of LSD and remanded in custody. He was subsequently moved to the Old Manor in Salisbury and apparently administered large quantities of Largactil. It is reported that this resulted in a major personality change and he became a 'broken man' after this, some days after his release in 1975, Phil Russell died by choking on his own vomit. For a detailed and very sympathetic account of this, see Stone (1996).

It is suggested that rising unemployment during the 1970's lead to an increasing alienation which contributed to festivals becoming an alternative lifestyle which, in turn,

led to a permanent nomadic existence (Earle *et al* 1994). Brig Oubridge attributes homelessness as a major factor in the increase in numbers of the 'annual convoy'.

From 1976 to 1981 the size of these annual convoys grew slowly but steadily. Every economic recession in history has produced an increase in the number of homeless and jobless people "on the road". The worst housing crisis since the Second World War and the easier eviction procedures which followed the squatting boom of the early to mid 1970's also contributed to the growth of these "New Age Travellers." (Oubridge 1986:10)

The festival at Stonehenge continued to grow between 1974 and 1981 by which time large numbers of vehicles had developed as homes as well as simply transport. Earle *et al* (1994) state that it was in 1981 when a convoy of vehicles left Stonehenge to support the women at Greenham Common when the peace convoy "really started". One vehicle had the words 'Peace Convoy' painted across it and this was to mark the beginning of an increase in public awareness of New Age Travellers. According to Brig Oubridge (see also Aitken 1990) it was in 1982 that New Age Travellers received their first real public 'recognition' describing the growth of the convoy:

This all went largely unnoticed by the national media until 1982. The Stonehenge festival had grown dramatically, so that the convoy which set off in 1982 was the biggest ever comprising some 250 vehicles and more than 1000 people. But it was the destination which did most to distinguish this convoy from previous ones and which gave rise to the name of the 'Peace Convoy' (1990:20).

The women's peace camp at Greenham Common had been set up in September 1981, and had organised its first big event on the spring equinox of 1982. Many habitual Stonehenge goers had been at this event, and there was a widespread desire to support the women by taking a convoy from Stonehenge to Greenham...strangely it was not the 'Peace Convoy' to Greenham which attracted media, nor the subsequent 'counter cruise carnival' outside the main contractors entrance. Even when some convoy members

pulled down more than 250 yards of security fencing around the base, the incident went largely unreported.

It was only after the convoy had left Greenham that the popular press began to give prominence to hysterical “shock horror” stories of alleged convoy mayhem - and the legend of the so called “peace convoy” was born (1990:20).

At first, confrontations with the police remained fairly infrequent.

Throughout 1983, police harassment had grown. Large official presences appeared at many gatherings, including Inglestone Common and Sizewell. In the spring of 1984, police action became heavier. When Travellers parked up in Fargo Woods after Shaftesbury grove in April, riot police appeared in coach loads to move everyone on. Benders and tat were burned...Similarly police trashed a coach load of protesters at Boscombe Down (Earle *et al*: 12).

Right up until 1984, in 1984 was the peak of it when we had 25,000 - 30,000 people there at Stonehenge for a long time, quite a long time. There were all the problems that gave us (Police interview).

From June 1st 1984 onwards the numbers gathering at the Stonehenge site grew to well over 30,000 (Earle *et al*: 13). This experiment in anarchy was a partial success. On the one hand many spontaneous social events were organised such as music and circus in the tradition of the fairs of Albion (McKay 1996). Infrastructure grew up through an informal system of roads, toilets and standpipes. There was also the support of First Aid, The Samaritans and a ‘lost children’ tent. On the other hand there were 65 abandoned cars some of which were burned. Drugs were in abundance and police suspected that numerous crimes were being committed that they had no control over. Eventually the crowds moved on, some in convoys, some in small groups. In August 1984 Police raided a fringe free festival at Nostell Priory and destroyed vehicles and benders presumably in search of illegal drugs. By this time the concept of the convoy as a threat to public order was becoming a reality to many constabularies.

## **The failure of coercion**

On June 1st 1985 near the village of Cholderton 550 people were arrested attempting to make their way to Stonehenge contrary to an injunction taken out by the National Trust. This was to pass into Traveller history as 'the Battle of the Beanfield' and remain one of the most significant events, framing their view of police for many Travellers (see appendix for a full account of this from the perspective of the police).

In March 1985, Wiltshire County Council announced that traffic would be blocked around Stonehenge for the period of the Summer Solstice. Later, on 31st May, a convoy of 140 vehicles, escorted by the police, moved into Wiltshire and camped at Savernake Forest near Marlborough. Police, including a helicopter, surrounded the camp. On 1st June the convoy set off south down the A338 towards Stonehenge accompanied by the police, the helicopter, and the Earl of Cardigan, whose family owns Savernake Forest and leases it to the Forestry Commission. On arriving near Parkhouse the convoy was met by a police roadblock. Some members of the convoy tried to move away on the A303 to be confronted by another roadblock. The trapped convoy, surrounded by police, moved into an adjacent field. The police, in visored helmets, and carrying riot shields followed and a pitched battle between the convoy and the police ensued. Moving away from the police, some convoy vehicles drove on to the next field. The police followed each vehicle until it stopped or crashed. Television cameras saw the occupants of the vehicles, including children being removed from their homes. The Earl of Cardigan who witnessed the scene said:

I shall never forget the screams of one woman who was holding up her little baby in a bus with smashed windows. She screamed and screamed at them to stop, but five seconds later 50 men with truncheons and

shields just boiled into that bus. It was mayhem, no other word for it (National Council for Civil Liberties 1986:9).

Over 240 members of the convoy were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly, obstruction of the police, and obstruction of the highway. The incident was later the subject of a *Channel 4 Television* documentary which depicted the full brutality of the event. Kim Sabido then working for the ITN is quoted thus:

What we...have seen in the last thirty minutes here is on this field has been some of the most brutal police treatment of people that I have witnessed in my entire career as a journalist. There must be an enquiry. I don't know what the results of it will be, but at this stage the number of people who've been arrested by policemen, who've been clubbed by while holding babies in their arms, and in coaches around this field is still to be counted (Operation Solstice Channel 4).

The 'Battle of the Beanfield' is now well reported in a number of festival magazines particularly *Festival Eye* 1986. Accounts of the incident are found in a number of texts related to the newer Travellers including Earle *et al* (1994), Lowe and Shaw (1993) Stone (1996), McKay (1996) and (NCCL1986). At the time however, the story was not broadcast on the television even though it was filmed. All but some footage, still in the camera and taken home by a cameraman, disappeared from the offices of the BBC and ITV.

After the Beanfield another attempt was made in the following year to visit Stonehenge which resulted in another major confrontation with police at the disused airfield at Stoney Cross where Travellers vehicles were impounded. The Travellers involved in the Beanfield eventually took the Wiltshire Constabulary to court for damages and won but it was a pyrrhic victory as the awards amounted to little more than the costs after a five year delay and the destruction of their homes.

The Battle of the Beanfield had an estimated cost of £5 million including the court costs. It not only succeeded in galvanizing many of the Travelling community but also outraged all those who were involved. Even the police who were involved in the operation look back at the incident with some regret. It was not only a difficult public relations issue that needed to be addressed, it was a tactical mistake that could have resulted in the serious injury of both police and Travellers. It could be argued that the event had a much wider political meaning than a simple public order issue in the South West of England. The event can be seen in the context of a change in the use of police tactics and their relationship to the Government. (c.f. the dispute between the miners' and the Government in 1984 and earlier in the joint operation with the army to remove 150 CND supporters from the Rainbow Village at Molesworth in Cambridgeshire). The operation certainly failed to wipe out New Age Travellers or even dampen the enthusiasm of those who chose to live nomadic lives. In this respect the operation marked the beginnings of a greater failure to destroy a way of living through coercive means (Stone 1996).

In the interim between the Battle of the Beanfield and the final court case in October 1990 new coalitions of counter/ youth cultures were developing that would eventually be galvanised by the State itself through the introduction of legislation.

The Battle of the Beanfield was the high water mark of coercive attempts at dealing with Travellers, the double irony that occurred was that legislative change did not herald a strengthening of police control. In some ways as media attention shifted away from Travellers to other groups and the values of the 1980's gave way to a softer *Zeitgeist* ;



Traveller identity was incorporated into the fashion of Grunge, the symbolic threat of the Traveller identity was, in turn, weakened.

### **Transmogrification**

The term 'rave', as McKay (1996: 103) points out is difficult as it refers to a specific music at a specific time. However, its use by the Government in the 1994 CJ&POA embraces a much wider dimension and a greater variety of music styles including 'techno', 'jungle' and 'hard core'. The 'rave scene', for want of a better term, is an important aspect of the criminalisation of New Age Travellers as it was coalition of interests between 'ravers' and Travellers that led to the precipitation of government action after the gathering at Castlemorton Common. Raves became a "cross-roads where unlikely subcultures (Football, Indie and Traveller, amongst others) would meet" (Melechi 1993: 33).

Raves were an important revival in the festival circuit, which provided Travellers a source of income through trade. The rave scene can be viewed as representing a retrospective enactment of the sixties with a strong political message of rejection of 'straight' society. Acid House and more broadly the rave scene can be viewed as a form of resistance that "escaped traditional sites of surveillance". This view is not shared by Hillegonda Rietveld who sees rave, according to McKay (1996) as "fitting a new, post-modern approach to youth subcultures, one wedded less to resistance and more to decontextualised pleasure." Antonio Melechi describes the origins of Acid House as "...attempting to relive the jouissance of the Mediterranean holiday in the pleasures of dance music and drugs"(Melechi 1993). McKay (1996) outlines the origins of the scene:

The main sources of rave disperse and collide swiftly, sometimes surprisingly : post disco dance music from the USA, the Mediterranean island of Ibiza, the North-western post - industrial city of Manchester, a general sixties and early seventies nostalgia, and the moveable feasts of squatted warehouse parties that mushroomed in Britain in the mid late eighties (1996:104).

McKay also makes the point that Ibiza had associations with the earlier Hippie movement and drug scene this supported by the idea that 1988 was the 'second summer of love'. Whatever the origins of or connections between the older counter-culture, by 1992 the rave scene was a serious threat to the government in the sense that it represented a public order issue of a greater scale than the existing gatherings of young people. It was also a vehicle for the distribution and consumption of dance drugs (see Thornton 1994). Whilst LSD and Cannabis were associated with the hippie movement Metylene-dioxy-meth-amphetamine (MDMA) or Ecstasy became the central drug of rave culture. The drug received huge media attention, most of it negative, which added weight to the feeling that youth again was 'in rebellion', at risk of self-harm and needed controlling.

During the same year, a much smaller gathering was taking place on the 'Dongas' (Iron Age trackways) on the meadowland adjacent to Twyford Down. People had gathered to protest against plans to build an extension of the M3. Alex explains the origins of the term given to the 'Tribe'.

I'm not sure where (the term Donga Tribe) came from...I think it's one of those things that's said in the family. We were 'tribing'. We identified with tribes of other countries so I don't know whether this newspaper said the 'Tribe of the Dongas', the 'Dongas Tribe'. Certainly (it's) an identity we took on ourselves quite readily as...we did feel like that we were trying to I know I'd say we identified more with sort of being an indigenous tribe than we did with the label of a New Age Traveller (Personal interview 1998).

The Protest, which pre-dates the tribe, was focused on the need to preserve particular characteristics of Twyford Down and the adjoining water meadow. It was a site of both Natural Beauty and Special Scientific Interest and ironically in terms of the new provision of trespassory Assembly, two Scheduled Ancient Monuments. An account of the chronology of events that followed including the notorious 'Yellow Wednesday' is covered in McKay (1996). The part played by the Dongas was instrumental in bringing to the public's attention the issue of road use and alternative methods of protest. During the summer of 1992 a tribal community was developed as a reaction to the attempts to destroy the Down. Accounts suggest that both the tactics used and the development of the tribal identity were due, in part, to a need to find solutions to the unfolding problems that faced the protesters. In the contemporary vernacular 'a steep learning curve' was followed. Alex explains some of the events that took place at the Dongas at Twyford Down.

we would go down to the water meadows and do actions and then go down to another place where they was trashing and stop the trucks there ... they wanted us off the Dongas so they could strip the turf off because they wanted to remove the turf and put it somewhere else. It was a mitigation exercise that they would need this turf which is so rare and transplant it somewhere else and then it wont be a problem. So we all tried to stop them obviously getting onto the Dongas bit of the land where the turf was. So we made like a barrier which is like a psychological barrier with physical and spiritual barrier really you know because we dug a ditch, which we dug in the shape of a dragon. We were chattering and talking. We made these quite deep ditches and we built this like horse on hedge so it was a barrier... it was enough of a physical barrier to stop them a little bit but also it was a psychological thing this was our boundary and people do think twice about crossing personal boundaries and they thought it was funny. They would drive up and they would stop there even though really they could have just drove, what would happen throughout the autumn they would try and catch us unawares and they would drive up in the bulldozers and they'd maybe 7 of us on camp or 6 of us something ridiculous and we'd got to peg it out and stand in front of the machines and try. I think where we made up in lack of numbers we sort of vibed them like we did a lot of cosmic stuff we go out and smoke sage sticks and I'd go out with a thick wooden

pentagon and we'd chant at them and stuff which like was all good stuff (Alex).

From these events a new form of contemporary 'green' protest developed with no affinity to the conventional left /right politics which would have an impact on a number of protest sites across the country and be used by anti veal export protesters farmers and of course anti-road protesters. There is little doubt that whilst the attempt to stop the motorway failed, the action, partly inspired by the women of Greenham Common, assisted in the development of a national anti-road protest movement which was successful in raising public awareness and government concern (McKay 1966). It re-energized a wider environmental protest that resisted a range of ecologically destructive activity such as logging, quarrying, airport construction and so on (Brass and Poklewski 1997). The organisations included Earth First!, Reclaim the Streets, The land is Our land Campaign, Alarm UK, the Advance party, The Exodus Collective, and a number of bender communities (See Brass and Poklewski 1997 and appendix XII). The DIY movement however, was not solely environmental. It made the links with the social as well, nor was it about single issues. As Alex explains in the context of Earth First!

(We) cannot campaign successfully on single issues without addressing the social problems that cause them. In order to improve our quality of life we have to fight the present system in its entirety- and demonstrate viable alternatives...If we don't fight against the totality of the system by understanding a campaign in the context of the wider struggle, capitalism will just rear its ugly head elsewhere (Letter in Do or Die, no 5 (1995),92 quoted in Plows 1998).

The DIY Culture can trace its roots through the Levellers and the Diggers and the protests against the enclosures of common land in the late 1700s, the mass trespass of Kinder Scout (which led to the formation of Rambler's Association) and more recently

to the women of Greenham. There is much in common with the counter-culture of the late sixties however, as noted by Brass and Poklewski (1997) many DIYers,

...reject direct comparisons with the sixties. They accept the historical connections but believe that DIY culture is unique: that it hasn't happened before in quite the same way(1997:17).

As part of this movement, between 1992 and 1995 there was a mushrooming of a new 'underground' press including *Earth First!*, *Front-line* (ironically the same title as the 'in-house' magazine of the Hampshire Constabulary) *Pod?*, *Squall* (magazine for sorted itinerants) and *SchNEWS*. Many of these publications were also available on the Internet resulting in the development of the new DIY media.

The criminal Justice (and Public Order) Act might have clamped down on the right to organise protests, but the people are discovering other means to make sure people are connected and kept up to date. The whole range of alternative media enables people to plug into the latest actions and new legal territory- from tracking down the next free party to keeping abreast of Government policies. DIY media makes also stokes the fire spreading ideas and motivation, both emotional and educational (1997:105).

An unbroken genealogy can be traced from the counter-culture of the 1960's directly through the development of the festival scene to a travelling lifestyle that was to emerge in the public's mind in 1982 as the 'Peace (hippie) Convoy'. The following three years leading to the Battle of the Beanfield then saw the displacement of this image by the 'New Age Traveller'. This image was displaced by firstly subcultural 'crossovers' marked most vividly by events at Castlemorton Common (Rave /Traveller) and secondly to the coalitions against the Bill and the expansion of a thriving 'DIY' culture.

## Conclusions

The process of living a nomadic life itself molds certain lifestyle characteristics and elements of identity, which cannot be easily ignored, and which predisposes the group to

the historic prejudices associated with the interface between settled and nomadic people that is sedentarism. New Age Travellers combine the traditions of nomadism with that of the counter-culture replicating the past, in some areas, and synthesising original ideologies and styles in others. In this sense, whilst Travellers embrace selective traditions they can, at the same time, be situated in a 'post- traditional universe' as their tradition is not established through the conventional kinship relations of traditional Travellers but created and styled through choice. This identity and ideology takes ideas from both sides of the Atlantic weaving together the Blakean romantic idealism of Arcadia with a more general pessimism towards and resistance against technology. It combines druid, celtic with Native American traditions and cultures. It includes the following:

- An enthusiasm for alternative realities either through the use of hallucinogenic drugs or through a range of alternative religions, medicines and other practices that was perhaps responsible for the 'New Age' tag.
- A sensitivity and awareness of environmental issues.
- A continuing tradition of the 'carnavalesque', music and theatre.
- The development of practical 'low technology' skills and knowledge.
- A rejection of the settled life of those caught up in the Thatcherite revolution of the 1980's
- A rejection of the traditional work ethic in an environment of increased unemployment of young people
- A rejection not only the notion of the home owning democracy, but of the very idea of living in a house at all.

New Age Traveller lifestyle was both the object of control and the means of resistance. Whilst there were, of course, events both beyond the control and knowledge of Travellers that shaped the growth of the phenomenon, Travellers themselves by making rational choices enjoyed direct access to the dialectic of control.

Conceptually the New Age Travellers can be seen as the re-emergence of the hippie counter-culture that appeared to follow the pattern of so many ephemeral youth cultures. As the group emerged in the mid 1970's the balance between the 'pull' of an attractive alternative elective identity versus the 'push' of socio-economic influences shifted towards exclusion rather than choice. The formation of New Age Travellers was effected by these conditions which excluded young people and, as a result, made the choice of life on the road attractive or, at least expedient. The squatting movement of the mid seventies can be seen as a kind of bridge between the ideological choice of rejecting conventional home ownership and the increasing pressure placed on homeless young people.

The ideology associated with the hippie movement, whilst the subject of much ridicule, was qualitatively different to that of other youth sub cultures. Its challenge to the dominant ideology of western Europe and the United States remained in 'the background' (if not underground) in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s and early 80s. The development of the free festival scene in the mid seventies, particularly the site of Stonehenge acted as a site from which a new form of subculture emerged, carrying forward the values of the previous decade. The identification with the marginal was a conscious politicized rejection of Thatcherism /Majorism and an effort to live an alternative lifestyle to that otherwise dominated by technology as well as reaction to the uncertainties of postmodernity.

The counter-culture of the sixties was subject to coercive action in addition to process of incorporation, for example the National Guard's involvement with the peace protesters of the mid sixties; in the case of New Age Travellers the State also displayed repressive

action. The Battle of the Beanfield, followed the next year by Operation Day Break at Stoney Cross, Yellow Wednesday (The name given to the clearance by security guards (wearing yellow jackets) of the protesters at Twyford Down) and countless trashings and evictions demonstrate that coercive action has been partly successful.

New Age Travellers have been displaced from Wiltshire and Warwickshire and those that remained in Hampshire continued to do so only in small groups. In addition to changes in police tactics, tighter legislative controls were introduced to enable police to take action against Travellers.

What is interesting is that this 'second phase' of hippie ideology itself metamorphosed into the coalition of resistance and protest thus protecting it from the processes of incorporation. The extreme nature of the changes in legislation and the conflation of 'problem issues' helped to sow the seeds of the CJ&POA's relative failure to deal with New Age Travellers. The development of this coalition in the United Kingdom blurred in the public's mind the difference between Travellers and the other groups identified in the of 1994 and allowed an alternative form of protest to develop.

Whilst many Travellers moved out of the country as a response to the harsher environment (Dearling 1998) a substantial number continue to live a successful lifestyle defined by themselves.



**CHAPTER THREE**  
**LAW MAKING: THE SHAPING OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE**  
**AND PUBLIC ORDER ACT 1994**

I hope now to describe events that led to the effective ‘criminalisation’ of New Age Travellers. These events culminated in the production of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (CJ&POA). I will specifically examine Part 5 of the Act and its development between 1990 and November 1994, referring briefly to the Caravan Sites Act of 1968 (CSA) and the Public Order Act 1986 (POA). These two Acts, along with the 1977 Criminal Law Act were the three major areas of amendment covered in Part V. Whilst Part V is not exclusively targeted at New Age Travellers many of the sections are.

I will attempt to locate the mechanisms by which public opinion, both ‘popular’ and ‘informed’ have shaped the Bill and its preceding discussion papers. Within this process I hope also to describe the impact of various groups and alliances and events that influenced both the Commons and the Lords in their debates on the amendment of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act.

The significance of ‘criminalisation’ and its relationship to public support goes beyond its obvious advantage of Criminal Law as a blunt instrument of social control. It provides added public support to the state as Hall and Scraton have observed.

One argument which makes the distinction between ‘social’ and ‘normal’ crime even more difficult to draw, and which has strengthened the ‘social rebel thesis’ is the proposition that criminalisation is part of the armoury of class control. An act is not a ‘crime’ until it has been legally defined as such. Criminalisation - the application of the criminal

label to a particular social category - is a process, and depends both on how certain acts are labelled and who is doing the labelling. The criminal label is applied to many actions which the majority of the population would regard as 'illegal'. But it can sometimes be applied to activities which the authorities oppose, not because they are 'criminal' but because they are politically threatening... 'criminalisation' is a particularly powerful weapon, when it is used in this way because it mobilizes considerable popular approval and legitimacy behind the state. People are more likely to support state action against a 'criminal' act than they would the use of the law to repress a 'political' cause (Hall and Scraton 1981:488).

The description of this process of 'criminalisation' will draw from the published debate in the House of Commons and the Lords, published materials of government departments, written parliamentary questions and answers, other unpublished material as well as the views of Peers, Ministers, and MPs.

There is a potential problem in describing the process by way of a strict chronology as it may fail to bring out the significant influences of distinct discourses. However, the choice to abandon a chronological description of events will mean roaming from various points in time in order to describe and discuss particular themes that were running in parallel. I have chosen the option of abandoning the strict chronological record. Within the context of social control this piece of legislation provides one example within a broader cluster of reactions both formal and informal to a particular group/problem. In many senses however, it is only an attempt: its long-term consequences are yet to be observed. Clearly Criminal Justice is not the sole legislative method. The Environmental Protection Act 1990, The Entertainment's (increased penalties) Act 1990, The Noise and Statutory Nuisance Act 1993 and changes in the benefit system have had an impact on the travelling community. During the passage of the Bill through Parliament, considerable public interest was generated and a number of coalitions emerged. This

chapter will attempt to describe the influences of these interests in the formulation of law.

## **Beginnings**

With hindsight 1994 can be seen as a period of time where the influence of public opinion was never so great in the 'law and order' debate particularly as expressed by the tabloid press. Some commentators noted the strong links between the popular press and Michael Howard's position on 'law and order'. It was in this volatile atmosphere of public concern for law and order that the 'voice' of the popular press almost displaced entirely the views of penal reformers, social workers, probation officers, criminologists and other professionals including, to some degree (and by its own internal regulation), the opposition.

In drawing out a general theme from this process, it becomes immediately apparent that the Act was a mixture of provision. This in itself is not an unusual attribute for an Act of Parliament but the extent to which it was collection of laws with little relationship to each other embracing as it does public order, bail, sexual offences, young offenders and ticket touts, made it more so than most. In slightly more lurid terms Fitzpatrick described it as:

...reek(ing) of panic: from the absurd diversity of its targets to the confused jumble of afterthoughts and compromises with which it has been thrown together. (1994:5)



Even within the relatively narrow scope of Part V of the Act, there are a number of related but quite separate issues that emerge. The power to remove campers, which was

essentially a strengthening of the 1986 Public Order Act (section 61 and 62) was ostensibly brought in to deal with the problems of New Age Travellers. The repeal of some sections of the CSA and powers of local authorities to remove unauthorised campers (sections 77-80) was a result of financial considerations which were exacerbated by the public awareness and public concerns to do with the newer Travellers.

The drive for legislation concerning raves (sections 63-66) became a fusion of issues relating to 'acid house' 'ravers' and New Age Travellers. Finally Trespassory Assemblies (70 -71), Disruptive Trespass (68-69) and the strengthened anti squatting laws (72-76) brought in a number of groups including motorway protesters, 'eco-warriors' and hunt saboteurs who may or may not have been living in urban squats for part of the year. In both the public's mind and *de facto*, these groups overlapped considerably.

### **The need for amendments**

The main thrust for change appeared to come from two quite separate sources. Firstly the repeal of Section 39 of the 1986 Public Order Act and secondly pressure to remove the responsibility for providing sites for Gypsies as an ever-increasing burden on the taxpayer. There remains some doubt on the necessity for a repeal of Section 39 of the Public Order Act. Certainly some constabularies reported that it had been quite effective in dealing with Travellers whilst others found it difficult to apply. The Department of the Environment Circular, *Gypsy Site provision and Policy* states that the POA 1986 was not designed for the use in the eviction of small groups of Gypsies, squatters, or even

hippies. This was also the advice of ACPO however, "It was clear that these guidelines were being ignored by some constabularies" (Todd 1991).

### **Designation and the definition of Gypsies**

An understanding of the relevance of 'designation' status given to local authorities is crucial to an understanding of the debate around the 1968 Caravans Sites Act. For a detailed account of this see Okely (1983) and Lloyd (1993). In summary however, the Act provided additional powers to local authorities to move on Gypsies only if they were 'designated' by the Secretary of State. However, to be designated they were obliged to provide some sites for Gypsies and to be approved by central government. Thus local authorities that were not designated had less power to move on Gypsies than those who were designated (a fact that was used by Travellers both traditional and 'New').

### **A brief chronology**

The first pressure for changes in the law came on October 26 1989 when the Home Secretary reviewed the POA. Coincidentally nine months later the Commons debated the financial consequences of Gypsy site provision. The so called carrot of designation failed to encourage local authorities and even the recommendation of the Cripps Report *Accommodation for Gypsies* 1976 to pay 100% grants to local authorities resulted in only 38% of local authorities receiving designated status. The argument that this duty had been ineffective in encouraging local authorities to provide sites and should therefore be repealed is obviously nonsense, however, this was the government's argument at the time. The reason for the proposed change could be viewed as a financial one in that the grants from central government would no longer be paid to local authorities. However, the extent to which the grant was taken up was relatively small and

taken together with the fact that the exercise can be seen as a transfer of the financial burden to “under funded local authorities and cash strapped police authorities” (Campbell 1995:37), this financial argument is also weak.

The next significant development took place in the summer of 1991 when Jack Aspinwall MP initiated the first debate on land trespass. This had the backing of a group of MP's in the southwest. At this stage trespass by Travellers seemed to be primarily a concern of a few vociferous MPs rather than a general concern. The government remained adamant that the law should not change at least up until February 1992.

April 1992 was a key month with a publication of the Department of the Environment Guidelines and The Conservative Party Manifesto. The two documents took very different perspectives. There was a clear contradiction between the ‘party line’ and that of civil servants within the Department of Environment. Whilst the Conservative Party Manifesto suggested “The 1968 Caravan Sites Act will be reviewed with the aim of reducing the nuisance of illegal encampments” (1992:23), the Department of the Environment Guidelines provided a number of suggestions on how County Councils could improve their provision, explicitly mentioning hippies as potential beneficiaries of sites.

By June 1992, subsequent to the Castlemorton Common ‘invasion’ there appeared to be little opposition to the notion that something had to be done about New Age Travellers. A Private Member's Bill was introduced to amend the CSA on June 10th, which received its first reading. On June 29th the House of Commons debated Travellers. Thus in August, when the Department of the Environment Consultation published the paper

on the CSA, its tone was markedly different to that of the previous policy papers. The consultation process that followed was subject to some speculation and suspicion. The Consultation Paper 'Reform of the CSA 1968' failed to 'recognise' approximately 400 of the 1400 responses mostly from Gypsies (Campbell 1995:28). This issue was also raised in the House of Lords. Notwithstanding the blatant dismissal of 400 responses as technically inadmissible, the response of a number of significant organisations was also ignored.

The Conservative Party Conference in October made the government's intentions regarding New Age Travellers very clear, suggesting that New Age Travellers would be targets for legislation. On 12th November changes in social security arrangements directly affecting Travellers were discussed in the commons and in the Lords in December. The change in benefits in December was the first in a series of legislative changes that took place ending on November 1994 with the CJ&POA. On 17 December 1993 the CJ &PO Bill received its first reading.

The period between the first reading and the second was unusually short particularly in the light of the Christmas recess. MPs had little time to prepare for the general debate of the second reading in early January. The working group on Children, Families and Caravan Sites was one example of many small informal grouping that attempted to amend, or in some way oppose the Bill as it was processed through Parliament. This oblique approach was fairly successful in at least getting Peers to oppose the Bill and suggest amendments. There was however, little success in actually defeating the government's main legislative thrust. Outside Parliament coalitions of those groups named in the Bill such as 'Ravers' and 'Hunt Saboteurs' began to organise

demonstrations and produce literature in order to encourage public opposition. This strategy had little impact in the debate at either the Lords or the Commons however, it would mark the beginning of a new form of extra parliamentary protest that would provide support for Travellers from the general public and would thwart many of the stated aims of the Bill.

In his address to the 1994 Conservative Party Conference, Michael Howard was unable to refer to the Act. He faced increasing hostility on his attempts to get tough on law and order. He was however, able to say repeatedly with some comfort in his response to his progress on law and order issues "It's in the Bill".

The Act Received Royal Assent in November 1994 but the adverse reaction incorporated an ever growing group of protesters coming from a greater age and class range. This reaction included the demonstration at and occupation of the Home Secretary's home. This and other protests suggested that its content and timing were to be problematic to the government, local authorities and the police. It appeared to incense the notions of civil liberty in the general public to a degree not previously experienced in this country as well as bringing together alliances of resistance.

Each group employed distinctive discursive strategies with varying degrees of success. Attempts were made to create sympathetic public opinion and in some cases to impact directly on the debate in the Commons and the Lords. Resistance and protest carried on well into the following year.



The classification of the various influences on the CJ&POA 1994 is necessarily overlapping. I have chosen to identify the shared interests and viewpoint of a small group of MPs. I have also chosen to separate the Conservative Party from the government and from peers (both Conservative and opposition). Clearly there are individuals who span these classifications and there is an obvious overlap of view between these different positions; however, the difficult task of separation seems worthwhile in exposing the process. I also include in my list of discourses traditional Travellers, children's charities, human rights groups and the other anti-Bill groups such as New Age Travellers, squatters and environmentalists.

### **Members of Parliament in the South West of England of England**

From 1991 until the Bill became an Act, a group of MP's put pressure on the Government to change both the POA and the CSA. The group comprised Jack Aspinwall, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, Robert Haywood, Sir Michael McNair-Wilson, David Nicholson, Sir Cranley Onslow Jonathan Sayeed, Paul Tyler, Michael Spicer (whilst not strictly one of the primary members of this group was brought into the debate as a result of Castlemorton on Friday 22nd May 1992. Notices for motions, written questions, meetings with ministers and personal involvement in the debates in the Commons were used to keep the pressure on. Initially the government resisted this but eventually agreed to amendment. Whilst there was clearly some political homogeneity within the group their purpose was to ensure that government was reacting to local concerns voiced by constituents. This in turn was amplified by prolonged local press coverage particularly in the counties of Avon, Cornwall and Wiltshire, Worcestershire and Bedfordshire. By the time of Castlemorton Common, public awareness had been

heightened to the extent that the issue of Travellers and public order became a matter of national concern. MPs such as Michael Spicer (MP for Worcester South) would have found it difficult to resist the wave of moral indignation and the desire for changes in the law.

Concern came mostly from local people complaining about unwashed drug addicts parking their homes in otherwise beautiful countryside. Local opinion was often backed up by information from the police. Local authorities had also shared information with MPs about the difficulties of eviction and threat to public order and environmental damage. Scenes were evoked of the peaceful countryside invaded by hordes of hippies with the police and local authority standing by, helpless. The National Farmer's Union, police and local authorities were, at this stage, apparently sympathetic to the cause.

Lawlessness, particularly the use of drugs was frequently raised as reason for action. Mostly this was based on anecdotal evidence as there was (and still remains) little or no evidence that Travellers commit more criminal offences or are more heavily involved in illegal drug dealing, or drug use than other non nomadic groups particularly groups of young people. Notions of 'contamination' were used which built on a common press 'theme-metaphor' of disease as a literal and figurative risk. Figuratively this was presented as a cultural contamination of the otherwise law abiding drug free youth of the English countryside.

On May 22nd 1991 the Home Secretary made a statement in reply to a parliamentary question on the completion of the evaluation of Section 39 of the Public Order Act. He concluded that more needed to be done to secure a better understanding by all interested

parties of the way, in which the law should operate, but that no change in the law was necessary. At the same time a leaflet was published by the government setting out the main provisions of the law on the trespass on land. This was written as guide for landowners.

A few weeks later, on the evening of July 2nd, Jack Aspinwall initiated a debate on Land Trespass in the House of Commons. He opened this speech by referring to the support of other Conservative members Jonathan Sayeed, Christopher Chope and Robin Haywood. He also acknowledged the support from the National Farmers Union, Kingswood Borough Council and Wansdyke District Council. In his speech he referred to invading Hippies in the village of Carlingcott and Charmy Down. In both areas he mentioned that there had been reports of theft, intimidation, damage and loud noise, all of which added to the inconvenience to and total misery of my constituents, making normal life impossible. This new phenomenon was being presented as an abnormal life, a group of people who were on the edge of normal life.

Mr. Aspinwall outlined his reasons for suggesting that the application for a Court Order or the use of Section 39 of the Public Order Act were ineffective, and went on to criticise the Labour and Liberal controlled County of Avon. Criticism was centred on failure to take positive steps "to remove these hippies or whatever one calls the various groups of itinerants". This difficulty in categorisation alluded to by Mr. Aspinwall quickly evaporated as the shape and size of the new folk devils took shape in the mind of the media and thus probably the general public. In a rare constructive tone Mr. Aspinwall stated:

The hippies have different needs from those of the Gypsies and tinkers whose requirements under the CSA are small supervised units. It cannot be beyond the bounds of possibility for the Home Office and the Departments of Environment and Social Security to get together to consider ways and means of providing transit sites for people who could be termed hippies or Travellers, who move around for part of the year and who cause tremendous problems. It should be possible to find sites far away from *human* habitation, (my emphasis) where proper sanitary facilities can be provided and where there will be no inconvenience for local people. (Official Report 2 July 1991 col. 293)

This image of the 'sub-human' which was repeated throughout the debate in the Commons and the Lords. Travellers were subject to a process of 'subspeciation'. The juxtaposing of Travellers and hippies cannot be seen as a neutral statement bringing into mind, as it does, the image of an 'anti-system' image at best and at worse, the image of drug abuse and lawlessness. The frequent substitution of the use of hippie for Traveller assumes that all Travellers choose the lifestyle of the 'irresponsible' rather than reacting in a positive way to economic and social factors. Ronald Haywood in describing the difficulties faced by his constituents in Kingswood suggesting that they could not leave their houses unattended for fear that their property would be removed.

The recurrent theme of theft is thus brought into the debate and the old attendant prejudices associated with the nomadic population are evoked. These attempts however, were not as successful as might have been imagined as the government appeared to be unwilling to change legislation citing the police as evidence for maintaining the status quo. Peter Lloyd, whilst acknowledging that Section 39 was a response to "the mass invasions in and around Stonehenge" said "The majority of cases of trespass are resolved, as they should be, either informally or in the civil courts. Trespass on land is a civil tort rather than a criminal offence." He reported that the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset had used Section 39 and it had worked well with occupations of Travellers

at Doynton, Manggotsfield and Radstock. He concluded the debate with the following statement:

Of course Gypsies, travelling folk and hippies, separately and collectively, have a responsibility to avoid creating a nuisance. Local authorities, crucially have a duty to provide sites under the Caravans Sites Act. Landowners have their rights under civil law. The police have a duty to exercise reasonably the discretion given them in the circumstances set out in section 39 (Official Report 2 July 1991 col. 298).

The government was later to reverse this position and repeal the duty of local authorities to provide sites as a section of Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. On February 4th 1992 Sir Michael McNair Wilson (Newbury) proposed a Private Member's Bill to amend part two of the CSA 1968. The Bill was introduced on the premise that the CSA was no longer effective in meeting the Difficulties that "hippies, Travellers, New Age Travellers, tinkers, dropouts, didicoys and peace people" create. (Official Report 4 February 1992 col. 133)

On February 20 1992 the Home Secretary faced a series of questions on the 1968 Caravans Sites Act and the 1986 Public Order Act. He indicated that the government had no plans to amend the Public Order Act and that both Acts were adequate to deal with unlawful campers.

Up to this point the government had remained resistant to amendment but the imminent election provided increased pressure for the government to be seen to be doing something and to "act tough". This became the watershed for the government's position. Later they acceded to the view that there was good reason to amend both the 1968 and the 1986 Acts.

On May 8th 1992 Ian Taylor MP asked for a statement from the Department of the Environment on the plans to tackle the problems of illegal camping by Gypsies and other Travellers. (A written answer published on 13 May confirmed that the government was committed to reviewing the operation of the CSA 1968.)

Pressure was intensified as a result of the 'troubles' at Kerry in Powys, Honiton and Castlemorton Common in June and July 1992. Cranley Onslow presented a Private Member's Bill to amend part 2 of the CSA on June 10th 1992. Between 19th and 23rd June there were three notices of motions to discuss Hippies and other Travellers. On June 23 Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor) asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action the government would take relating to a report submitted by Powys Council and the NFU. On June 29th the House of Commons discussed the issue of Travellers. The debate was undoubtedly able to take place because of the recent incident at Castlemorton Common. Mr. Spicer referred to the invasion of Castlemorton Common on 22nd May as the reason for prompting him to discuss the issue. He went on to say:

On that day New Age Travellers, ravers and drug racketeers arrived at a strength of two motorised army divisions, complete with several massed bands and above all a highly sophisticated command and signal system. However, they failed to bring latrines...as many as 30,000 people - combined to terrorise the local community to the extent that some residents had to undergo psychiatric treatment in the days that followed (Official Report 29th June, col. 688).

Comparing the 'invasion' of Castlemorton Common to motorised army divisions intensifies the threat in that it not only panders to the frequent press metaphor of the invading military hordes but also gives the impression of sophisticated organisation. Mr. Spicer advocated tighter laws, referring to the POA and the CSA, and asked for powers

that would enable the prevention of mass gatherings of what he later described as “these miserable people”. He also referred to a defect in the 1968 CSA in terms of its definition of the word Gypsy concluding that a tighter definition was needed. Whilst acknowledging the need for freedom of choice and therefore the right to choose one’s own lifestyle, he felt that this particular lifestyle was a threat to the lifestyle of the majority. Whilst condemning the lawlessness and lack of common decency by some of those camped at Castlemorton, Mr. Wardle reiterated the right to lead a nomadic life but condemned the intolerable behaviour that had taken place over the few days.

To add weight to the general view that Castlemorton was essentially a public order issue Mr. Paul Taylor gave an example of invasion of Davidstow in north Cornwall. Even at this stage of the debate Mr. Wardle referred to the review of section 39 by the previous Home Secretary. He reminded the House that on the 22nd May 1991 no change in the law was required and concluded the debate by simply assuring the House that the government was examining whether and how the current position could be improved.

Public Order issues became entwined with those of the CSA. Hippies were lumped together with Travellers and Gypsies and for the first time the relatively new phenomena, the ravers, were also added to the ‘brew’ of undesirables that needed to be more effectively controlled; more effective legislation was the only answer. A number of parliamentary questions followed the debate.

There was a lull in the pressure exerted by MP’s in Parliament until 1993. An exception to this was the proposed change in social security legislation debated in November where New Age Travellers were held up as an example of benefit fraudsters. The notion

of the benefit fraudster was embraced both by the Conservative Party in its creation of a new 'folk devil' and was unveiled in its manifesto, supported by an economic drive to decrease expenditure on social security payments, the details of which are explored in the next sections. It was also to be highlighted by extensive press coverage depicting unacceptable exploitation of the benefit system by Travellers. This process is detailed in the section on the party and the government it is mentioned here only in recognition of the role that backbenchers played in setting the scene for this process through many references to 'hippie scroungers'.

In the early part of 1993 however, the topic of Travellers came back on the political agenda. On January 14 the Prime Minister was asked what provisions existed to improve access to state services for the traditional travelling community. A comprehensive, but non committal answer was given by the Prime Minister outlining the current position.

On February 5 1993 The Caravan Sites (Amendment) Bill, another Private Member's Bill on the subject, brought before the House of Commons by Sir Cranley Onslow, received its Second Reading. In his opening speech Sir Cranley suggested that his Bill did not set out to provide an answer to the problem of New Age Travellers, suggesting other measures would be needed to deal "with the more serious problem presented by New Age Travellers". He referred to the "tremendous menace to those who spend time in the West Country or Wales." John Marshall agreed and suggested many of the so called Gypsies

are not Gypsies at all, but ne're do wells who are anxious to move from one site to another, to avoid paying their community charge, to avoid sending their children to school and to live off Social Security (Official Report Feb.5th 1993 col. 575).



Judith Chapman made a typical comment. When referring to more traditional Travellers she said

Many people strongly criticise the huge numbers of people moving around the country known as New Age Travellers...They went into the town, many of them strangely dressed, and into shops, where they offended local people...Many people believe that such congregations deal in drugs, and that is often true (Official Report Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 col. 616).

John Sykes expressed a similar view

I am not talking of...the old Romanies...The plain unvarnished truth about New Age Travellers and people like them is that in many cases 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 (Official Report Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 col. 620).

The quotes above are worth recording in detail as they demonstrate how, at the time, the 'New Age Traveller' as a concept was being used to gain support for changes in public order legislation and the reform of the 1968 CSA. Protagonists were able to front their sedentarist prejudices behind this new manifestation of the problem, both separating them out for special treatment, but at the same time evoking the stereotypical dirty and lazy nomad. David Nicholson raised the issue of the problems of the site at Middlezoy with reference to New Age Travellers.

The big problem in Somerset has resulted from the emergence of New Age Travellers...New Age Travellers cause considerable damage. More importantly they instill great fear. Hon members may recall from their history books the great fear which existed before the French revolution. That kind of fear began to occur in our rural settlements in Somerset, Devon and elsewhere. Law abiding people who pay their taxes and community charges resented the fact that the new age Travellers often do not pay vehicle tax and that their vehicles are not properly insured. Those new age Travellers obtained social security, and in Somerset it seemed that they obtained a drug substitute. Indeed many new age Travellers suffer from drug conditions. The massive police effort that was necessary last summer was also largely paid for by the community

charge payers in Somerset and the other counties in the West Country...we must have action this summer to prevent the problems that occurred last year with new age Travellers (Official Report Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 col. 638).

Here again New Age Travellers are stereotyped as drug users, driving uninsured, untaxed vehicles who dealt in drugs paid for by the benefit system but are placed in an historical context of 'the Great Fear' before the French revolution. Members are asked to consider urgent action.

In early June 1993 a group of west country MPs including Jonathan Aspinwall met John Major to discuss Travellers. The group was reported to have pressed him to make changes in the law over providing sites and to increase police powers further. Over the period of the summer solstice, the issue of New Age Travellers and Gypsies was raised on five consecutive days. This pressure resulted in a law and order debate in the Commons on July 1st 1993. In the debate New Age Travellers were used on several occasions as examples of rural lawlessness and during the debate on gypsy sites again New Age Travellers found themselves as the reason why 'privileges previously given to traditional Travellers would need to be restricted.

Thus by the continued pressure exerted by backbenchers, New Age Travellers had become a well-known term in Parliament. Stereotypes had been cast which were used in arguments to increase police powers and reduce government spending on caravan sites. There were however, different perspectives. A related but separate concern was that of the Conservative Party.

### **The Conservative Party**

The Party began to become overtly involved in the issue of Travellers in April 1992 when it published the manifesto for the forthcoming election in which there was an undertaking to review the CSA and tackle squatting. Clearly as the party in power with a general election approaching, the Party's popularity was a legitimate and pressing concern. It was therefore understandable that the party should highlight this topical issue as an area of concern. The 1992 manifesto stated:

Squatting is nothing less than the seizure of another's property without consent. Having consulted widely on the subject, we have decided to extend the criminal law dealing with squatting...Illegal camping by Gypsies or other Travellers can affect the lives of whole communities. We believe that this problem must be tackled...We will create a new criminal offence of squatting, to give greater protection to owners and occupants of shops, commercial premises, houses and flats...The Caravan Sites Act will be reviewed with the aim of reducing the nuisance of illegal encampments (The Conservative Manifesto 1992:23).

Thus, as with the proceeding debates in the House of Commons, there was a fusion of a number of different but related issues. In this case it was the combination of squatting with illegal camping.

On Friday 9th October 1992, John Major speaking at the Annual Conservative Party Conference expressed his views thus, having just finished expressing his views on crime generally, referred to New Age Travellers.

There's another problem we are dealing with the illegal occupation of land by so-called 'New Age Travellers'. You will have seen the pictures on television or in the newspapers; if you live in the West Country and Wales you may have seen it on your own doorstep. Farmers powerless, crops ruined and livestock killed by people who say they commune with nature, but have no respect for it when it belongs to others. New Age Travellers? Not in this Age. Not in any age...They say that we don't understand them. Well, I'm sorry - but if rejecting materialism means destroying the property of others then I **don't** understand. If doing your own thing means exploiting the Social Security System and sponging off

others, then I **don't want** to understand. If alternative values mean a selfish and lawless disregard for others, then I **won't understand**. Let others speak for these New Age Travellers. We will speak for their victims (John Major 1992 Conference speech).

This now rather notorious speech underlined the Conservative Party's commitment to draw up legislation aimed directly at New Age Travellers, Gypsies, ravers and squatters. At the same conference Peter Lilley talked about his 'little list' and outlined a number of target groups that were apparently defrauding the Social Security Benefit System. Whilst New Age Travellers were not specifically included on the list, this additional focus on Benefits was to have an additional impact on New Age Travellers.

By the autumn of 1992 it was clear to anyone who was interested that the Conservative Party was concerned about squatters and Travellers and would, if given a mandate from the people, do something about the problem. The motive for change was clearly about popularity with the voting public. The manifesto was designed to attract the widest possible support. Travellers themselves, a tiny politically inactive minority, were a relatively easy target with little likelihood of gaining widespread political support. The events of the summer of 1992 provided further support for a position based on the elimination of 'the Traveller problem'. Thus the party, drawing on media and public support could begin to assemble an argument that would lead to the creation of the CJ&POA.

### **The government**

The official government position on the issue of New Age Travellers seems to have fluctuated dramatically during the period 1991 -1994. Extremely positive papers were being published by the Department of the Environment, suggesting creative solutions to

the thorny question of caravan sites. The same department published a consultation document on its proposals to repeal the Caravan Sites Act that received fierce opposition from children's charities, the National Gypsy Council and House of Lords.

For many months the Government resisted pressure to amend the CSA and the POA and yet when their intention was declared to conflate the two issues, the resulting legislation was the most draconian seen for many years. It was not only the CJ&POA that resulted from the pressure exerted on the government but also radical changes in the benefit system aimed at making it difficult for Travellers to sign on. This issue could be relied upon to galvanize support from a wider audience and add yet another aspect of the New Age Traveller as a problem that needed to be dealt with.

Ironically the Department of the Environment also published two volumes in the same month that the Conservative Party was holding its conference in October *Good practice Guidelines for Gypsy Site Provision by Local Authorities and Gypsy Site Provision and Policy*. These well-researched and constructive documents received little publicity as the manifesto commitments, combined with increased public opinion appeared to take precedence.

The Department of the Environment Consultation Paper, published on August 18 1992 - *Reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968*, however was almost in direct opposition to this, suggesting as it did, tougher measures. The Paper was predicated on a number of 'problems' that had arisen since 1968.

a) There were far greater numbers of Travellers than predicted in 1968.

- b) The presence of New Age Travellers (who were not 'nomadic') as well as the 'highly mobile' families who work on laying tarmac are an additional, unforeseen burden of local authorities.
- c) The permanent settling on sites by some families preventing other more nomadic families from getting access to sites.
- d) The occupations of scrap dealing and car breaking were more sedentary and therefore not in need of special provision.
- e) Travellers occupy a privileged position in relation to planning laws.

Liz Lloyd (1993:82) makes the point that these are familiar tones in the construction of a problem in relation to minority groups: the rapid increase in size of the population, the threat to the taxpayer and so forth. The Department of the Environment's consultation paper then proposed the following suggestions having set the scene for a radical solution.

- a) Swifter action to deal with illegal camping by those who persist in flouting the law
- b) Encouragement to all Travellers to provide their own sites.
- c) More places on existing sites as some families move into permanent housing.
- d) Improved access to educational opportunities for Travellers and their children.

The paper had a strong assimilationist flavour. The department, cognizant of the fact that introduction of fines for resisting or obstructing evictions would be difficult to operate, recommended the last resort for fine default- imprisonment- may be reached in a high proportion of cases, alternatively, the family's caravan could be seized. The reactions to the new proposals were thus polarised. Some welcomed it as a result of years of

campaigning (for example David Harris MP and a number of other backbenchers, the NFU, the CLA). On the other hand those groups representing the needs of Travellers and particularly children's charities (some of whom were providing direct services to Travellers) as well as academics, sympathetic reporters from newspapers and television, saw the proposals as draconian.

There was some question as to the extent of consultation undertaken by the Government and the notice it took of a dissenting view. In a speech in the House of Lords, Lord Avebury referring to the Consultation Paper said:

I am advised that the Government received nearly 1,400 responses to the Consultation Paper, and that the overwhelming majority believed that these proposals to be unworkable. I am also told that only 600 of the responses were lodged in the library of another place, the remainder having been excluded on the spurious grounds that they did not mention particular paragraphs of the paper.

In tandem with these discussions on the general reform of the CSA and the POA the issue of social security payments became intrinsically linked with more general concerns about New Age Travellers. The inclusion of Travellers in this debate appeared to be blatant manipulation of public opinion as noted by a number of peers. This view was expressed by Lord Henderson who felt that "regulations were sold to the public as measures to deal with the plague of so called New Age Travellers". He suggested that Police co-operation and public alertness were the effective combination for dealing with "this undoubted plague" (Official Report col. 1320).

Peter Lilley's opening speech started by underlining the government's commitment to increased spending, particularly to those hit by the recession. Included in a raft of measures designed to make the system more effective was a proposed increase in the

'fight against fraud' by £10 million, with a target of decreasing fraud by £1billion. He announced:

I am today laying the regulations withdrawing income support from those - be they New Age Travellers or others - who are not actively seeking work (Official Report 1016 12 November 1992).

If the reason for including New Age Travellers was to elicit support from the House, then it appeared to work. In reply to Mr. Lilley's opening remarks, Patrick Nicholls asked:

Does my right honourable friend accept that the action that he has announced against new age Travellers will be particularly welcomed on this side of the House? Does he also agree that the vast majority of people who honestly draw benefits find it particularly insulting when they see the nations resources being squandered on an indolent, anarchic rabble? (Official Report col. 1021)

Travellers were again cited a few days later by Mr. Burt (junior social security minister) who pointed out in a written answer that:

The Income Support (General) Amendment (No.3) Regulations which come into effect on 3rd December will remove entitlement from most unemployed single people and childless couples who fail to seek work actively ... so called new age Travellers and others who make no effort to look for work will no longer be able to support themselves at taxpayers expense.

The motion to resolve the amendment was agreed in the House of Lords on December 1st 1992. In speaking against the motion Earl Russell referred to the fanfare of publicity on New Age Travellers that had accompanied the new regulations and whilst acknowledging his opposition to Travellers, he felt that public order legislation was needed to deal with Travellers not changes in the benefit system. The clear implication from this was that Travellers had been used to attract support for a cost cutting exercise. Whilst none of the Lords defended the New Age Travellers as such, many felt that New Age Travellers had been used as a tool to increase public support for the amendment.



On March 31 1993 a Department of the Environment press release published the minister's written replies to parliamentary questions. This joint press release outlined the main themes of the proposed legislation that would eventually make up the CJ&POA 1994.

The government believes these measures are necessary to prevent serious damage to the quality of life in rural areas, and that they will be welcomed by law abiding citizens throughout the country...The Home Office consulted with the Association of Chief Police Officers, other government Departments and also took the view of the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association, and local authorities who suffered *as a result of illegal invasions of Travellers and ravers last summer.*

In summary the government, who had started from a position of 'status quo', resisting pressure from back bench MPs however, by 1992 they had moved to a position where

- a) Changes in the Social Security Benefit System would be introduced to combat Travellers,
- b) The 1968 CSA would be repealed to remove the duty of local authorities to provide sites and
- c) New public order legislation would be created to combat Travellers, ravers and squatters.

### **The Lords debate on Travellers**

The debate in the Commons was rather short. Issues of human rights and civil liberties appeared to go almost unchallenged by the opposition, particularly the Labour Party. The slogan "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime" may have effectively restricted Labour opposition to a Bill that was ostensibly about criminal justice. It was therefore left to the House of Lords to amend the Bill, taking their lead from a number of interest

groups concerned about the consequences of part V on issues such as civil liberty, children and human rights. Interest in the debate was not however, restricted the opposition peers concerns about civil liberties. Government and some cross-bench Peers had strong views about New Age Travellers and the measures necessary to deal with them. On 11th May 1992 Lord Stanley tabled the following question in the Lords.

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle the problems caused to the public and the police and other authorities by 'New Age Travellers', and whether they will review their guidelines to Chief Constables on the operation of Section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 (Official Report col. 513).

The Lords then debated the question on 14 May. During the debate the weakness of section 39 was repeatedly outlined. Lord Stanley concluded his opening speech by "...repeating the plea, accepted in the Conservative manifesto, that the present situation is intolerable. He went on to describe his particular image of the phenomenon:

But anyone who has visited a 'New Age Travellers' site will see practically every law in the country being broken: the traffic laws, the environment laws, the health laws and the drinks and drugs laws. Worse still, the public see the police turn a blind eye to it.

This point was amplified by Earl of Radnor who believed that,

In the countryside lawlessness has increased immeasurably over the past few years. I feel fairly certain that there is a strong connection between the so called 'New Age Travellers' and that lawlessness...There is no harm in saying that the kind of people that I have encountered are abusive, aggressive and totally unhygienic. On the whole they live above and beyond the law.

As I will discuss in the chapter on policing, there is no evidence to support this view. However, the issue of overt criminality and lawlessness added weight to an argument that something needed to be done. This was in addition to specific concerns about

trespass and public order. Interestingly the general rise in lawlessness in rural areas was shifted to the focus on Travellers themselves rather than problems inherent in the developing rural communities. The debate started off with a list of anecdotal tales and calls for something to be done about criminal trespass. This was mostly from peers with land owning interests but by no means exclusively so.

The interests of landowners and the protection of the countryside combined with an obvious dislike of the Travellers' lifestyle were a potent mixture. As will be discussed in other chapters, New Age Travellers, like nomadic people generally, are a symbolic threat to landowners. Living a nomadic life challenges the axiomatic assumptions about who owns the land and by what right. It exposes the law itself as an instrument for normalising the possession of property and ownership of land. There was some irony that the protection of the countryside was later to bring together the aristocracy with Travellers in their opposition to the government over the road plans at Twyford Down and Solsbury Hill.

This first encounter with the issue of New Age Travellers may have led the government to believe it could rely on the support of the Lords in its proposed changes in public order legislation. This was not the case however, as it was in the House of Lords that the CJ&POA received its major amendments.

### **Children's charities**

Children's charities presented a counter view to a wave of anti-Traveller feeling. Partly this was achieved by focusing on the issue of New Travellers in terms of their reaction,

as young people, to the ever increasing problems such as unemployment and homelessness in the early nineties (Davis *et al* 1994).

Young Travellers were portrayed, in the view of the charities, as rational human beings, many of whom had little choice but to take to the road in order to make the best of a difficult economic situation. This provided an argument to counter a more general concern about young people and used as a weapon in the arsenal of metaphors, stereotypes and phobias to attack the New Age Traveller phenomenon. A counter view to the hooligan stereotype was created. These charities depicted young people as not 'out of control' but simply 'innocent victims' of economic and social changes. These were young people who were coping in a constructive way with problems that were partly attributable to the government's own economic policies.

The other thread to the children's charity position was presenting Travellers *as families* who like the 'rest of us' have vulnerable dependants and who are concerned with their children's education and health. By representing Travellers in this way not only were the wider issues of welfare brought into the debate, but there was a direct counterpoint to the underlying powerful message from the media and politicians, that Travellers were somehow alien to normal society or, *in extremis*, aliens themselves. A continued focus on the children of Travellers and the consequences of draconian legislation on their lives made it difficult for the more extreme rhetoric aimed against Travellers to be accepted.

The two leading charities in this debate were the *Save the Children Fund* and *The Children's Society*. Since 1991 a small unit had been set up by the Children's Society known as the 'Bath and Wells Neighbourhood Development Team'. The team worked

with a number of Churches to “seek to understand and respond to young homeless people”. The result of this study led to the publication of *Out Of Site Out of mind - New Age Travellers and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill*. (Davis et al 1994). This document was widely circulated and subsequently quoted in the House of Lords.

The Save the Children Fund had developed a ‘Travellers Information Unit’, which had been monitoring information on Travellers for a few years. In recent years the unit was concerned about a new wave of anti Traveller press coverage particularly focusing on the New Age Travellers. Staff at the Unit took a lead in co-ordinating a response to government proposals.

In response to the government’s consultation paper published in 1993, the Save the Children Fund sent a letter to the Home Affairs Minister, David Maclean, setting out the organisation’s concerns and requesting a meeting. This was agreed along with an invitation to address the all party parliamentary group on homelessness and housing need.

On Monday 18th April 1994 SCF issued a press release entitled *Government should think again on Gypsy and Traveller proposals say 14 organisations*. The press release quoted Michael Taylor, SCF’s UK Director as saying:

We believe these policies fly in the face of the responsibilities the government took on when it ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under that convention the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in legislation. And yet here are policies that would harm children and families. It is not too late for the government to think again

There thus emerged an overlap between the position taken by children's charities and the broader issues associated with the more mainstream civil rights organisations i.e. references to the universalist statements of the United Nations. Regarding the effectiveness of this strategy, clearly the children's charities did not get what they wanted. Perhaps the most significant impact was the effect of the briefing papers produced and distributed to peers which were then used to good effect in the Bill's passage through the House of Lords.

### **Civil rights groups, newer Travellers, squatters**

The Criminal Justice Bill invoked a number of loosely connected groups of resistance in extraordinary alliances. These ranged from the more established forms such as the organisation Liberty to newspapers such as *Green Anarchist*, small groups of protesters and nationally organised protest groups and those 'somewhere in the middle' such as Freedom Network and the Dongas Tribe. Their influence on the Bill itself was minimal nevertheless substantial progress was made in raising public awareness and more importantly, a form of resistance began to gather momentum. This increase in awareness could be traced back to the Battle of the Beanfield in 1985 and was to bring together a number individuals and groups. Some of these groups were overtly and obviously to do with New Age Travellers, others less so. The effect of the CJ&POA however, was for these groups to identify a common method of protest.

The significance of this protest may be viewed in terms of a rejection of the conventional political struggle personified in the young ultra-left coalitions of the late sixties and seventies. Linda Grant (1995) on the new wave of environmental protest suggested that,

their actions seem to defy any attempt to fit them into the history of struggles since the sixties, characterised as they were either by single issue campaigns or the deep class analysis of the far left (1995:7).

It may be for this reason that the more conventional forms of protest were not expedited. MPs were not bombarded with letters of protest because they themselves were seen as part of the problem. However, within this 'extraordinary alliance' there was room for a range of modalities of protest. Demonstrations, protests and rallies took place in tandem with meetings with ministers.

A number of demonstrations against the Bill were organised in 1994. On July 2nd 1994 a mass trespassory assembly was organised at Twyford Down by Road Alert to oppose the Bill. Later on Sunday July 24th 1994 a demonstration opposing the Bill took place from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square. In a leaflet publicising the event, David Faulkner, billed as "ex-head of the government's Criminal Justice Policy" is quoted as saying the Bill's powers "...can be used to make criminals out of demonstrators, squatters, Travellers and protesters of all kinds". MPs Bernie Grant, Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn are listed as supporters along with *Advance Party, No M11 Campaign, Hunt Saboteurs Association, Forgive Us Our Trespasses* and *Squall*.

During the debates the Public Order and the Caravan Sites Acts, a 'new group of people' emerged often linked with Travellers, these were the so-called 'ravers'. Raves were portrayed by the media as essentially anti-social, involving illicit drug use and causing distress to residents through noise pollution. A particularly significant 'party organisation' known as Exodus evolved in the Luton area during 1992 began not only organising raves in the local area but also addressing local homelessness and

community. These projects along with the raves themselves had the support of some local police who observed a reduction in the crime rate by 6% in the Luton area that year. The weekend raves had a positive effect. Chief Inspector Mike Brown was quoted in *The New Statesman*

Licensed premise were experiencing a fair amount of loss of trade... Some licensees were starting to get into real financial trouble. As a consequence there was a lessening of alcohol related offences, gratuitous assaults, bottle throwing the random public disorder that generally goes with town centres and drink (1994:7).

The tolerance by local police to Exodus eventually was halted due pressure from local MPs on the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire. Police operations against Exodus, particularly the breaking up of a demonstration, were used to add weight to the argument that more legislative controls were needed.

The use of land and issues of ownership created another coalition (Monbiot 1995a 1995b). Environmentalists who opposed motorway construction found themselves protesting against the government alongside the newer Travellers. Both groups questioned the right to determine the use and ownership of land by government and landowners. A 'higher authority' was invoked, that of the principle of 'ecological sensitivity'. Environmentalists were disillusioned by what they saw as the interests of short-term political and financial gain. Many Travellers were similarly disillusioned by what was perceived as the government's heavy-handedness. This seemed to be directed against an environmentally sensitive culture that demonstrated an environmentally less destructive alternative lifestyle. It is important to note however, that the media coverage of these protests along with the myriad of small underground publications coupled with the support of more 'acceptable' environmental discourses seemed to have an effect on



modifying public opinion. This positive move in terms of a growing public support for the 'ecological discourse' was not successful in influencing the passage of the Bill through Parliament and was not used as a context for the amendment of clauses in the Bill.

Submissions to the committee considering the Bill were brought by the Commission for Racial Equality, ACERT, Citizens Advice Bureau, The Consortium for Criminal Justice, Squatters Action for Secure Homes, Campaign Against the Criminal Justice Act (Nottingham Group), Advance Party and many other pressure groups. These had little effect in terms of the formal amendment process. This would support the positions of organisations such as Earth First! who suggested formal appeal to reason was not a productive use of time. Alex Plows, writing from an ecological perspective in 1995 provides a flavour of the feelings that were developing in the ecological coalitions. In an open letter written in 1995 to Brian Mawhinney the then Minister of State for Transport she wrote:

Lets pretend for a moment that we could suppress our feelings of nausea and rage and just sit down to negotiate; what in fact could you offer us? The end of the industrial system -can you offer us that? An end to the life support systems of the Earth... can you offer us that? Of course not!... Why should we debate, we know what you are going to say, you've said it countless times before, we are bored of listening. The modern ecology movement is over 30 years old; in the bowels of your office there is a whole forest of reports on the ecological stupidity of what you are doing. You know the situation (quoted from Plows 1998, Do or Die no.5 (1995), 5).

In February 1994 Liberty, produced two Briefing Papers *Restrictions on Travellers and squatters* and *Restrictions on peaceful protest* under the common rubric of criminalising diversity and dissent. Regarding the proposals concerning Travellers, Liberty felt they should be opposed because they:

- undermine the right to pursue a chosen way of life, creating further discrimination against groups who are already marginalised.
- are likely to breach international human rights law.
- are counter productive and probably unworkable in practice.

Liberty argued that the proposals created an array of offences and penalties, which were both draconian and discriminatory, and internally inconsistent. The organisation outlined a number of potential breaches of international law including Articles 8, 11, 14 of The European Convention on Human Rights and Articles 17 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. If the children's charities had exploited their concern for children and families then this loose coalition of anti Bill protesters used the higher authorities of European Law, the United Nations and highest of all perhaps, concern for the environment. Their methods were diverse and relative to their conceptual and political positions. A combination of appeal through legitimate authority and a new form of informal, anarchistic protest appealing to the 'sentimental' outlines their methods of resistance.

### **Traditional Travellers**

The substantive discursive device used by traditional Travellers and one that would appear in the media (particularly *The Guardian* and *The Observer*) was a call to oppose the return to fascism and totalitarianism. It was also observed by a number of commentators that New Age Travellers had been used to devise harsher penalties against traditional Travellers and that both were the victims of harsh and discriminatory laws. Traditional Travellers made reference to central Europe. Organised under the banner of the National Gypsy Council, they opposed the Government's Consultation Paper

published on August 18th 1992. The Vice President of the National Gypsy Council was quoted in *The Guardian* report as saying :

It's simply appalling. It's the sort of proposals one would expect from a totally fascist government. It's a Nicolae Ceausescu reaction. This happened in Romania 10 years ago.

Generally the Gypsy Council for Education, Culture Welfare and Civil Rights opposed the proposals in Part V of the Act and sent briefing papers to the Commons and the Lords. The repeal of certain sections the Caravan Act were seen as most alarming along with the new criminal offence of trespass. In a letter to Lord Avebury the Council pointed out that there was a confusion between homelessness and nomadism and that many New Age Travellers were on the road because of a lack of affordable accommodation or employment and not for any great desire for a nomadic lifestyle. Whilst some individuals resented New Travellers many did not. The general schism between 'Traditional' and 'New' appeared to be more important to the Lords in debating the Act than the to traditional Travellers themselves.

### **The opposition**

Some commentators noticed that the Labour Party declined to oppose the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill on its second reading.

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". (Michael Mansfield Q.C.)

This was presumed to be "for fear of being soft on crime (and its causes)" (Smith 1995: 21). There was however, some opposition from the *Labour Campaign for*

*Travellers Rights* who published information on the main issues and attempted to recruit members to lobby during the debate

Smith (1995:27) concluded that given the “lurid” first hand tales told by the Lords during the Bill’s passage, there was never a prospect of serious opposition. Based on the language used by Labour MPs in the debate where New Age Travellers were being discussed, it seemed unlikely that the newer form of Traveller would benefit from the arguments marshalled to defend the more traditional Travellers. In fact on many occasions New Age Travellers were criticised in order to strengthen the support of traditional Travellers or simply left out of the debate for tactical reasons. During a debate in the Commons Mr. Corbyn emphasised the long tradition of Romanies who he claimed had travelled as itinerant labourers throughout Europe for many centuries and had a deep and respected culture. This statement implicitly removes support for newer Travellers. Mr. Pike referred to the Department of Environments Consultation Paper *Gypsy Sites Policy and Illegal Camping*. He felt this was “completed in haste and not well thought out” and “a response to *the problem of new age Travellers*” (Official Report, 9 December 1992 col. 834). Opposition MPs also attempted to slow down the process against the growing pressure from MPs to the government to do something quickly. Mr. Pike asked for assurances that the Department were not “working to a rigid timetable and would consider responses and complexities of the issues before taking action”. (1992 col.834) Labour MPs referred to the health care and education of Traveller children as an issue that deserved caution. Mr. Corbyn suggested the government’s proposals would *criminalise* Travellers. He also accused Conservative members of not wanting people to have different lifestyles and suggested Conservative members spent too much time reading editorials of *The Daily Mail*.

Other comments made by the Labour Party were on the basis that it would cause more problems than it would solve, particularly the reliance on provision of private sites as an alternative to the local authority provision. This 'privatisation' solution was central to the Conservative Party ideology and was an obvious area for attack by the opposition. A counter strategy used by the opposition (with the aid of the CRE) was to call into question the motives of MPs calling for harsher measures to deal with Gypsies by hints of racism or xenophobia.

### **A Summary of the debate**

Generally the public order part of the Act attracted opposition from a diverse set of interest groups and individuals. Even with a clear majority in the House of Commons, any government can expect that the original intentions of a Bill do not always result in an Act of Parliament that satisfies the original concerns purportedly expressed on behalf of the general public. The end result can often be a compromise of opinion, both expert and lay. Many of these opinions are recorded for scrutiny and analysis but there are also a number 'interests' which are expressed 'off the record' or in different forms for example through protest. An examination of documents, particularly official ones, cannot reveal these opinions in their entirety. A full analysis of the process of law making therefore needs to be cognizant of what 'the record shows' as well as what it does not.

Initially the momentum for a change in the public order law appeared to come from a tenacious group of 'back bench' MPs however, there were other factors that influenced the shaping of the CJ&POA and these will be discussed in more detail in the final

chapter. The leadership crisis of the Conservative Party in 1992 was clearly significant; John Major was able to use Travellers in the manifesto of 1992 as a problem to which he had a solution. Later in the same year at the party conference was able to announce the proposed changes to warm applause.

At the same conference Peter Lilley was able to the divert attention from the economic imperatives that lay behind the *Income Support (General) Amendment (no.3)* introduced in November 1992. Whilst not mentioned specifically at the conference, New Age Travellers were used as examples in the debate in Parliament. The political expediency of portraying Travellers as 'folk devils' and the resulting 'scape-goating' is an obvious point but one which needs to be made if only to put into context some of the real concerns and difficulties that faced a number of rural communities, organisations and individuals.

To complicate matters, the amalgamation of a number of concerns about, for example, caravan sites, public order, raves and squatting had the effect of the various interest groups themselves both supporting and opposing the Government during the passage of the Bill through Parliament. Perhaps the most visible example of this was the position of the NFU and Country Landowner's Association. The NFU strongly supported proposals to amend the POA on the grounds of the threat symbolised by the Castlemorton Common 'invasion'. However, as they witnessed the development of the Bill they opposed proposals to amend the CSA (particularly in respect of the proposals to remove the duty of local authorities to provide sites for Gypsies) they realised that the enforcement issues that would arise. These issues would arise from criminalising the

Travelling lifestyle and by providing fewer sites. This was seen a recipe for further conflict in the countryside.

The police could be viewed as another example. It would be wrong to conclude that the constabularies unanimously supported additional powers concerned with public order (although the collective view of ACPO would influence ministers greatly). In fact the police were cited in order to persuade members of parliament that tougher public order legislation was needed and yet also cited by the Government (up until 1992) as an authority for supporting the position that no amendment was necessary. In later debates the police were used by opposition Peers to warn of the difficulties of implementing certain aspects of the Act that would, in effect, criminalise the nomadic way of life. These warnings were, with hindsight, well founded as police also found themselves in the difficult situation of implementing public order measures against a wide range of protesters in the year following Royal Assent.

It is well reported that the Bill received more opposition in the House of Lords than in the Commons and was subject to an unusually large set of amendments and counter amendments. The Labour Party did little to oppose the Bill in the Commons, but it should not be overlooked that a small group of opposition peers and MP's attempted to resist by amendment the worst excess of the Bill. These were Lord McIntosh, Lord Avebury, Lord Taylor of Gryfe, Baroness Mallalieu, Jeremy Corbyn and Peter Pike. With the exception of Lord Taylor, this was normally a defence of the rights of traditional Travellers at the expense of New Age Travellers.

**Conclusions and the wider debate**

The debates in the Palace of Westminster represent only the exposed tip of an iceberg that is the crystallisation of a number of discourses into one; that is the discourse of law itself. The process of law making is not confined to Westminster nor should it be confined to an unchallenged discourse of law. To see the process of law making as simply that, which is, exposed to public scrutiny risks the failings of an uncritical, 'low level' 'nuts and bolts' analysis. Indeed, within the context of this debate (which had definite environmental overtones) the whole question of a perspective that currently lies outside criminological theory and is situated in the human-environment relationship, becomes central to the analysis. Halsey and White (1998) who discuss the need to develop an 'ecological imagination' in the interpretation of criminal law make this point. That is not to dismiss a close scrutiny of the language used in debate and its fine detail which are nevertheless essential in making sense of the wider processes that were involved in formulating legislation.

The debate surrounding part V of the Act stirred up the passions of both sides. The threat of lawlessness to the peace of the countryside, images of invasion and corruption mixed with older prejudices against nomadic people, hooligans and the 'youth of today'. The counter arguments attempted to portray the potential victims of anti-Traveller legislation as families with children in need, as well as directly exposing xenophobic racist arguments of sedentarism. The legal aspects of the 'human rights' of Travellers galvanised the wider support of civil liberty groups. Public opinion and the images created by the media provided a 'pseudo authority' for discussions that were often so bereft of factual information that they stretched credulity. Outside the Palace of Westminster the concept of ownership of land was being challenged by a new coalition organisations spawning new modalities of protest set against the grain of conventional



left /right (or even class) conflict. The pragmatic concerns of landowners and farmers found, and then lost, alliance with government and party political imperatives. It was here, outside the debating chambers that the much of the conflict was played out.

The successful passage of the Bill was a pyrrhic victory in two ways; the unpopularity it caused the government and the amalgamation of the 'Anti-Bill /Environmental Protest' movements. The government's intention of finding solutions to the 'caravan sites problem' never seemed to be a realistic objective if it were to be achieved through the abolition of local authority's responsibilities in respect of Travellers.

In order to make sense of this detail on the law making however, there is a need to stand back a little and examine this process in terms of political power. Certainly focusing on the pragmatic alliances and variable meanings of the conflicting discourses help us to understand how the organisations and interest groups influenced this piece of legislation or not as the case may be. In postmodern terms, the weakening grip of the state and its increasing exposure to the effect of alternative voices may help to enrich an understanding of how law is made and the reactions it inspires. Equally however, a postmodern view that ignores the power of the state or exaggerates the impact of the new forms of resistance must be open to criticism.

A deeper analysis of the process needs to be embedded in a number of struggles and conflicts that are essentially about protecting the interests of the dominant elite and the concept of the ownership of land. The "erosion of social and individual liberties as a result of losing the traditional rights of equal access to land" (Jupp 1997:29) must be an important element of the conflict. This is in addition to the conflict that is derived from

sedentarism whose roots stretch back to the 14th Century. Law itself maintains ownership of land not simply through the development of land law but as a generality. The making of law is situated in the dominant sedentarist values and protection of the privileged position of these values. It becomes clear that the weapons used against Travellers would be a recall to sedentarist prejudice (in this case mixed in with the fear of drug crazed hippie swarms conjured up mainly by the media). It explains the robust reaction of the NFU and Landowners Association to the physical and symbolic threat of Travellers. The issue of where Travellers can exist legally is subsumed by the urgent need to "make life difficult for them".

Within this wider struggle and during the process by which the Bill became an Act, New Age Travellers were used to introduce changes in the benefit system and abolish the duties of local authorities to provide sites, measures that were essentially fiscal in their purpose. The Conservative Party also conveniently added New Age Travellers to their list of scapegoats for electoral gain.

In defence, many interest groups rallied around human rights, child welfare and European law. The draconian nature of the Bill awakened potential activists and offended public opinion. It spawned new forms of contemporary protest. It created an environment through which otherwise disparate groups organised themselves.

The CJ&POA 1994 remains the most significant instrument for the punitive aspect of the social control of New Age Travellers. This chapter has attempted to trace from whence it came, who shaped it, the methods used and its more general context.

### SECTION III

#### CHAPTER FOUR

#### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter I discuss some of the major theoretical concepts in an attempt to link the previous chapters to some of the main findings of the research. Central to this work are the concepts of social control and postmodernity/postmodernism. A study of the social control of New Age Travellers is for me both a sociology of the post-modern and, particularly in the section that relates to the media, a post-modern sociology. These concepts are therefore discussed at some length. New Age Travellers as the subject of control can be perceived in many ways and it is this multiplicity of view that supports an almost multi-disciplinary approach to the question of methodological and theoretical triangulation'. Ontologically New Age Travellers can be placed in the classic mode of the 'folk devils' invoking a 'moral panic' (Cohen 1972), or state-centred manufacture of a moral panic through the manipulation of public opinion leading to changes in legislation (Hall *et al* 1978). They can be seen as latter-day vagabonds subject to the processes of structural conflict (Chambliss 1976) or as serious 'environmental messengers' transmogrified and eventually marginalised by media tropes (Young 1990), or as counter-cultural resistance through style (Hebdige 1987). They can be seen as the subject of 'phagic' / 'emic' reactions by the insiders of society (Bauman 1993) as part of the eliminative ideal (Rutherford 1997). Lastly they can be described as descendants of the hippie line counter-cultural resistance (McKay 1996), or as the latest example of the many 'contemporary nomadic' people subjected to anti-nomadic prejudice such as that

expressed towards Gypsies (Hawes and Perez 1996; McVeigh 1997). For me, each of these perspectives has something to add to an understanding of the phenomenon, be they derived from a 'hippie trail' or 'Gypsy lane' or neither. It is therefore my intention to take a fairly broad view, integrating not only the 'incommensurable explanations' of crime and deviance but also the very different ways in which the Travellers themselves are perceived.

Lastly, I will also discuss the specific theoretical aspects relating to the media's role in portraying New Age Travellers, public opinion and policing. In the case of policing I have also included a short discussion of the history of policing in Britain and more precisely, the development of public order policing. I have also included some discussion on hippie ideology, identity and sub-cultural theory as a way of connecting New Age Travellers to their progenitors.

### **The concept of social control**

It is perhaps now necessary to outline the reasons why 'social control' remains useful in describing the processes outlined above as opposed to other alternatives one might choose such as 'policing', 'hegemony' or 'social censure'.

It should be clear from a look at the range of perspectives outlined in the brief chapter descriptions given in the introduction that the concept of control was as large as practicably possible. In doing this, and by involving public opinion, media, law making, policing and cultural relationships, I hope to capture the social, as it is here that we find

the weakest aspect of the concept of social control (Sumner 1997a). The term social control does have its difficulties: it was, and remains, a term that means many things to many people, its meaning having evolved, regressed, splintered and condensed. Social control was seen as an explanatory concept in relation to the bonding of functional societies. Since then the use of the term has changed again to incorporate coercive responses to deviance rather than simply be in a set of processes parallel to the coercive. Social control can be seen as a 'bad thing' or a 'good thing' depending on both one's theoretical position and one's own definition. The understanding of social control perceived in the neo-Gramscian sense of hegemony involves a shift from the coercive to the subtly seductive. Nevertheless where seduction is weak, unavailable, or exposed as flawed, violent social control remains legitimised by the 'social' majority for those at the margins. Melossi (1997) has noted this in respect of Black people in the United States. In the case where individuals or groups do not wish to be 'socially included', for example the Dongas Tribe, the debate on social inclusion and social exclusion becomes further complicated. Rejecting consumerism and the trappings of the post-modern world and replacing it with a passion for environmental (and social) issues brought some Travellers head on to violent reaction from the state. Indeed the exposure of violent coercive reaction is seen by some as the very process of awakening awareness to the systematic destruction of the planet by international corporations.

There are however, a number of additional problems associated alternatives to the term social control. Let us first consider policing. Policing, as Rawlings (1995) has noted, has been used as a much broader term than simply a description of the role of the police.

For clarity we can accept Reiner's (1997:1008) definition of policing as "an aspect of social control processes involving surveillance and sanctions intended to ensure the security of the social order". Policing captures much of what went on in terms of the role of the police and local authorities, the legal and criminal justice system and the development of the CJ&POA 1994. However, it is not a term that easily embraces the 'whole process' by which New Age Travellers were created, vilified and controlled (or indeed continue to be seduced by consumerism). Omissions resulting from a 'policing perspective' would include the role of public opinion and the media in shaping social control and indeed the deep-seated prejudice of and conflict that exists between mainstream sedentary society and the contemporary nomadic people.

Even in its late eighteenth century sense, 'policing' was about understanding crime and disorder and the development of appropriate policies for its prevention and control, thus taking for granted that 'disorder' was by definition, inappropriate. The concept failed to recognise structural conflict or the social construction of deviancy through social control itself. As Robert Reiner puts it (1997: 1004) "the idea of policing is an aspect of the more general concept of social control".

Sumner (1997) using instead 'social censure' gives an alternative to the concept of social control. By censure Colin Sumner means:

The practical process of disapproval and stigmatisation which arises so frequently in situations of relational conflict (and the)...negative ideological formations which designate practice, demeanour, or other manifestations of self or others as bad, unacceptable, criminal, wicked, mad, delinquent and so forth (Sumner 1997:49).

Social censures, according to Sumner, are located within the ideological terrain of society's hegemonic groups. Their sanctification often takes the form of law and thus these censures have been integral to state formation. These ideas appear to work well in the context of this study. Social censure seems to be a useful concept to apply to New Age Travellers in view of their experiences of the last 20 years. However, Sumner's claim that for many souls there can be no more moral panics in a post-modern world of relativism may be a little premature. This was true of the reaction to New Age Travellers between 1992 and 1994, a reaction that appeared to be precisely one of panic. This implicit critique of Stuart Hall's hegemonic, state based 'crisis model' of control not only reflects that the world has moved on but reflects how social theory itself has moved on too. The concept of moral panic however, will require some explanation at this stage before returning to it in the concluding chapter. To do this we need to go back in time from post-modernists to 'modernists' and the work of Stanley Cohen.

'Modernists' or 'mods' as they were more usually known, were the subject of a study which first led to the concept of the 'moral panic' (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994).

According to Cohen (1972) a moral panic happens when

A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned... Sometimes the subject of the panic is quite novel at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious long lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even the way society conceives itself (1972:9).

For a thorough analysis of the term see Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994). It is worth noting though, that a moral panic implies not only issues such as concern, hostility and disproportionality; it implies, at least to some degree, a consensus that something is wrong. However, disproportionate the reaction was to the problem a consensus did exist for a while that 'New Age Travellers' were a threat. This consensus challenges notions of a post-modern pluralism and relativity-of-morals suggested by Sumner (1997) and occurs, I would suggest, because it was embedded in sedentarism as well as perhaps to a much lesser degree, the continuing demonisation of 'youth'. The concept of moral panic whilst criticised by Peter Waddington (1986) for being political rather than analytical is, in my view essential to the understanding of events; for that we owe a debt to Stanley Cohen.

At this stage it is perhaps worth making the point that I conceptualise the reaction to Travellers as a moral panic with a difference. This difference is located in the changes in perception of Travellers as objects of control, which led to an unusual sequence of events. Travellers originally conceived as 'hippies' underwent a 'mutation' partly real, partly imagined leading to a more positive public perception. In addition to the changes that took place to the object of the panic, I also accept the more general differences noted by McRobbie and Thornton (1994) who describe how moral panics have developed in contemporary society in relation to the changing role and impact of the media. However, I disagree that the term 'moral panic' is a metaphor that mystifies more than it reveals. The events, and the issues that arise from them, will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.



A concept is needed to capture the more overt and coercive aspects of regulation and prejudice as well as the subtler ones. It needs to embrace 'the moral panic' which I believe to be alive and well even within societies claiming high degrees of reflexivity and relativism (see also McRobbie and Thornton 1994). The concept needs not simply to identify the areas of censure, deposits of power and resulting consequences; it needs also to explore the mechanisms, agents and domain of control. As Clarke has reminds us

Even the most hegemonic - the most taken for granted constructions or cultural formations have to negotiate their dominance against displaced or declining alternative conceptions of the world and against emergent alternative possibilities (Clarke 1998:14).

Notions of hegemony lead us to consider the role of the state and again Sumner is clear that within the discipline of criminology there has been a dearth in analytical work in this area. The concept of the state can act as a bridge between the specific and the general.

Here, Jessop's (1990) definition of the state as:

a distinct ensemble of institutions and organisations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on members of a society in the name of common interest or general will (1990: 341).

becomes a useful reminder that within criminological study, patterns of interest, which emerge, should be examined. There is an obvious advantage in placing hegemonic process centrally in regard to criminological enquiry and in highlighting the state's relationship with the media in producing socialising effects. However, contemporary media forms provide a different context from that of thirty years ago, suggesting that a degree of care is necessary in exploring and attributing state-media relationships.

It is perhaps with a view to ridding social control of its historical meaning that Sumner would have it replaced by a new term, 'social censures' and yet its history is, in one sense, its strength. The concept of social control can be placed very much in the context of the modernist project, an answer to the apparent lost social ties of the pre-modern world. It is precisely because of its relationship with the modernist project that the term becomes useful in the post-modern context. New mechanisms of social control may be found in 'technological coercion' as a response to pluralism and fragmentation. Framed in this way, social control appears to have contemporary value. Van Swaanigen (1997), for example, connects critical criminology to social control by reminding us that visions of the state as an omnipotent repressive apparatus have been largely superseded (1997:243). The powerful state has been augmented perhaps by market forces and a private sector that has spawned an industry of surveillance, underpinned by changes in information technology. Van Swaanigen's observation that social control is now decentralised or fragmented, depending on the vocabulary one prefers to use (1997:243), points to the limits of Sumner's state-based conception of social censure.

Social control is not a concept restricted to conflict, deviancy or state-centred political theory but can embrace the control of the 'new' areas of social life, (sexuality, body, gender, emotions, the heart); it can be applied sensitively to the complex relations of reflexive contemporary society. It is therefore clear, as Hudson (1997:467) points out, that analyses of social control will need to "reconsider the nature and function of the state, the community and the individual" in the light of the changing conditions of late-high- or post-modernity. Foucault's (1977) concept of the construction of conformity by

means of a disciplined society and the concept of social control as developed by Cohen (1994), Melossi (1997), Scheerer and Hess (1997), provide ideas which are central to the situation of newer Travellers. These ideas have the potential to survive not only post-modernity itself but from a postmodernist critique of a situation. It is not only the sociology of post-modernity, a weakening state, of contradictory and contested social constructions that challenges the concept of social control but post modernism itself. Lyotard's (1984) incredulity of the meta-narrative i.e a cautionary position in relation to any grand concept may also extend to the concept of social control itself.

Lastly, I would argue that there is a particular reason for using the concept of social control in the context of marginalised groups. Hudson (1997) has suggested that, as in mainstream criminology, the issues of race and gender have often been overlooked to the detriment of many a criminological project. This is no less true in social control theory. I would argue, as do Scheerer and Hess (1997), that there appear to be two apparently contradictory processes evolving: one which sees an increasingly widening net of therapeutic control and computerised surveillance and the other which sees a fragmentation of traditional ties alongside the rampant march of uncontrollable globalisation and international capitalism. These combined processes have the prospect of increasing 'brutalisation at the margins of the out-groups' (Scheerer and Hess 1997). It is thus by focusing on the margins that we can see how a process of social control is developed, molded, reacted against and modified; sometimes with desired outcomes often with unforeseen consequences. By focusing on a specific time period within late modernity we can test the concept, note the to-and-fro of the dialectic and possibly

expose processes less obvious but nevertheless present in 'mainstream' society. We may also be able make predictions about how some of these principles could be generalised to other marginal groups or indeed to a wider social context in a future of uncertainties. Social control as a specific concept for the analysis of the fate of New Age Travellers has many advantages and has relevance in contemporary society.

### **A Theoretical Framework**

The choice of methodology for this project was a triangulation of both theory and method in order to do justice to a set of complex relationships between agencies and individuals that is based on control, legitimacy, action and reaction. Clearly the decision to adopt a multi-perspective approach has implications not only in terms of a selection of an appropriate data-collection mechanisms, (each selected for a particular function) but also a range the theoretical considerations appropriate for the task. It is therefore important to identify a framework of theoretical perspectives, which will act as a boundary and provide the appropriate structure necessary for the project. The aim of finding an appropriate theoretical framework located in an essentially sociological/criminological project raises a number of immediate difficulties, quite apart from the difficulty of definitions. Firstly, criminology like sociology, has accommodated a range of intellectual nuances and some major contradictory schools. The development of criminology and indeed social control has offered a myriad of approaches. These have included Beccaria's classical work *Dei delitti e delle pene* of 1764 to biological notions derived from Lombroso's *Trattato antropologica sperimentale dell'uomo delinquente* of 1876, of the *Scuola positiva*, leading to the oppositional French environmental

criminology inspired by Alexander Lacassagne in 1885. Criminology has been influenced by the grand narratives of Durkheimian functionalism and of structural conflict as well as the micro-level fields of phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, in addition to the more recent radical, new left and new right realists and feminist criminologies. Recent revivals in European critical criminology as an antidote to the growing field of heavily sponsored administrative criminology remind us of the tensions and crises that exist within the field from a theoretical point of view. For example, as Van Swaanigen notes:

Next to being a criminological perspective in the empirical sense of the word, critical criminology is an epistemological critique of positivism and functionalism (1997:4).

Secondly, there is an apparent crisis of identity in the field of criminology concerned with its fragmentation and even its existence as a separate discipline. Criminology could not deconstruct crime without abandoning criminology to sociology and yet it embraces a wide degree of unrelated activities, issues and problems. The same problem of fragmentation and unification of the subject is identified, albeit with some optimism more recently by Ericson and Carrier (1994). Deviance is not a unified problem; it has no essential substance and can be studied from diverse intellectual standpoints. The boundaries between disciplines will continue to be problematic unless, as Ericson suggests, “we stop worrying about discipline and order in the field and start celebrating its fragmented character” (Ericson and Carrier 1994:94)

As a potential solution to this David Garland (1990) suggests a synthesis of perspectives as not simply helpful but, more importantly, possible. ‘Garland seems to suggest that it is

important not to synthesise a grand theory of penalty but rather to find a way of making sense of a range of perspectives and vocabularies through which (in this case) punishment can be variously understood (Garland 1990:206). He maintains that he is not being eclectic for the sake of it; in fact he warns against arbitrary eclecticism, stressing the importance for some guide to issues of selectivity from one perspective to another. There is a need to reveal what Cohen describes as the fragments, shifting strategies and alliances, unconnected zones of power, changing vocabularies of intervention - which cannot be re-assembled by conventional means (Cohen 1989:356). Garland (1990) warns against reductionism in the analysis of punishment leading to a tendency to explain penalty in terms of any single causal principle or functional purpose, be it 'morals' or 'economics' or 'state control' (Garland 1990). Garland suggests that instead of searching for a single explanatory principle, we need to grasp the facts of multiple causality, multiple effects and multiple meaning. It is thus an attempt to grasp the facts of multiple causality that guides the theory and method of this project.

These previously incommensurable theories are now being seen as less mutually exclusive by other authors (Cohen 1994), (Ericson and Carriere 1994). Particularly within the field of social control theory there is now some convergence around a common understanding of 'political', 'anthropological' and 'deviance and crime' discourses of social control. "We are now at the fascinating stage where these three different grids of social control are becoming less separate" (Cohen 1994:65). By 'political', 'anthropological' and 'deviance and crime', Cohen is describing three cognitive discourses that have been attached to the concept of social control. Political is

the classic question of social control, “how we maintain social order”. Anthropological is the focus on the processes of social control whereas the third ‘deviance and crime’ covers the sequential succession (but certainly not evolution of) ‘labeling’, ‘state-centred’ and ‘Foucauldian’ perspectives of criminology. Post-modernist/post-structuralist theory sees a looser, much less state-centred, view of power.

### **Postmodernism and post-modernity**

Nelken (1994:) suggests that there is a need to distinguish between the ‘sociology of postmodernity’ and ‘post-modern sociology’ (1994:15), and yet warns that the distinction is “not always that easy to maintain”. This idea, Nelken suggests, is also supported by Giddens (1991), who proposes that reflexivity (an aspect of the post-modern condition) “can serve as a topic for criminology as well as a way of doing criminology” (1991:187). The social control of New Age Travellers, I believe, lends itself to both a sociology of postmodernity and a post-modern /poststructuralist sociology/criminology. This project is a sociological study informed, to a degree, by other disciplines such as history and geography, and in that sense it exhibits some aspects of postmodernism i.e. the ‘blurring of the edges’ of the disciplines (Capra, 1976; Lyotard, 1984; Giddens, 1987).

There is disagreement on the term post-modernity and the boundaries that separate it from the alternatives. Whether or not ‘postmodernity’ actually exists separately from modernity (high or late) (Sarup 1988; Hassard and Parker 1993; Giddens 1991; Lash and Urry 1994) is a question which no doubt will continue to be debated. It is therefore

perhaps worth spending some time considering and defining the use of the term in relation to this particular study.

Lash and Urry (1994) provide a convincing argument for the use of the term post-modernity as an alternative to late modernity, suggesting the many ways in which contemporary society is very different to a society based on the 'modern project'. Their interpretation is essentially rooted in the idea of the end of organised capital and the beginnings of disorganised capital. Based on the ideas of Lash and Urry, I will consider two themes related to the conditions of postmodernity which I believe are most relevant to my general thesis and which will be discussed throughout this dissertation. Firstly, there are the effects of the simultaneous processes of globalisation and localisation; this is relevant to this work for a number of reasons. The globalisation and resulting 'disorganisation' of capital is fundamental to the concept of the 'hollowing' state: it is a process which, in some respects, has eroded the nation-state concept which in turn can lead to a reconceptualisation of the relationship between 'state' and 'social control'. Furthermore globalisation and localisation is also fundamental to an understanding of the critique by contemporary protest of "modernity itself" (1994: 296). Global networks of communication allow "diverse and pluralistic images" to be used "for oppositional movements such as with regard to environmental issues" (1994: 307). Secondly, Lash and Urry (1994) distinguish between the modern and post-modern conceptions of time. This is important as, it too, relates to ideas of global environmentalism (contemporary protest). It also relates to other ideas such as the need to replace the modern metaphor of the clock with the post-modern metaphor of the



computer (the Internet) and the hologram (the media image of the New Age Traveller). Lash and Urry criticise Giddens' three times scales of *durée* (daily time), *dasein* (lifetime) and *longue durée* (history), because they seem to represent only the middle ground of sensed time, ignoring the very fast and the very slow. They conclude that:

while the conflicts of modernity were fought out around the significance of clock time, around efforts to expand or contract the length and sequencing of waged labour, conflicts within disorganised capitalism have more focused upon contradictory temporal principles, between concepts of time as instantaneous and as glacial (Lash and Urry 1994: 251).

That is not to say that *longue durée* is not significant in situating sedentarism or that *dasein* is not relevant to ideological life choices made by Travellers or *durée* relevant to their reaction to disciplinary routines. Clearly, perceptible time is important, but the computer time of the nano-second and evolutionary time has become fundamental to an understanding of contemporary society and its conflicting values. The spread of advanced systems of 'information technology' and a growing awareness of environmental issues such as global warming by those involved in contemporary protest bear witness to this.

I see the subject New Age Travellers, their criminalisation and social control as a post-modern phenomenon. It is an example of a reaction against the growing number of young disenfranchised as well as a reaction by Travellers to the conditions of post-modernity, an example of the fragmentation/unification dilemma of society.

Returning to the concept of late-modernity, Giddens (1991) suggests that modernity produces '*difference, exclusion and marginalisation*'. In his words,

The ecological and peace movements are also part of this new sensibility to late modernity... Such movements internally diverse as they are, effectively challenge some of the basic presuppositions and organising principles which fuel modernity's juggernaut (1991:208).

If the arguments above support the view that contemporary existence falls within a condition of post-modernity, then there is also a need to justify the usefulness of a postmodernist/post-structuralist sociology/criminology, if indeed that is an approach to be taken.

The media's role in the creation of the phenomenon of New Age Travellers suggests a link to the field of semiotics (the sending of messages through the use of symbols and signs). The work of Ferdinand Saussure (1974) provides explanation of the relationship between signifiers and signifieds as an interpretation of these signs. Following on from Alison Young's (1992), work on Greenham women a post-structuralist reading of the press narrative can question the relationship between language and truth. It can suggest a stronger role for the signifier than would be attributed by a 'common sense' view of language as well as providing a challenge to the predominant modernist narrative. Through this process, the selection of particular words and the significance of the metaphor is brought into focus.

Young's (1991) use of Derrida's (1978) concept of *différance*, where there is no direct relationship between signifier and signified since the meaning of the sign is always

deferred both temporally and spatially, is an interesting and helpful model of analysis for 'the press narrative'. The significance of a post-structuralist reading is the insight it can provide to the instability inherent in language, and particularly the written word and a suspicion of the values of 'meaning' and 'truth'. This idea leads to an investigation and deconstruction of text as a tool for examining the role of the media in creating New Age Travellers.

To narrow down the possible range of usage I use the conceptual framework of 'a postmodernist approach to knowledge' based on that developed by Hassard and Parker (1993). This focuses on the work of Jacques Derrida and Jean-Francois Lyotard, but includes, amongst others, Jean Baudrillard. Five key themes are identified: They are representation, reflexivity, writing, 'difference' and 'de-centring' the subject. It is perhaps worth offering here a brief explanation of these themes. The idea of representation rejects the 'picture theory' of language as a neutral description of a fixed reality, e.g. Wittgenstein's (1953, 1958) analysis of 'language games', Kuhn's 'scientific revolutions' (1962, 1970, 1974) and Pepper's 'world hypothesis' (1972). Thus the factual is replaced by the representational (Gergen 1992) and there is no 'genuine order of things' which can be revealed through empirical investigation as their findings simply reflect 'pre-existing intellectual' categories. In addition to this, an essentially circular argument can develop around representations and 'fact'. Reflexivity is assumed to create a position of 'equality of knowledge bases' and a suspicion of linear progress, which can be helpful in adopting an epistemological pluralism.

Writing, according to Derrida, is seen as a 'fixing of the flow of the world' in temporal and spatial terms. It relates to the structure of representations more than the meaning of the message, (Cooper, 1989). Derrida also describes the concept of 'differance' as strategy of thought that reflects but does not capture the process of deconstruction. 'Differance' is derived in part from Saussure's (1974) conception of a language as a system of differences. The French verb *différer* means to differ in space and to defer in time. In this sense differance produces an illusion of presence and consciousness where there is temporal and spatial deferment.

Decentering the subject introduces the notion that the subject is not the locus of understanding. The displacement of the present and effect of mediation on consciousness both weaken a view of the holistic and clearly bounded cognitive universe of the human agent. This is replaced by the notion of the human agent as a system of relations. A post modernist/post structuralist reading can sensitise an interpretation to the degree necessary to provide an alternative viewpoint of what may otherwise be seen as a neutral process of selection of words, phrases, tropes and metaphors.

Freedom as freedom-from-control is an important concept in the understanding of why many Travellers 'take to the road'. Heterotopias are defined by Foucault [1986:64]) as "something like counter sites", and "as a kind of effectively enacted utopia" (Hetherington 1993:3). They are yet another way to interpret the emergence of Traveller lifestyle and identity as a way of coping with the post-modern condition. (see Hetherington 1993). The notion however, that New Age Travellers are simply tourists on

vacation from modernity perhaps stretches the importance of the concept of post modernity in explaining New Age Traveller identity.

If cities are dystopian reminders of the failed project modernity, then the countryside is perhaps an arcadian refuge for many Travellers as a practical and symbolic alternative. However, the migration by many Travellers to the countryside is not without its problems: it is the development of these 'problems' and the reaction of Travellers to them which is at the heart of this thesis

### **Land, the city, the countryside and sedentarism**

Land ownership and the use of land are pivotal to an understanding of why 'New Age Travellers' received such a violent reaction from the media, policy makers and in some cases, from landowners. New Age Travellers are essentially a bucolic phenomenon.

Most Travellers are people of the countryside and it is in the countryside that the issue of land use, a central issue to the social control of New Age Travellers, finds its sharpest relief. Changes in the use of the 'countryside' from the Middle Ages onwards have resulted in 'vagabonds from the country' and 'Masterless Men' (Beier 1985). These masterless vagabonds have caused fear for those with interests in property and city life. New Age Travellers remind us that the conflict that occurs between the settled community and nomadic people is still very much alive. Travellers can, in the context of a post-modern world, expose some of the dilemmas that face the police in their struggle to maximise resources in a world of increasing uncertainty and competing values. A set

of theories is needed to embrace the process by which conflict over the ownership of land can be placed and that can also encompass the consequences of such conflict.

It is important to record the echoes of the past in the contemporary relationship between nomadic and sedentary people. This will allow an understanding how particular manifestations of discriminatory legislative processes have recurred over time, re-emerging in revised forms. It will also provide some insight into the attempts to assimilate nomadic populations both on the grand scale and on more local levels. I believe it is equally important to see New Age Travellers (and society's reaction to them) in the context of a history of recurrent moral panics and political manipulation. This manipulation has been consistently centred on a vulnerable group, which is too often seen as an 'easy target'.

For this project I have chosen the key concept of social control to underpin its main thesis, as I believe that it remains the concept that best captures the wide range of issues and processes that will need to be examined. I have also chosen a theoretical approach based on an integration of theoretical perspectives in order to maximise the use of existing theories of crime and deviancy, some of which have previously seemed to be incommensurable (Garland 1990, Hester and Eglin 1992). This is not to be randomly eclectic for the sake of it but is designed to allow an examination of the multiplicity of meaning and aetiological relationships in the process of social control. It will draw on the major discourses of social control, consumerism, counter-cultural conflict, law making, the media and policing to examine how the current trends, modalities and styles

of social control can help provide a deeper understanding of society's reaction to this particular group.

### **Some theoretical perspectives on the media and deviancy**

Interest in the relationship between the media and 'deviance' is not a new one. Wilkins (1964), Gusfield (1967), Cohen (1967,1972) and Hall *et al* (1978) have applied interpretations to this relationship which have been described as a 'special relationship' in which deviance /crime play a particular role in the production of news whilst the media play a particular role in the creation of deviance. This central relationship in which the media provides or represents order is described below:

News of deviance and control represents order through constituting an active discourse about ordering activities of the people reported on. As such, news perpetually represents order- morality, procedural form, and social hierarchy- in ways that help people to order their daily lives. As an active *agency* of social control, stability and change, news representations provide people with preferred versions and visions of social order, on the basis of which they take action (Ericson 1991:3)

Cohen (1972) has proposed that, in industrial societies, the majority of information about deviant behaviour or groups is received 'second hand'. This information is processed by the mass media which in turn defines what is news and what is not, makes decisions about presentation, and further redefines news within the political and commercial constraints that act on it. Thus public opinion is shaped, not by first hand experience but by what *sense* the public can make of radio and television reports, local and national newspapers. These reports vary from time to time dependent on how they are packaged, the audience they are aimed at and the type of newspaper concerned. Generally however, when reporting a phenomena like, for example, the Mods, the Greenham Common Peace

Camp or New Age Travellers, the general message appears to be one of concern. Cohen describes a process by which the media leave a general feeling of anxiety about a newly exposed problem, a problem brought to the attention and in some respects 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)

This focus on sensational crimes and scandals is not solely an attempt to entertain but provides normative contours. These contours inform society about what is right and what is wrong, about the boundaries beyond which one should not venture and about the shapes that the 'devil' can assume.

Hall *et al* (1978) focusing specifically on the creation of 'the mugger' describe the 'mapping of meaning' undertaken by the media by which news items are made sense of, based on a number of assumptions. Most significant of these assumptions is the assumption of the consensual nature of society, an assumption that can, in turn, help to construct and reinforce an image of social consensus. The difficulty in taking one perspective or one central value system is, of course, that it denies the presence of more than one.

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 is* significant events are taking place, but, also they offer powerful interpretations of *how* to understand these events (Hall *et al* 1978:57).



In their essentially Marxist reading, Hall *et al* describe the process of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ definers of social events refuting simplistic theories of conspiracy between capitalist interests and newspaper ownership. The consistent reliance on the expert, the MP or Trade Union leader provides an ‘institutional spokesman’.

The result of this structured preference given in the media to the opinions of the powerful is that these ‘spokesmen’ become what we call *primary definers* of topics (1978: 58).

Primary definers then provide a ‘primary interpretation’. The significance of this is that having interpreted the event or the phenomenon, it becomes difficult to introduce a wholly new definition to counter the definition. Put another way, once the agenda is set, it is only within limited boundaries that the discussion is seen as legitimate. An example of this process might be to posit the question “how do we ensure that New Age Travellers don’t overwhelm the police at Stonehenge during the Summer Solstice” rather than to ask why the police should be there in the first place, or why access has been denied. The debate is thus narrowed down to the effectiveness of police tactics, a focus on incidents of violence etc., rather than broader issues that may lie deeper in a more general debate.

Hall *et al* suggest that it is not the media themselves who are the primary definers, but their sources. As a result of the structural relationship between media and their sources (who reflect the dominant ideology), the resulting process ends up fulfilling Marx’s prediction that ‘the ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of its ruling class’. This particular process may raise slightly differing but nevertheless related issues in the case of New Age Travellers compared say to the creation of the ‘mugger’ as, in many ways,

the prejudices that are directed to New Age Travellers are different. It draws from the prejudices of xenophobia, sedentarism, 'youth out of control', drug misuse and the creation of a much less palpable 'concern' associated with general issues of public order.

This interpretation of the media role as representing the opinions of the powerful based on a perspective of structural conflict adds a degree of understanding to some of media coverage of New Age Travellers in the last ten years or so. This ideological role of the media however, is problematised if we consider alternative explanations of power relationships. An incredulity towards meta-narratives, the 'hollowing out of the State' or the concept the 'micro deposits' of power, undermine Marxist interpretations that rely too strongly on defined class relations placed within a positivist tradition. The media have an interpreting role as well, particularly in respect of selectivity, the coding of information into a particular language form, its 'form of address' to its public. It is suggested by Hall that whilst there may be a myriad of different public idioms there remains more in common between, for example, *The Daily Mirror* and *The Times* than may, at first, seem apparent. Hall *et al* suggest that within a fairly narrow band of language, dominant and consensual connotations remain. This aspect of the press coverage will be examined in relation to the 'New Age Travellers'.

Chibnall (1977) by exploring the structuring of news from interviews with reporters and police provides us with a *Laissez-faire* /Marxist duality and at the same time challenges both. Whilst acknowledging that media interpretation of reality is "a process which

exhibits patterned regularities governed by a consistent set of interests” (1977: 207) he nevertheless criticizes Marxist analyses of mass communications in that they,

tend to be bedevilled by a limited problematic in much the same way as social science analyses. We might say that the difference is that social science research often fails to see the wood for the trees while Marxist approaches rarely give one the impression that the wood is composed of trees at all (1977: 207).

As he reminds us, with reference to Gramsci and Althusser, that the ideological apparatuses of the state are many and varied and are deeply embedded within society’s cultural discourses. Ideologies and thus media narratives do not owe their existence to

a small number of cynical men who base their domination and exploitation of the people on a falsified representation of the world which they have imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating imaginations. (Althusser 1971)

Reiner (1997:220) focusing more specifically on crime rather than general deviance as such, classifies the ‘crime-news-as-hegemony-in-action’ debate as falling into three broad categories

a *The political ideology* of the press, where the viewpoint takes for granted “certain broad beliefs and values, those of moderate the middle-of-the-road majority opinion”

b *The elements of newsworthiness*, i.e. dramatisation, immediacy personalisation and titillation which can trivialise ideological conflict and lastly

c *Structural determinants of News making* as McNair would have it Journalists are not necessarily biased towards the powerful - but their bureaucratic organisation and cultural assumptions make them conduits of that power (1993 :43).

Reiner suggests that recent studies have tended to qualify the deterministic implications of the hegemonic model without overthrowing their fundamental implications thus reinforcing the views expressed by Chibnall by reference to Althusser.

Lastly more recent studies, notably Schlesinger and Tumber (1994) suggest that there is more diversity in the coverage of crime and deviance than a simplistic hegemonic version would suggest and that groups critical to the establishment do have a substantial voice in the debate. This expression of the 'alternative view' was found in the press coverage of New Age Travellers. Many examples occurred where the position of New Age Travellers is eloquently explained and defended by journalists of *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and even *The Financial Times* and *The Evening Standard*. Some articles analysed the role which the media as a whole has played in exacerbating problems associated with the friction between New Age Travellers and mainstream society. Related to this, Thompson (1995) notes the erosion of space time 'distanciation' in respect of the reporting of 'crime' and Osborne (1996) notes the quickening circle between representations of crime and the fear of crime into what may be described as the 'hyperreal'.

The implications of post modernity lead to the consideration of postmodernism and more specifically post-structuralism in the context of the media/ deviance relationship. It is here that Alison Young's analysis of the press narrative concerning the Greenham Common women provides an interesting and very helpful perspective. Alison Young's account of the media coverage of the Greenham Common women (1990) applies a post-

structuralist reading to the press narrative. Whilst acknowledging the relational matrix of the press as an institution and the 'Dominant Order' as represented by the government and the pro-nuclear lobby, Young maintains that previous work on images of crime have been derived from a restricted perspective. She does however, concede that the media created a myth; in this case a mythology that elaborated various aspects of womanhood. She states that too often media representations stop at a consideration of 'content', 'data', 'themes' and 'images' (1990: 105). As an alternative to previous studies however, she advocates an analysis of 'representation' of crime as, "...not simply a collection of 'images' (content based) but an adventure into the influence of structure" (1990: 89).

In describing her approach, Young outlines why she rejects a more conventional approach using examples from Broadbent (1983) and Hollingsworth (1986) whom together, she suggests, present a process of 'revelation'.

The notion of a 'distorted public image' predicates the existence of a previously unsullied identity, a 'natural' Being; which is taken up by the journalist and twisted, distorted or repressed. The driving force ... is a desire to demonstrate the times at which such distortion, misrepresentation or suppression occurred. The punch line or conclusion of the story in this genre of media studies is always a *revelation*: the 'real person' under the pile of press pretence, the alternative point of view, the unadulterated version. In my own reading, I have tried to avoid any recourse to any hypothesis of distortion or repression.... I want to come to terms with what might be the potential '*truth*' (1990: 43).

This is a similar point made by McRobbie and Thornton (1994) who criticise notions of reality as simply other versions, impregnated with the mark of the media rather than somehow pure and untouched (1994: 571). Thus in Young's subjective journey to

discover the potential truth in the narrative, the use of metaphor becomes a central theme of her post-structuralist reading. The successful metaphor reduces the importance of the dissimilarity and plays on the similarities. When this process takes place, because there is no limit to the effect of accentuating similarity and eliminating dissimilarity, a process of selection can occur.

### **A post-structuralist /postmodernist reading**

As I have mentioned earlier, the terms post-structural and postmodern are difficult to define. It is worth noting however, that reliance on metaphor as an 'analysis focus' has the potential weakness of assuming that the message given out is the message received; there is no guarantee of this. For example, references to dirt and squalor as a neutralising message levelled against those who claim to champion 'Mother Earth' may not work on those who are predisposed to believe in the underlying cause that is being championed. They may see through the ploy and thus disregard the narrative as a trick of the 'gutter press'. It may also simply 'pass over the head' of many readers. We cannot be sure of the effectiveness of metaphor but from the public opinion survey, undertaken later in this project, there is some evidence that these metaphors do influence the public opinion of New Age Travellers.

### **Public opinion theory**

Gamson (1992) claims that much of the literature on public opinion is misleading particularly in the context of the public's understanding of politics. He quotes Converse (1975) as an example of this:

surely the most familiar fact to arise from sample surveys in all countries is that popular levels of information about public affairs are, from the point of view of the informed observer, astonishingly low (Converse 1975: 79).

Iyengar (1991) in a similar vein is quoted as thus:

The challenge of public opinion research has been to reconcile the low levels of personal relevance and visibility of most political issues with the plethora of issue opinions...that large proportions of the population profess to hold. How do people manage to express opinions about civil rights legislation, economic assistance for the newly freed nations of eastern Europe, or President Bush's performance at the International Drug Summit, when these matters are so remote from matters of daily life and so few citizens are politically informed (Iyengar 1991:7).

Generally, Gamson criticises these accounts which imply the overall confusion of the population by an ever increasingly influential media. Gamson is also implicitly critical of those theoretical analyses that fail to verify their claims on how particular messages are interpreted without input from the public, on whose behalf they speak. In Gamson's analysis the following assumptions are made:

- a. People are not so passive
- b. People are not so dumb
- c. People negotiate with media messages in complicated ways that vary from issue to issue.

In this account, I hope to be guided by these principles. In one sense this project is informed by the need to verify public opinion but does not go as far as adopting the particular methodological approach adopted by Gamson.

## **Policing theory and recent history**

The relationship between the powers of the monarchy (and the law) with the authority of the constable is a long tradition stretching back to the middle ages. The development of the police as “part of a modernist power/knowledge nexus” (McMullan 1998:93) also owes a great deal to what happened in the countryside in the 1600’s and the subsequent reaction of the settled community to paupers and their families, vagrants, Gypsies, rogues, vagabonds and idle (Colquhoun 1800). For Colquhoun, at the turn of the last century, the role of the police was to civilise the homeless vagrant. However, this need to control vagrants can be traced back to a number of factors discussed earlier such as increases in population, and in agricultural technology, rearrangement of landed property and the rapid expansion of cities. This in turn, led to the sudden appearance of masterless men, the influx of the ‘sturdy vagabond’ and the appearance of the illegal underworld over a hundred years before Colquhoun’s ‘police machine’ was envisaged. Colquhoun’s ‘police machine’ would ensure *inter alia* the enjoyment of property; it is this threat to the enjoyment of property that make the concepts of land and law inextricably linked to policing and social control.

Changes in the use of the countryside resulting in ‘vagabonds from the country’ can be seen as being responsible for stimulating the development of modern policing. New Age Travellers in the context of a postmodern world, expose some of the dilemmas that face the police in their struggle to maximise the effectiveness of resources in a world of increasing uncertainty and competing values.



The relationship between the development of the constable and the magistrate as symbols of public order has been covered extensively in the criminology literature. (Hay 1975, Hobbs 1988). It was as recently as 1829 that the first unified body of state employees concerned primarily with social control was established in the formation of the Metropolitan Police. (Miller 1977). This was seen as a reaction to the threat of the mob in 19th century London and a need to control London's vast army of casual workers. The history of the development of the police force in England and Wales is well documented. See Radzinovitz (1948-68) Thompson (1974), Hay (1975) and Critchley (1976) and Hobbs 1988) and it is worth remembering that the idea of a police force was not a popular one and occurred only as the result of protracted conflict to be eventually established by Robert Peel in 1829.

The reason for this strong opposition, mainly from the middle classes, was the fear that the police force would operate like the *Mouchards* of the Marquis d'Argenson who penetrated lower class criminal gangs and provided the precedent for French policing techniques. This led the way to the development of the *Agent Provocateur* by the notorious Lieutenant Fouché, whose method relied heavily on a network of informants (Hobbs 1988). The 'Popay' affair in 1833 in which a police *agent provocateur* was employed to infiltrate the National Political Union increased the public's concern about a direct threat to liberty.

### **Recent changes in public order policing**

It is in public order policing that the relationship between Travellers and the police is most visible and problematic. Public order policing is also a subject that has recently been exposed to some robust debate between the 'critical consensus' and Peter Waddington (Waddington D. 1998). Whilst agreeing with the 'critical consensus' i.e. recognising the police's role in generating public disorder, (see Appendix III for evidence of this) there are some helpful points made by Peter Waddington which will be included in the discussion below. Public order policing, as noted by Peter Waddington (1994b), has characteristics that set it apart from routine policing. It is highly visible and is also normally in the form of 'corporate action' under the command of senior officers. It is mainly concerned with encounters between police and non criminals and lastly incidents are generally more likely to be contested as often two or more conflicting views emerge as how events took place.

Perhaps, due to the fact that public order policing is a corporate action, the police commanders are, according to Peter Waddington, very aware of the trouble that can arise from confrontations both at the time and during the 'post-mortem' stage of a public order confrontation. Waddington therefore argues that, against the popular idea that police are more confrontational, quite the opposite is true. This view was particularly relevant between 1898 and 1980 when there was a transition from stoning and shooting to pushing and shoving.

It is in the last 25 years, according to David Waddington (1996:1) that British public order issues have undergone a 'remarkable transformation'. The expansion of the role of

the police in to the area of public order occurred in the 1970s with a sharp increase in the 1980s in the wake of yet more serious disorder. In 1972 the National Reporting Centre was established which received a certain degree of publicity in the miners' strike along with the Tactical Operations Manual (see Northam 1988) designed to be a guide for incidents of public disorder. The urban riots and the policing of the 'hippie' convoy of 1985 eventually lead to the 1986 Public Order Act; since then further refinement of a strategic response to public disorder by the police has occurred (Reiner 1992). Taking a wider perspective in the context of policing a post-modern society, Reiner describes the subtle shift in the nature of conflict between police and an ever increasing marginalised.

Police activity has always borne most heavily on the economically marginal elements in society, the unemployed (especially if vagrant) and young men, whose lives are lived largely in the street and other public places.... Whereas the historical incorporation of the working class modified their resentment of policing, police conflict with the residuum at the base of social hierarchy remained. Studies of policing in all industrial societies show this to be constant (Reiner 1992:771).

Whilst New Age Travellers represent a group in society which posses little economic or political influence and are perceived by many, as occupying the base of the social hierarchy.

### **A New form of Conflict**

The relationship between the police and New Age Travellers can be viewed against this background of public order policing, a crisis of public confidence in the police, the emergence of a number of fairly strong 'alternative' lifestyles and new forms of protest. The dramatic reforms that have been imposed on the police leave some commentators alarmed at the prospect of replacing a police system that seemed to work with an

organisation “combining the least attractive characteristics of the Gestapo and the Keystone Kops”(Reiner 1996:263). The problems that New Age Travellers bring to the police are both major public order issues, most notoriously the events at Castlemorton Common in 1992, but also the ‘day to day’ issues of eviction for illegal camping of small groups of Travellers. These two, seemingly unrelated issues, overlap in attempts to prevent public disorder and were brought together, in the legislative sense, in the CJ&POA. This Act provided Police with new powers to deal with hunt saboteurs, environmental protesters, animal rights activists and ravers. It is suggested by Waddington (1994) and King and Brearley (1996) that it was as a result of the changing face of public order issues from the monolithic to the diverse (expressed through contemporary protest) that the nature of public order policing itself changed. The trends included a more preventative or pre-emptive approach “based on tension indicators, intelligence gathering and surveillance, and negotiation and co-operation” (Waddington D. 1996:2).

### **Hippie origins: identity, lifestyle and the theory of sub-cultures**

It is my proposition that the chosen lifestyle and elected identity of New Age Travellers as a blend of both nomadic and counter-cultural tradition is central to understanding their social control. Travellers, like the rest of us, can be conceptualised as living in a ‘post-traditional social universe’ with fewer ‘tradition based’ constraints on behaviours than say forty years ago. As Giddens suggests,

the more post-traditional the settings in which the individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self identity (1991:81).

The lifestyles and identities of Travellers can therefore be seen not only as the target of control but, as importantly, representing the oppositional resistance to control. A focus on identity and lifestyle helps explain how the coercive methods are brought to bear on the travelling community.

The conceptual isolation of the 'New Age Traveller' as a problem-to-be-solved, together with the isolation of similar overlapping groups such as 'ravers' 'squatters' and 'hunt saboteurs' can be seen as another major factor in the social control dialectic and 'moving equilibrium' of an hegemonic process. I suggest that Traveller lifestyle and identity are a symbolic and oblique challenge to mainstream society in the sense that by rejecting consumerism they elude its obvious seduction. This symbolic threat is in addition to the material threat of Travellers-as-nomads in a country that is short of space and where the land is generally owned.

It is the emphasis of self-elective identity that is at the heart of Hetherington's (1994) description of Traveller 'sub culture'. This concept draws on the contemporary use of Schmalenbach's (1977) concept of the *Bund* as a way of describing affectual forms of solidarity which are seen as providing a more helpful viewpoint than the dualism of Tönnies's (1955) *Gemeinschaft/ Gesellschaft*. We are presented with a variety of potential identities both reactive and proactive to the economic, social and (later) the ecological environment, which can be seen as changing over time from 1975 to 1995. Hetherington (1994) argues that the notion of *Gemeinschaft* (based on traditional ties) does not go far enough in describing an association that recreates its own tradition. He

suggests the most significant aspect of *Bünde*, as a way of describing the New Age Traveller sociation (as opposed to *Gemeinschaft*) is the fact that it is consciously elective. Hetherington also draws on Maffesoli's (1988) and later Bauman's (1992) concept of the 'Neo-tribe' and Victor Turner's (1955,1969) *Communitas* to describe what he sees as a 'de-traditionalized' association. New Age Travellers lifestyles are, to Hetherington, derived from emotional and empathetic identification with like-minded others. New Age Traveller identity is thus for Hetherington, a chosen one; they choose their marginal, 'liminoid' identity and they choose their lifestyle. Whilst most would agree that in the earlier years this was an obvious feature, some would argue, notably Davis (1994) that the amount of choice became less in more recent years. The new, younger Travellers were simply making a choice about not living in cardboard boxes in the cities.

Hetherington (1994b) extends further that the process of identity formation amongst New Age Travellers, which he describes as liminal, i.e. produced through transgressive performances in chosen liminoid spaces. He suggests that the identities produced are 'heteroclitic' and the liminoid spaces can be conceptualised as 'Heterotopias'.

Heterotopia was originally an anatomical term referring to parts of the body that are missing, out of place or extra; Foucault used the term metaphorically in reference to the social body. Hetherington explores in greater detail the use of the term in the context of social space i.e. sites of 'Otherness' of whose existence sets up unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate 'objects' that challenge the way our representations are ordered. In his own words these 'neo tribes',

can be seen as a collective attempt to create distinctive subcultural identifications that provide the opportunity, through the totemic symbolism and empathic solidarity they offer, for members to establish a new identity (Hetherington 1994 b:3).

Hetherington (1994) places the identity very specifically on the edge of society emphasising the importance of the location of the Stonehenge festivals as particularly significant in the process of this new identity. For Hetherington, Traveller identity, like other contemporary sub cultures, is very much a postmodern phenomenon and a reaction to postmodernity. What makes New Age Travellers (and other contemporary groups) different from earlier groups, is the degree of choice that they have in “the media saturated, disembedded, chaotic and uncertain every day lives”(1994:4) that they lead. Hetherington goes on to claim that these heteroclitic identities are established through liminal rituals that embody carnivalesque transgressions of established norms

Hetherington is clear however, that this is not the creation of alternatives to society “but identities derived from conditions of uncertainty” (1994:28). This seems to be a similar notion to that of Musgrove who connects periods of economic growth with ‘dislocation’ and counter-cultures as recurrent reaction to this dislocation (Musgrove 1973, Johansen 1994). However, both Musgrove and Roszak saw the counter-culture very much as providing alternatives to society.

A post-traditional social universe opens up choice, but the range of choices are not open to everyone. Life chances are to some extent related to lifestyle and lifestyle variations between groups are elementary structuring features of stratification and not simply the

result of class differences in the realm of production (Bourdieu 1986). Thus lifestyle is both a reaction to economic position and a chance to ameliorate its worst effects. For whatever reason, be it rejection of tradition, the pluralisation of life worlds (Berger 1974), the age of uncertainty, or the prevalence of the mediated experience, there is now more choice available in the construction of self identity. Lack of tradition also allows, as never before, the adoption of lifestyle as a reaction to poverty and a rejection of the traditional lifestyle that poverty homelessness and unemployment would prescribe.

### **Hippie ideology**

Stuart Hall maintained that:

Despite their apparently patternless eclecticism, the latent value system of Hippie society can be seen as a direct dialectical contraposing of alternative values to the sacred values of the middle class (Hall 1968:7).

The Hippies and the newer Travellers share many characteristics, these include themes such as the nomadic way of life, the movement, both physical and intellectual, from urban to rural environment, mysticism, criticism of the 'protestant work ethic' and the cultural significance of drugs. Whilst most hippies were, in fact, urban (originally based in San Francisco), the pastoral theme was of great significance. It symbolised a rejection of all that was wrong with middle class suburbia, paid work and 'technology'. It is perhaps more correct to say that hippie ideology embraced Arcadia which itself can be conceptualised as an escape from the 'real' world as much as attempt to find a real alternative. Arcadia, like travelling itself, is as much a state of mind as longing for the apparent simplicity of things pastoral. In Britain the opportunities for living out this lifestyle were and still are hampered by the very different geographies of Britain and the



United States. However, it was this physical expression of this rejection of materialism and the development of the festival scene that led to the origins of the Traveller lifestyle.

Elective poverty too was a conscious rejection of the protestant work ethic and consumerism. Hall makes the point that if we were to compare American hippies with their British counterparts, the most striking fact would be the emphasis upon assumed poverty amongst the Americans, the identification with the 'poor'.

For Musgrove (1974), the hippies represented the main component of the late sixties counter-culture (the other being the political left wing student resistance culminating in demonstrations in Paris 1968). It was, for him, characterised not by an Apollonian / Dionysian split within the movement between 'heads' and 'freaks' but as the Dionysian counterpoint to Apollonian 'straight' society. Musgrove saw the rise of counter cultures as directly relational to economic order suggesting that during periods of economic revolution there was often a flourish of counter cultural activities. In his words, "Order and frenzy are closely interlinked" (Musgrove 1973:55). "Counter culture values emerge in a context of rapid population growth, economic expansion, and consequent dislocation" (1973:34). He suggests that the counter culture of the late sixties was similar to reactions to the Neolithic revolution, the eleventh century industrial revolution and the commercial revolution of the sixteenth century and the classical industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. He depicts nineteenth century romanticism as being strikingly similar to contemporary counter culture in its explicit attack on technology, work, pollution boundaries, authority, the un-authentic, rationality and the family.

Roszak's seminal work on the counter-culture which both analysed and endorsed the counter-culture movement was also an inspiration for the movement. Roszak placed the hippies in direct opposition to technocracy by which he meant

that social form in which an industrial society reaches the peak of its organisational integration (1970:5).

Roszak's generally sympathetic analysis challenged the unquestioned imperatives of the modernising process suggesting that many of the promises of technocracy were unfulfilled. Roszak categorised a number of influences on hippie ideology namely the effect of eastern philosophy such as Zen and Taoism through the influence of Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*, Allen Ginsberg and Alan Watts and the influence of hallucinogenic drugs through the experiences of Timothy Leary. To this list he adds Aldous Huxley's search for Utopia through the anarchist works of Paul Goodman, through experiencing communal living, an incredulity to the conventional scientific world view and lastly what might be described as 'romantic sensibility'. It is this last feature which resonates with the ideology of many the New Age Travellers. As Roszak puts it "Anything Blake ever wrote seems supremely relevant to the search for alternative realities".

Fred Davis provides a similar interpretation of the significance of hippie ideology.

There is as Max Weber would have put it, an elective affinity between prominent themes and styles in the Hippie sub culture and certain incipient problems of identity, work and leisure that loom ominously as western industrial society moves into an epoch of accelerated cybernation, staggering material abundance and historically unprecedented mass opportunities for creative leisure and enrichment of the human personality...the point is that the hippies, in their collective yet radical break with the constraints of the present society, are....

already rehearsing *in vivo* a number of possible solutions to central life problems posed by the emerging society of the future (Davis 1967a:7)

Again the emphasis is on the 'acting out' as in Alan Beam's account of his experiences in the British counter culture 'Rehearsal for the year 2000'. Willis' ethnographic study of a particular group of hippies in central England during 1970 provides another insight into the Hippie phenomena in Britain; it focused primarily on the identification of common ideology. Like Hall he concluded that hippie culture was making a criticism of the inner contradictions of modern capitalist societies and mocking "conventional reality".

In one sense the hippie movement of the late sixties and seventies in Britain was something of a faint echo of the 'American moment'. Ken Kesey's 'merry pranksters' were reincarnated in the form of the Beatles 'Magical Mystery Tour'. In Britain the process of incorporation had begun almost before the counter ideology. Willis (1977) observed the hippies were playing out what he described as an "immanent critique of the Protestant ethic" (1977: 173) by the exposure of the contradiction of material need and self-denial. He noted the strange cerebral hedonism with which these things were acted out. He saw the hippies as marking "a kind of eruption of the cultural id through the restrictive super ego of social convention" (1977: 174).

The phenomenon of the hippie counter-culture lay dormant or at least was forgotten in the UK for a number of years. McKay (1996) conjectures that this second wave of hippie culture manifested through the 'New Age Traveller /Festival scene' (and later, and more generally, through coalitions of protest) can be viewed as the continuing resistance of the

original counter-culture that originated in the late sixties. Certainly the political and social context in which the hippies found themselves was very different to that of post Thatcherism where dissatisfaction with the opportunities available to young people and their consequent alienation is more accentuated. This change in political context may have been responsible for the second wave of resistance/rejection resulting in an equally threatening critique of 'straight' society, in general and the Thatcherite ideologies of home ownership and popular capitalism.

Whilst hippie culture grew alongside feminism there is little evidence that hippie men had 'progressive' views about women or that contemporary research was, to any great degree, sensitive to issues of gender. This criticism is true of much subcultural research for example the CCCS has been criticised for neglecting "sub-cultures whose membership is largely female" (Widdicome and Wooffitt 1995). The sexist views of hippies provides some contrast to punk culture and the link between the women at Greenham and the Peace Convoy of 1982 although some contemporary research suggests that some things never change (See Hetherington 1994). Willis (1976) in his description the role of women in "hippie culture" refers to them thus:

They had a place which was certainly different from, and usually inferior to men. They could be most fulfilled it was thought, by living out what was taken as their 'natural' and 'intrinsic' selves. Generally, the hippies distrusted the women's movement, and contrasted its ideals with their notion of the *natural* female and her organic role (Willis 1977: 128)

Willis's ethnographic material is worth quoting here as it exposed graphically a 'mid seventies hippie' discussion on this issue.

Les: ...women nowadays are trying to compete with men at their level but you know I don't think many head chicks do this.....

PW: I'm not quite with you.

Les: You know, women try to be sort of career women.

PW: Well how about equality?

Les: Crap, isn't it, you know.

Stuart: There's no such thing.

Val: If they were meant to be men, they'd be born men.

Les: Why be equal? Why not become complementary, I think it's just that these chicks are being screwed by some bastard in their earlier life, because they've got a very warped view of life in my opinion. You know, this is just my opinion, I mean if somebody had just gone to this chick when he first screwed her and screwed her with complete tenderness, and showed her the quality of fucking love as much as he could, they wouldn't have been freaking out all over the place, wanting equal fucking rights, you know. They just want to be into being women, because it's a beautiful fucking thing.

(1977: 128,129)

This contrasts with a view expressed by one of the original Dongas Tribe describing her experience at Twyford Down on the same issue.

when it actually happened...we did actually have time to hang out and enjoy ourselves really as well and talk a lot of ideology through and learnt to, like, live on the land and mostly there's meeting up with other sisters and that was a really big part of it. So we could...I think the men also were like... it was a fairly post-feminist thing in the sense that we ... we weren't going round saying we're a group of sisters and like "fuck off men!". The men were a part of it but we still had a strong sister bit as well. It was, the gender relations (that) were really, really balanced. It was not an issue I mean, but there was also the sense of men to make you aware of the patriarchal hierarchical shit that had been, that had made the system the way it was and the way. So there is a lot of critique of that at that so we'd sit up and talk all this stuff through (personal interview December 1998)

Above all other things the hippie movement was one of political resistance to 'mainstream' society and based on the rejection of 'straight' society. It offered solutions to what was perceived as the problems of a society based on capitalism, paid work, technology, routine and consumerism. The term hippie used to describe the movement

also has the problems associated with the 'metamorphosis' of the group and its internal 'inconsistencies'. Young (1973) classified the movement into three types and suggested a number of inconsistencies such as:

1. The rejection and simultaneous reliance on high technology goods
2. The dilemma of violent revolution as a means to reaching peaceful Arcadia
3. The contrast of the commercially orientated boutique owner with the digger communities and
4. An 'Apollonian / Dionysian' dichotomy described by Davis and Munoz (1968) as the dichotomy between 'heads' and 'freaks'.

These changes and the inconsistencies all contribute to the difficulty of capturing what is meant by the term Hippie as well as what is meant by their ideology. Even with these difficulties, the view that hippies played an important role in the development of the New Age Traveller phenomenon is inescapable. However to further understand the Hippies themselves and 'mainstream' reactions to them, they can be placed in a more general theoretical framework of sub-cultural theory.

### **Sub-cultures**

Well before the arrival of Ken Kesey's 'merry pranksters' (Wolfe 1967) American and British society had been aware of a number of youth sub-cultures. There has been much written in the field of deviancy relating to this. Other subcultural groups such as The Beats and Hipsters (Polsky 1971, Gans 1963, Jones 1975); The Bike boys (Willis 1977); The Teddy boys (Fyvel 1963); Mods and Rockers (Cohen 1972); Hell's Angels

(Thompson 1966); Skinheads (Clarke 1976, Davis 1990) and the Punks (Hebdige 1979, Cashmore 1984, Davis 1990, O'Hara 1995), have provided a model for analysis and inform us of the general contours of 'sub-cultural life'. More recently post punk groups such as the New Romantics, Goths, and Acid House (Redhead 1990), and the rave scene (Redhead 1993), have received the attention of 'cultural studies'.

Of these groups, some are constructed by the media and in public mind as 'gangs' for example the Skinheads, the Teddy boys and the Hell's Angels. Others, like the Beats and hippies, and to a lesser extent punks, are not. Whilst the study of subcultures can be traced back to the work of Mayhew (1851) and Archer (1865), who were among the first to attempt to describe the criminal underworld, the first 'scientific' studies were ethnographies undertaken by the Chicago School, for example Thrasher (1927) and Foote-Whyte (1955). These studies provided substantial descriptive detail but lacked theoretical analysis. In an attempt to provide an analytical framework, Albert Cohen (1955) suggested a system of 'substitution' whereby a choice of values in direct opposition to those of 'normal' society was made.

Dick Hebdige (1979) provides a further framework with which to look at the shape, origins and process of subcultural development. In Hebdige's account of subcultures, he constructs a theoretical basis for investigation drawing from the work of Roland Barthes and Ferdinand de Saussure to expose the 'arbitrary nature of cultural phenomena' and to uncover 'the latent meanings of an everyday life', which appear as natural or normal. Barthes (1972) 'Mythologies' exposed the assumptions of neutrality as potentially

flawed and proposed, through the route of language and semiotics, a way of reading cultural differences, meanings and significance more sensitively. Drawing on the work of Marx and Gramsci, Hebdige uses the concept of hegemony to explain the significance of non-coercive methods as a way of affecting the necessary control by the dominant class with the result that

...subordinate groups are, if not controlled, then at least contained within an ideological space which does not seem at all 'ideological': which appears instead to be permanent and 'natural', to lie outside history (Hebdige 1979 :16).

The effective containment of New Age Travellers within an ideological space remains a significant element of social control. Hebdige concludes this framework by introducing Lefebvre's (1971) notions of commodities that can be repossessed providing contradictions to the relationship between signs and objects. Hebdige (1979) suggests that it is an understanding of this process of contradiction that enables us to bring insight into the meaning of subcultures through style. In his words: "Style in subculture, is ...pregnant with significance...Its transformations go 'against nature', interrupting the process of normalisation." (1979:18). He suggests a theoretical basis to explain the need to control subcultural style as is a "a symbolic violation of the social order", and that therefore,

such a movement attracts and will continue to attract attention, to provoke censure and to act....as the fundamental bearer of significance in subculture.(1979:19)

Hebdige provides a sequential model by which the process, by which subcultural style is discovered, amplified and eventually 'incorporated' into mainstream culture. He



suggests that it is the subculture's style, which is first to attract media attention followed by deviant or anti-social acts. Either one or, more usually, both of these result in a moral panic reaction (Cohen 1972). However, the media are not only responsible for amplifying deviance they also define it in the context of "the dominant framework of meaning" (Hall 1977). This leads on to the process of 'incorporation' which assumes two characteristics; the 'commodity' and 'ideology' form. The 'commodity' form of New Age Traveller incorporation was felt in the exploitation by both the music and fashion industry of 'grunge' style and 'indie' music. Thus as the original innovations are translated they become 'frozen'. In an ironic twist The Levellers (described in 1994 as an acoustic punk band) who were followed by police apparently "telling venues there would be trouble if they put on the gig" eventually agreed to play at Glastonbury in the summer of 1994. They enjoyed huge support for opposing the Criminal Justice Bill that became fleetingly fashionable to a wider music audience.

The process of ideological form can be either to 'trivialise', 'naturalise' or 'domesticate' where the 'Other' is denied or alternatively the 'Other' can be transformed into "pure object, a spectacle, a clown" (Barthes 1972). This form allows the dominant culture to place a subculture out of the field of analysis. In the case of New Age Travellers the descriptions in the chapter on media provide numerous examples of this process. 'Scum' 'animals' even the tag 'New Age' all serve to both describe and to put beyond further description the groups identity and ideology. I would place this process of ideological containment through 'trivialisation' and 'domestication' under the heading of social

control, seeing it as simply one aspect of the wider process by which the threat of the New Age Traveller is neutralised.

**SECTION IV**  
**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**METHODOLOGY**

In the following account, I attempt to describe why it is that I have opted for a particular methodological approach. Essentially the approach was selected to allow a plurality of theoretical perspectives. In this chapter I will outline the case for this ‘triangulation’ with a brief discussion on the relationship between epistemology and methodology set in the context of the development of sociology. Finally I will outline the precise methods adopted in the research concluding with a discussion of the moral and personal dilemmas that a study of this type brings to the surface with particular reference to ethnography.

**A case for triangulation**

In the late 1950’s when the study of sociology was experiencing a major division in approach between high level abstraction and low level data Merton (1957) recommended the development of theories of the ‘middle range’. To counter the predicament that sociological theory was becoming bi -polar, Merton suggested the need for intermediate theories between the minor day-to-day working hypotheses and the all-inclusive master conceptual scheme (Merton 1957). Willner (1967) challenged Merton’s assumptions and concluded that the grand theory and microscopic statistical research are not end points in a single continuum but maintained that each ‘pole, represented different epistemic assumptions applicable to any scale or range of data. The debate emerging from what was essentially a clash of

research traditions i.e. 'quantitative,' versus 'qualitative' can be seen as representing an exaggeration of differences and an implicit antagonism which is often over stated. In many ways it is clear that epistemological differences are at the centre of the differences but that related 'technical' issues have a part to play in the major differences.

In her chapter on ethnographic fieldwork Judith Okely (1994) describes how it was only from the position of an 'insider', equipped with a range of memories and field notes of thousands of conversations and observations, that she was able to understand what would otherwise be hidden to the quantitative analyst. There are, of course, difficulties in what used to be described as 'going native' and thus seeing things only from the participant's perspective.

Quantitative research implies a well formulated theory, or concept, at the start of the research process for example in Hirschi's preface to *Causes of Delinquency* the preface starts with "In this book I attempt to test a theory of delinquency." (Quoted in Bryman 1988:97). On the other hand qualitative research can be described as being "concerned with the discovery a theory rather than the verification of a theory" (Filstead 1979:38). This division however, may not be as clear cut as it first appears as there are many examples of quantitative research that have developed theories as the research progresses often leading to the casting aside the original hypotheses. Whilst quantitative research tends to adopt a structured approach, qualitative research is often more open-ended. This is similar to the much quoted, and possibly misused, concept of grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967)

where theories are 'grounded' by evidence as the research continues. It is a possible strength of the qualitative research perspective that its direction can change in the face of the unexpected. Judith Okely (1994) gives an example of how, by chance discussions, she suddenly made the connection between Gypsy animal classification and the strict eating and washing taboos. The chance interpretation provided the stimulus for further research or a change in the identification of the original research areas.

There is need however, to be cautious in assuming that the boundaries of the qualitative and quantitative 'camps' are co-terminus with those of the nomothetic (seeking law-like findings) and ideographic (time and place specific) modes of reasoning. Whilst there is a general relationship between these two 'constructs', the claim that quantitative research is firmly set in the nomothetic tradition may be exaggerated.

Perhaps at the heart of the differences between the qualitative and quantitative methodology is the influence of phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism, which dictate that:

we cannot take for granted the availability of a preconstructed world of phenomena for investigation but must examine the processes themselves by which the world is constructed (Walsh 1972 :19).

Thus, more than lip service is paid to the notion of the social construction of reality by the qualitative researcher who questions the entire premise of the quantitative researcher in establishing arbitrary categories as a starting point.

Whichever position is adopted, there has tended to be a partisan approach adopted by some researches as to the weakness of the alternative view. Filstead describes the two positions succinctly:

Quantitative and qualitative methods are more than just differences between research strategies and data collection procedures. These approaches represent fundamentally different epistemological frameworks for conceptualising the nature of knowing social reality, and procedures for comprehending these phenomena (Filstead 1979:45).

Briefly from an epistemological view, quantitative researchers appear to be committed to a positivist approach. Those who subscribe to phenomenology or *verstehen*, would naturally be drawn to a qualitative approach in order to 'make sense' of the social reality from the perspective of rejection of the natural scientist's methods the subject.

Contrary to Walker (1985), who suggests that certain questions cannot be answered by quantitative methods while others cannot be answered by qualitative ones, Denzin (1970) provides an answer to the problem of mutual exclusivity by suggesting triangulation as an approach. Based on a concept borrowed from the field of surveying, triangulation attempts to combine a multiple approach in order to 'synergise' an understanding by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and subsequently comparing the various account with each other.

In the structuring of this research programme, I selected a triangulated approach in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the processes involved in the social control of New Age Travellers, using a triangulation of multiple theoretical

perspectives, multiple sources of data and multiple methodologies. Denzin (1970) suggests a number of ways in which triangulation can be used as a way of bringing together differing perspectives and methods. I have mentioned earlier that a number of authors have triangulated or at least integrated theoretical perspectives in order to reach a greater understanding of the 'social control' process. This has been variously described as a 'sociology of crime' in the case of Hester and Elgin (1992), an 'integrated theory of crime and recession' (Box 1987) or a variety of 'integrated interpretations of penalty' as described by David Garland (1990).

### **Multiple sources of data**

Fairly early on in the study I had intended to combine a number of research methods in order to examine the processes that might be involved. These methods include questionnaires to local populations, semi-structured interviews police officers, New Age Travellers and others who would have access to information particularly pertinent to the process.

In addition to this I envisaged the possibility of an involving participant observation of Travellers. The reasons for this approach are well rehearsed. The work of Willis (1978), Parker (1974) and Polsky (1967) have demonstrated like many studies of this nature that an ethnographic approach is particularly helpful when studying groups at the margins of society. In order to provide a perspective and context for this, I also intended to investigate secondary information sources such as the press coverage of the topic, criminal statistics, official documents such as DoE Circulars and the Official Reports of

the Houses of Lords and Commons. In addition to this I had envisaged a literature review focusing on the historical context of Gypsies, the Hippies of post 1967 and other sub-cultures including the development of what we now know as the 'DIY culture'. This plan was broadly followed.

## **Secondary data**

I had intended to examine criminal statistics as a way of assessing recorded crime attributed to New Age Travellers. This exercise would have been undertaken in full recognition that criminal statistics themselves cannot be taken as an indicator of criminal activity. Clearly they relate to those offences that are detected officially cautioned or prosecuted. However, government often quotes criminal in order to support a particular point of view or to rationalise tougher sanctions aimed at combating the 'crime wave'. In this case therefore it seemed important to check if there was any statistical correlation between the numbers of persons prosecuted for or cautioned for offences and areas where New Age Travellers had settled. This information in conjunction with direct interviews with police and possibly magistrates would help to establish what links there were, if any, between criminal activity and the need to introduce further public order legislation targeted at New Age Travellers

My first task would have been to simply analyse Home Office supplementary tables of Petty Sessional Division (Criminal Statistics England & Wales) in an attempt to establish a 'trace' of criminal activity that had been picked up by the Court system. Particular variances would be traceable either to specific police operations or the



general public's concern over criminal damage theft or burglaries. Interviewing appropriate Clerks to the Justices could then extend this information. In the event I was able to draw from Mike Brown's (1995) work in this area. His role as a serving police officer gave him access to police records in this area; his results demonstrated that there was little evidence of New Age Travellers impacting on recorded crime.

Within any model of the social control of New Age Travellers the media must rank high as an influencing factor both locally and nationally. (Wilkins 1964), (Gusfield 1967), (Cohen 1967,1972) and (Hall *et al* 1978) (Sumner 1982). The concept of the amplification of deviancy is well known (Cohen 1972), (Hall *et al* 1986) and is discussed elsewhere in this thesis. My purpose in examining media coverage of the phenomenon of 'New Age Travellers' was twofold:

- a) Using the press as an access to information about certain key events and
- b) Using the press to analyse the narrative.

In the first case I was concerned not to put too much weight on one source because of the possible effects of errors, both technical and due to carelessness in reporting.

Secondly the fairly obvious point that each newspaper was aimed at a particular audience meant that the 'factual information' needed to be treated with some added caution. The first step in the process of data collection was to determine the methods by which I could access media coverage of the subject. The British Humanities Index provided an index reference under the headings of 'New Age Travellers' 'Hippies' etc. but this was far from a comprehensive record serving more in the way of locating milestones in the brief history. The references could then be accessed and photocopied using the microfilm library of the 'broad sheet' newspapers.

Following on from this I was able to access news items, editorial comment and readers letters based around key events and dates, notably the summer solstice, The 'Battle of the Beanfield' and the eviction at Castlemorton Common. Subsequent to this, I accessed C.D. ROM copies of *The Guardian*, *The Times* and other 'Broadsheets, using keyword search to provide copies of articles relating to New Age Travellers.

Having visited the Save the Children Fund *Travellers Information Unit* in London and the Children's Society *Neighbourhood Development Project* in Midsomer Norton I was also able to access the Neighbourhood Development Project's collection of local and National Newspaper cuttings on the subject. The Travellers information Unit provided computerised records of articles and news items on the topic of Travellers. This had been established since 1991 and could be set selected for articles specifically to do with New Age Travellers. In addition to this many of the articles were available at the unit for photocopies. At both these location photocopies of dissertations, magazines and publications produced by New Age Travellers were also available. The cuttings and printouts were then checked against the SCF index and further searches undertaken where applicable. Lastly, *Friends and Families of Travellers* provided an additional library of information including press cuttings dissertations and so on. Mike Brown also kindly lent me his collection of newspaper cuttings on this subject.

Whilst textual analysis may be attractive as a method of analysis, it is not without its problems. This rather quantitative approach may not do justice to a full interpretation of the text. Weber (1990) describes content Analysis thus.

A central idea in content analysis is that the many words of the text are classified into much fewer content categories. Each category may consist of one, several, or many words. Words, phrases, or other units of text classified in the same category are presumed to have similar meanings. \* Depending on the purposes of the investigator, this similarity may be based on the precise meaning of the words (such as grouping synonyms together), or may be based on words sharing similar connotations - (such as grouping together several words implying a concern with a concept such as WEALTH or POWER). To make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent.”\* Meaning in this sense means shared meaning

An alternative approach to textual analysis would be to analyse text by attempting to ‘deconstruct’ its meaning: this was in fact the approach I selected. There are of course, problems with this approach too, not least the high degree of individual interpretation. However, this problem can be overcome by the study of text in its own social context. I decided that for the purposes of this investigation I would avoid a strictly quantitative content analysis in favour of exploring the press coverage of New Age Travellers both local and national, examining in detail the use of metaphor and identifying a number of themes (Young 1990).

### **Published material on Travellers**

Whilst New Age Travellers have received some considerable attention from the media the number of published works on Travellers is limited. Of particular note however, are Richard Lowe and William Shaw’s *Travellers* (1993), George McKay’s *Senseless Acts of Beauty* (1996) and Fiona Earle’s *A time to travel* (1994) all of which have been

referenced earlier in the text and provide useful insights into the Travelling scene. The contributions from Robbie McVeigh and Colin Clark in Thomas Acton's *Gypsy Politics and Traveller identity (1997)* provided up to date analyses of New Age Travellers in the context of sedentarism and control through the social security system. In addition to the published research there were a number of unpublished theses, dissertations etc., which contributed to an understanding of lifestyle and identity. Notably the many papers produced by Kevin Hetherington and Colin Clark on identity were helpful in situating this ethnographic study. So too has the research undertaken by Michael Brown, *Do Police Officers Base Their Assumption of New Age Travellers On Stereotypical Images Rather Than Empirical Evidence?* Correspondence with Brown resulted in accessing the completed questionnaires (distributed to 200 Travellers between 1994 and 1995) for further scrutiny and analysis. Prior to sending out the questionnaire Brown spent 7 months visiting a number of New Age Traveller sites. The Questionnaire was piloted and feedback given as to its effectiveness by Travellers. The questionnaire was distributed by *Friends and Families of Travellers*, a small charitable organisation, and to Travellers themselves. Brown received 75 completed questionnaires. The questionnaire is interesting as it addressed issues such as criminal involvement prior to travelling, harassment and reasons for travelling.

### Questionnaires

A questionnaire was used for the collection of data from local communities to gauge the opinion of individuals who may have had some contact with New Age Travellers. It was important to establish answers to the following questions:

- a) To what extent had the media, in respect to attitudes to New Age Travellers, influenced public opinion?
- b) To what extent had claims by central and local government to represent the concerns relating to Travellers been substantiated by the public themselves?
- c) What evidence was available on the nature and extent of problems caused by Travellers?

I felt that the relationship between the public, the media, the government and police would be significant in any analysis of social control and thus I felt that there was a need to test assumptions on public attitudes, beliefs and opinions. The design of the questionnaire provided an opportunity to examine the source of information on New Age Travellers for the sample population. It also gave an idea of the extent to which both local and national newspapers as well as television played a part in the amplification of concerns related to this 'deviant group'. The questions attempted to provide data for the analysis of attitudes and beliefs, factual information on 'problems' caused and biographic detail.

The design of the questionnaire was constructed in a way that threw up a number of supporting responses to a self-defined 'attitude' as well as eliciting factual information. Care was taken to construct the questions in a neutral way so as not to 'manufacture' an unintentional bias. New Age Travellers have not found much political support and it is difficult to imagine much pressure to 'give the right answer' with the general exception of a willingness of respondents to give an impression of kind benevolence, behind which may lie more accurate feelings.

The questionnaire comprised approximately 40 'closed' questions, focusing mainly on attitudes and beliefs rather than behaviour. In this element of the research I was dealing with generally less complex issues; the answers could be limited in number and the thus warranted such an approach. The first page, based on biographical information and behaviour, was designed to test the range of respondents and provide data to test the relationship between attitude and attributes of the sample population. Confidentiality and anonymity was assured if requested.

Regarding the attitudinal scales, these were developed from general discussions on New Age Travellers, consultation with my tutor and the responses from the villagers of Offchurch. In retrospect it may have been advantageous to test a number of constructs for their effectiveness in identifying polar positions; an analysis of the results demonstrated that the scales selected were, with some exceptions, helpful as tools for discerning general and specific attitudes.

The factual element of the questionnaire was designed to assess what actual nuisance the respondent (or someone known to the respondent) had directly experienced. Finally there was a section in the questionnaire which allowed respondents to provide their name and address, if they wished to be involved in a further, more 'in depth' interview. This was to help with the recruitment of a possible focus group if required at a later date.

Initially a pilot for the questionnaire was tested in the village of Offchurch. Offchurch is a small village near Leamington Spa in Warwickshire. New Age Travellers had been

camped on a dis-used railway embankment for about two years. This had attracted a fair amount of media attention and a result of this, I had selected the site for the first study. The site was also relatively near to Birmingham.

Regarding the selection of interviewees, I was concerned to establish respondents that were representative of a particular group of society i.e. those with a relatively high probability of contact with New Age Travellers and at least some exposure to local media interest. I required the sample to 'fit' a theoretical framework based on a model of public opinion - media interest - police interest - political legislation, and thus, to use the term coined by Glaser & Strauss (1967). This was essentially 'theoretical sampling' rather than meeting the need of statistical adequacy of the sample *per se*. The technique falls broadly under the heading of a 'purposive' or 'non-probability' sampling technique. Thus, whilst it was important to maintain reliability through the construction of the questions and developing a statistically significant sample (approximately 350 completed questionnaires), my main emphasis was in the process of defining the sample. The sample was thus located in Leamington where local Travellers had received local, national and indeed international interest. Within this constraint I required a balance of biographic profiles to provide data for further examination and analysis to test the different attitudes between men and women and to generate a representative sample with a potentially wide range of views.

The interviewers were asked to seek out a range of respondents of different ages, gender, class and race. The sample was intended to provide a spread of ages and social class which would be representative of the population of Leamington as a whole. The inherent

bias of a quota sample was offset by the fact that inferential statistics were not going to be drawn from the data. Instead the representativeness of the quota would be used by comparing the sample with known population characteristics, using characteristics other than those specified in the quota controls. Leamington at the time of the survey had a population of approximately 42,000 of which 89% are White, 8% Asian and 1% Black. Further demographic information is described below.

In the case of the survey held in Leamington Spa, the questionnaires were presented by a number of volunteer assistants who were mature sociology students at Solihull College. It was agreed that a range of 'dress codes' would be appropriate in order to reduce the likelihood of respondents assuming that the interviewers were biased towards or against Travellers based on the interviewers appearance. The questionnaires were aimed at local residents who had direct or indirect experience of New Age Travellers. Leamington is a fairly prosperous town. The interviewers filled in the questionnaires for the interviewees and were able to clarify any ambiguities that arose.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

These were undertaken for different reasons. Firstly I wanted to get detailed information on how the police had perceived the problem of New Age Travellers. An interpretation of the police attitudes and beliefs was essential in putting together how ideologies and coercive methods of social control were operationalised in practice. I was also interested in the strategic response of police forces and their view of the events that had occurred in the recent history of New Age Travellers. I had ruled out



the use of structured interviews as I felt they would not allow the flexibility to probe an answer. This method was used by Fielding (1988) in his research on police socialisation where he noted of the interviews “They were semi-structured by a thematic guide with probes and invitations to expand on issues raised” (Fielding 1988:212)

In the case of the interviews of both police and the Travellers, there was a need to allow the answers themselves to prompt further investigation. I had also ruled out, at this stage of the research, the non-standardized or unstructured interview, as there was an element of comparative study between the constabularies selected. This leaning towards non-standardisation reflected the sensitive nature and complexity of the respective subject matter.

Clearly this was to be an overt study with limited access in the case of interviewing the police and other possible ‘controllers’. There is much research, which demonstrates the difficulty of undertaking empirical research on the powerful or elite, for example (Spencer 1973, Cohen and Taylor, 1977 and Winkler 1987). Most empirical research is according to Bell “Done *on* the relatively powerless *for* the relatively powerful” (Bell 1978: 46).

This particular research included a focus on the powerful, (from the perspective of New Age Travellers) as well as the (relatively) powerless. The first problem to solve in the process of collecting primary data was therefore one of access to those who may have little incentive to waste their time talking to researchers. In the case of

Wiltshire I had previously established contact with a Chief Inspector in my professional capacity and decided to approach him directly. Some years later, my job as County Community Safety Co-ordinator in Warwickshire provided a number of additional contacts and an easing of access for taped interviews. In the case of an interview with Hampshire Police I was able to interview the Deputy Chief Constable as he had an interest in Gypsies and had been personally involved in some conflict with New Age Travellers. In most cases I secured permission to tape the interviews well in advance. This did not appear to be a problem perhaps due to the familiarity the police have with recording interviews as a result of their experience subsequent to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Regarding interviewer effects, there is evidence that suggests that the response people will give can be significantly shifted depending on who is asking the questions. My intention therefore was to 'match' myself as far as possible with the interviewees. At first glance this seemed a fairly difficult task as the interviewees themselves represented significant differences in their view of the world. However, to some extent this was achieved by conforming to norms of 'dress code' as well as emphasising professional interest in the context of the police interviews. Certainly sharing a professional interest in crime reduction not only increased the ease of access, it provided a fairly relaxed atmosphere which I believe led to an increase in openness.

I decided not to pilot the interview schedule as I my intention was to allow myself a fair degree of flexibility in probing and follow up questions. Regarding the

transcription of the text it seemed advantageous to produce a *verbatim* transcription based on tape recordings of the interview. Whilst this is a laborious task I was aided by access to word processing equipment which was invaluable to the editing process and much more significantly, occasional clerical assistance in the drafting of the interviews. Thus a professional typist undertook a number of the transcriptions, with my role being primarily editing of the first drafts.

### **Ethnographic research**

The tradition of the Chicago school, committed as it was to an 'appreciation' of the underworld, set the scene for modern ethnographic studies by taking a naturalistic approach from the early anthropologists and refining the principles included the concept of understanding the symbolic world in which people live. More recently Judith Okely (1994) has produced a number of arguments outlining the benefits of the ethnographic approach in her research on Gypsies. Her concluding paragraph is particularly helpful in summing up these benefits.

The Research has combined action and contemplation. Scrutiny of the notes offers both empirical certainty and intuitive reminders. Insights emerge also from the subconscious and from bodily memories, never penned on paper. There are serendipitous connections to be made, if the writer is open to them...The author is not alienated from the experience of participant observation, but draws upon it both precisely and amorphously for the resolution of the completed text Okely (1994:74).

As New Age Travellers are subject to prejudices of sedentarism combined with a general disregard of the hippy counter-culture, it was extremely important for this research to obtain first hand experience of the travelling lifestyle. It was also important to obtain first

hand experience of the difficulties that they face in attempting to live their lives in the way in which they had chosen.

In addition to the main ethnographic work I undertook some additional background research which I felt would increase my understanding of events. In order to experience a rave first hand I attended the *Big Sexy Festy Party* 10/11 May 1997. Arriving early provided me with the opportunity to help set up some of the equipment and discuss the research. Later that year, through a police who had been seconded to Alderney in the Channel Islands, I was also able to visit the unique Alderney equivalent of a rave. This was a 'bunker party' held in a disused German bunker built during the last war. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act is not applicable on Alderney and thus raves as such are not illegal. The police tolerated these small-scale informal parties.

During the study period two visits in 1995 and 1997, (one week and two weeks respectively) were made to Tenerife in the Canary Islands during which time I lived in 'caves' adjacent to a type of 'bender community' that had been established overlooking the resort of *Las Americas*. In addition to this I visited what was described locally as a 'hippie community' near the small village of *La Caletta* on the Island of Tenerife. Whilst the latter appeared to be similar to the bender community near Pilton, but with significant differences, the former was a much looser association of individuals from across Europe that were united by homelessness and a shared method of income generation. Another example of the chance opportunity was the meeting up with the *Desert Storm* rig on the way to the 'Reclaim the Streets' party in Bristol and an opportunity to discuss and experience a 'Reclaim the Streets, event.

For the main element of the ethnographic research I set out to spend as much time as possible living with Travellers for the period from May to December 1997. Having made the first contact with the bender community at King's Hill, I regularly visited the site in Somerset, normally arriving late Friday and leaving on the Sunday afternoon. During my stay I recorded notes of conversations thoughts and some descriptive work on the site and relationships that I observed. I also taped ten interviews with the people living or visiting the site. These ranged from 20 minutes to one hour in length. I was open about my purpose for being there and by the end of the study period I feel I was fairly well accepted by the community. For much of the time I was based at the guest bender which was occupied by one of the residents. This provided me with the opportunity to develop a very helpful relationship and an opportunity to reflect on some of the experiences and observations I had made. During the autumn and winter, with only candlelight available, the environment was extremely conducive to long discussions, some of which were nothing to do with travelling or Travellers but a lot to do with ideology, religion and philosophy. I also managed to undertake participant observer research at the Paradise Quarry near Shepton Mallet, a week with the Dongas Tribe in Cornwall and limited visits to Sam's site near Glastonbury. Looking back, the process was not as organised as I had originally anticipated and on more than one occasion a chance meeting led to a series of events that 'opened doors' which otherwise may have remained shut.

## **Conclusion**

The study of the social control of 'New Age Travellers' has a richness of perspectives that can provide useful signposts to help in the construction of a

methodology. In line with a growing consensus, in the field of sociology, I opted for a multi-faceted approach to this study, drawing together different theoretical perspectives and research methods once seen as incommensurable. I believe that in order to understand the multiplicity of interpretations of social control, the roles played by the different actors and their relationship to each other, a triangulated view in terms of both method and theory, provided the most appropriate approach.

There remain a number of moral and personal dilemmas associated with this research. Most fundamentally, the question whether it is possible to reach a state of academic neutrality in a study of this type. The proposal to undertake ethnographic research into the lives of the controlled and at the same time, with total 'objectivity', examine the mechanisms of the controllers may not actually be possible. For both the semi-structured interviews and the ethnographic research there were occasions when trust and respect seemed to take precedence over a search for neutrality. By setting up the research on the premise that there may a number of interpretations of 'the phenomenon' some of which are have little to do with actual events or behaviours, I hope to have kept close to the line of academic neutrality if indeed there is such a thing. In addition to this, by bringing into the analysis a number of perspectives and methods this may have the effect of both exposing otherwise hidden truths, subsumed by dominant discourses and at the same time, by giving ear to the many voices, provide a structurally balanced methodology.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## CHAPTER SIX

### MEDIA IMAGES

The press narrative of New Age Travellers has developed over a number of years and like many similar stories it seemed to be left unfinished. However, events such as the CJ&POA and the coalitions that formed to oppose the legislation prevented that 'freezing in time' that is characteristic of the press coverage of deviant groups or subcultures. This allowed reporters to dip into events as though they happened yesterday whilst simultaneously suffering from what Young (1991) has described as a selective amnesia.

The following is a brief description of how the narrative unfolded between 1985 and 1994. At first, coverage tended to focus on the events around Stonehenge. This became an annual feature and could broadly be described as the "Hippies try to get to Stonehenge story". The initial momentum for this coverage can be clearly traced to the so-called 'Battle of the Beanfield' and to the public order legislation that followed in 1986. News centred on the fact that either there was a violent confrontation or there was not; both outcomes appeared to be worthy of a report. It was usual at this period to see a large number of photographers and reporters at the perimeter of the stones around the summer solstice. The term hippie (often spelt hippy) slowly evolved into New Age Traveller as a way of describing the group. In 1985 the Peace Convoy was described as a group of 'hippies'. By 1986 *The Guardian* referred to the group as the 'hippy convoy', although *The Telegraph*, reporting an attempt to congregate at Stonehenge referred to the "self styled 'peace convoy'". \ *The Independent* in an article 'Druids celebrate amid disorder'



on 22nd June 1987 referred to 'hippies' and 'hippy *manques*' whereas *The Telegraph* in the article entitled 'Fewer arrests as hippies are let into Stonehenge' referred simply to hippies through out the article. By the summer of 1988 a number of terms were being used in the media to describe events around Stonehenge and the Summer Solstice. In *The Guardian* (18th June 1988), 'Stonehenge convoy clash with Police' the terms 'convoy Travellers', Travellers, and convoy people are all used. A year later the press coverage of Stonehenge varied its choice of words. The article 'Police defend Stones action' (*Guardian*, 22nd June 1989) used the word 'Travellers' throughout. An article in *The Independent* on the same day, '250 hippies held as Stonehenge is blocked off' used both Travellers and 'hippies'. *The Telegraph* also used Travellers and hippies. The term hippie remained in the tabloid press up to 1994 but was less prevalent in the broadsheets after 1990. It was in *The Guardian*, (Society tomorrow), that an article, written by John Vidal, appeared on 19 August 1987 entitled "Glastonbury comes of Age which first referred to 'New Age children' who had come to Glastonbury to celebrate the New Age of Aquarius.

By 1990 Stonehenge story received little press coverage around the time of the summer solstice. For example the Wiltshire Police's 49 square mile 'exclusion zone' meant that only 250 hippies gathered at Salisbury Plain. However, by 1991 the term New Age Traveller was in general use and was used by both local and national press to describe the group along with 'Hippie' and simply 'Traveller'. 1991 also marked a more generalised coverage of New Age Travellers, which was not simply concerned with Stonehenge at the Solstice but was beginning to be spread out more evenly throughout the year. The reasons for this are many. Firstly the previous year at Stonehenge had been fairly quiet. Secondly the issue of eviction from local sites became more widespread in both the

national and local newspapers. Thirdly, other events displaced the summer solstice as the focus for media attention.

In January 1991 the decision by Michael Eavis not to hold the Glastonbury Festival at Pilton due to a violent incident between security guards and Travellers in the previous year, attracted moderate media attention. In the same year the longest civil court case in British legal history over the 'Battle of the Beanfield' finally came to an end; twenty four Travellers were awarded damages for wrongful arrest, assault and damage to property. This received a fairly sympathetic coverage in *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. A Channel 4 documentary on the 'battle' was also extensively reported very sympathetically in *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Financial Times*.

By 1992 the issue of proposed changes in legislation became the natural stimulus for media coverage. The coverage was more evenly spread throughout that year and occurred locally and nationally. The tone of local coverage was almost exclusively negative. On 13th March 1992 *The Bristol Observer* reported "House Support for MP's anger over Travellers. A month earlier *The Bath Evening Chronicle* reported on warnings not to "Whip up fear and prejudice". That year there was a proliferation of articles in the national and local press on the problems caused by New Age Travellers culminating in the press coverage of the build up of Travellers and final eviction at Castlemorton Common on May 29. This was possibly the most significant event reported in the media concerning New Age Travellers. Following 'the invasion' the general level of reporting increased dramatically.

*The Observer* on May 31st reported that “Castlemorton has provoked as much uproar and complaint as at any time since the free festivals came into being”. There were a number of extremely negative articles on Castlemorton by both the local and national press. By the end of May *The Daily Telegraph* under the headline “Villagers at boiling point over Hippies”, reported that Michael Spicer MP was a warning that if nothing was done about events like Castlemorton, vigilante groups would spring up. Between May and August of that year the debate continued, not all the coverage was negative, but with an increasing divergence between the rave scene and Travellers festivals.

At the same time as the effects of Castlemorton were attracting so much public opprobrium an incident that occurred in Kerry, Wales appeared to add fuel to the fire. Thus the ‘hippy scroungers’ were, along with single mothers and other convenient scapegoats, targeted for benefit reform.

Thus by the mid summer of 1992 two major concerns related to Travellers were high on the political agenda, the invasion of Castlemorton Common and the issue of Welfare Benefits. The Conservative manifesto published earlier that year had specifically mentioned Gypsies and *other Travellers* as issues to be tackled. On August 11th, Earl Ferres was reported as saying that the Government was to launch an enquiry into Trespass Law after the “anarchy” that had occurred the previous weekend. On September 23rd Kenneth Clarke, the then Home Secretary, was reported as promising action against New Age Travellers to the Police. For the rest of the year a number of articles appeared both nationally and locally covering evictions and the new proposals to tackle Travellers through legislation.

1993 was perhaps the peak year for coverage. Many articles were written on eviction, proposed legislation and a number of articles outlining the court battles around eviction of New Age Travellers. In addition to the more general national and local press coverage, a plethora of specialist magazines, some not normally associated with the issue, published articles from a number of perspectives

In March *The Independent* covered the launch by Liberty of a charter of Human Rights for Travellers. Beatrix Campbell's article published in *The Guardian* on April 14th described the proposed changes in Mainland Britain as hoping to.... "barricade the country against the New Age hordes" in a comparison with the Northern Ireland Office's proposal related to a new Race Relations Act.

In an article later that month (23rd April 1993) on Housing Benefits the example of the "New Age Traveller" settling down in a leafy suburb, eligible for benefit of up to £90 per week was described as the "stuff of a Conservative MP's nightmare". Supportive coverage was not exclusively confined to the more traditional "left wing" press. An article published in *The Evening Standard* on May 5th by A.N. Wilson entitled "Why I wish I had been a New Age Traveller", is used as a vehicle for criticising the legacy of Mrs. Thatcher and the incompetence of a Tory Government led by John Major. *The Daily Mail* however, maintained a fairly negative attitude throughout the summer running a number of stories based on benefit fraud and other themes discussed. Throughout the summer of that year a number of articles based on the "intolerance of country folk" were published. *The Independent* (6th July), "An everyday story of not so friendly country

folk “ and “Old time hatred for the New Age (7th August)”. *The Observer Magazine* “An every day story of country hatred”. (14th November), (although this focused on traditional Travellers). “Village pays convoy £1000 to move on”, *The Guardian* 8th November.

In 1994 the press coverage tended to focus on issues of legislation that were being debated at the time. On January 11th *The Times*, focusing on the proposal to abolish the definition of “Gypsy” raised the question as to whether the proposed “harsher anti-nomadic laws” would precipitate intervention of the European Commission. On a different tack, *The Guardian* January 21st responded to the second reading in Parliament of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. In the sympathetic article the link is made between the interests of ecological interest groups and indeed the general public as whole and the presumed targets of legislation. In March there was a flurry of newspaper reports, mostly in *The Guardian* about the recent information concerning the monitoring of New Age Travellers by the Surveillance Unit in Devon. “Police watch on Travellers to go before European Court” (1st March; *The Guardian* reported the action taken by Liberty to take the issue to the European Commission as it “breached Article eight of the European Convention on Human rights”. On March 4th “Freedom of a closed Road” typified the intellectual critique that was developing in the broadsheet newspapers. The article tackled the broader issues of the proposed legislation and the relative concepts of freedom. It concluded:

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?

In June as a response to John Major's remarks about removing beggars from the streets a negative reaction occurred shortly in the media to Mr. Major. Links were with the Holocaust. This had an added impact as letters to the Guardian on June 6th were published making the connection between the D-Day landing which had occurred fifty years previously and the rise of Hitler who "...shared his (John Major's) views on Travellers, beggars and clutter on the streets". The year as a whole carried stories on continued evictions, although stories not related to the possible effects of the imminent legislation were less frequent than in the previous year. In January a court case against Travellers involved at Castlemorton common received considerable publicity in the Local Worcester Press. The Children Society's Publication *Out of Site Out of Mind* received some press attention. In the same month *The Daily Express* published an article outlining its view on the appointment of a Traveller Liaison officer. "A Dark New Age" (*The Guardian* Weekend 7th May 1994), painted a critical picture of a number of squatters and Travellers.

On December 7th 1994 an article by John Vidal covering the events of 'Yellow Wednesday' (when security guards cleared Twyford Down) hinted at the emergence of a new movement that was to some extent going to displace and replace New Age Travellers and their associations with hippie scroungers.

The powerful modern image of private money hand in hand with the machinery of the state together rolling over the economically weakest to appropriate common resources was given perfect expression. The subtext for environmentally aware youth was obvious: to the list of oppressed people in Latin America, Indonesia and elsewhere, add the English.

By 1995 media interest had on Travellers had waned. The emergence of rave culture that had 'crossed over' with Travellers at Castlemorton Common in 1992 and the new protesters began to assume a greater focus of interest.

### **Images of New Age Travellers**

The term New Age Traveller whilst primarily homogenising and defining a changing and quite heterogeneous category of people relies on building up a number of sometimes conflicting images based on a number of recurring themes. I will now focus on the construction of these images.

#### **New Age /Sewage.**

McKay (1996:66) has observed that "Dirt is a signifier of difference, of outsidersness for Travellers and other marginal groups" and perhaps one of the strongest themes to emerge from the press coverage of New Age Travellers is that of dirt, filth, squalor and disease. "Hepatitis discovered at New Age camp", (*Hereford Times*, 4th July 1991), "Bath Time" (*Independent Magazine* 26th October 1991), "Lack of hygiene is hippie weapon", (*Shropshire Star*, 3rd July 1992), "Order of the Bath", (*Daily Express* 1st August 1992), "My New Age Life of Grime", (*Sunday Express* 16th May 1993).

In one sense this association with filth and the nomadic lifestyle is not a new one.

Gypsies and other nomadic people notably the 'canal children' that George Smith championed at the latter part of the 19th century, have traditionally been seen as in need of salvation and good wash. Their plight has invoked a degree of sympathy and concern for them as members of the human race. There is however, another side to this coin. By

continually emphasising the dirt and squalor, by fixing this securely in the minds of the general public it gives credence to measures of control, of quarantine and of eradication. It is also a theme that operates on a number of levels quite apart from the direct physical threat to the sedentary population (where 'proper' sanitation exists); it is a symbolic threat to the status quo, to the benefits of home ownership. There is a feeling of threat to society as a whole represented as clean and *ordered*. There is also a shift from the actual body, the focus of surveillance and control, (Foucault, 1977), to the general threat to society as a whole. The image thus dehumanises and sub-speciates the object and by exaggerating the issue draws the focus away from the rights of a nomadic and simple existence.

Another feature of the process is the connection made between the 'simple life' and that of the 'primitive life'. The benefits of an outdoor existence with its potential positive associations of being closer to nature and indeed protesting for more environmental sensitivity are ignored. A choice not to examine the environmental benefits of the restricted use of water, limited production of refuse is substituted by metaphorical association to 'the primitive', 'the untouchable', and the dangerous. An example is seen in "New Age Hovellers", a headline in *The News of the World* published in June 1993. This displacement can then accentuate feelings of xenophobia, a process that is not new to nomadic people but fundamental to the specific prejudice of sedentarism.

Jeremy Sanford in response to the *Birmingham Evening Mail's* campaign launched with the headline "Keep this scum out" and describing Travellers as "parasites" who "set up filthy, disease ridden camps...and offend every decent citizen", suggested another reason



for the public outrage and the possible Government response. In *The Independent*, July 7th 1993, he is quoted:

In very poor countries such as Mexico people live in vehicles because houses are out of the question. There's a great fear of these images in Britain.

Thus the site of ramshackle dwellings challenges the public's image of 'this green and pleasant land'. It calls into question the government's policy on employment opportunities and housing. Lastly the focus on uncleanness has a more general environmental facet. There appears to be a contradiction in terms of environmental issues between the acclaimed protection of the environment and what seems, on the face of it, a complete disregard of the local impact that New Age Travellers may have. The coalition between landowners and Travellers in their opposition to the development of motorways coupled with a general awareness and conscious rejection of materialism and its attendant negative environmental consequences appears to be at odds with a callous disregard for other people's property.

The incessant reference to the New Age Travellers' personal hygiene appears to spill over onto their effect on the environment. An image is created of encampments that epitomise squalor, disrespect and filth. Having established this, any serious attempt to draw the public's attention to issues felt to be of environmental importance can be dismissed as being difficult to take seriously. The emergence of the 'Eco warrior' displaces the longer tradition of romantic protest seen in the 'Hippie generation' and inspired in turn by the writings of Morris, Tolkien and Lewis (Veldman 1994). It is one of many ironies that one response to the 'invasion' of New Age Travellers published in

the *Shropshire Star* was to spray Travellers with farm slurry, allegedly at the instigation of the South Shropshire District Council.

### **The Scrounger**

Another theme that echoes from the nomadic/ sedentary ongoing conflict is that of envy. Gypsies have been feared and simultaneously envied. Their freedom and their rejection of the tedious life of the many involved in paid work has been a constant recurring if not paradoxical theme in the relationship between the nomad and the settled population. More recently the wave of managerialism sweeping through the public sector coupled with job insecurity, the speeding up of the pace of life, information overload could add weight to these feelings. Faced with these pressures we might feel, as Giddens suggests, “bereft and alone in a world...(lacking) the psychological supports and the sense of security provided by more traditional settings” (1991:34) All these factors could explain an increased feeling of envy and fuel sedentarism.

This feeling of envy finds its particular focus in the issue of welfare benefits. It is this theme which has attracted particular interest in the media and is explored in detail by Clark (1997a, 1997 b) “Arrogant Spongers”, a headline in *The Daily Express* 18th August 1992, is not an uncommon sentiment. There was particular attention given to the issue of benefits by the media who interviewed a number of social security officials who had set up a ‘Mobile Benefit Office’ on a festival camp at Kerry in Wales in the summer of 1992. This was on the pretext of making sure that the appropriate benefits were being provided. Benefit staff were recorded “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.” (Clark 1997b: 131) The incident was captured by *The Daily Mail* with the headline caption “Dole Staffs field trip to pay hippy hand-outs” accompanied by a large photograph of Travellers and their dogs with benefit staff. On the 2nd August *The Independent* published an article “New Age Travellers face dole crackdown”. The article reported tight new controls on benefit claims by New Age Travellers. The article claimed:

The move was hastily announced in response to the wave of protests by MPs 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.

Two months later in a report on the Conservative Party conference, *The Daily Telegraph* 8th October 1992, “Something for Nothing Society’ is under attack” reported that Mr. Lilley,

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

The image of the scrounger is a powerful one playing on the emotion of envy. Generally the press coverage chose not to convey an impression of self-reliance or the difficulties of a nomadic lifestyle, a mixture of self-employment, occasional seasonal work, but instead a ‘parasitic’ lifestyle supported by the taxpayer. This choice of this focus has a dual effect; the image not only provides a negative object for envy, it also displaces an alternative reading of the situation grounded in a need to survive which in turn is a reaction to closing opportunities based on conventional lifestyles.

In *The Mail on Sunday* 12th May 1993 nearly a year after the Kerry incident, the issue of Traveller fraud emerged again. An article with the rhetorical title “Why DO we put up with the welfare state cheats?” discussed the general problem of social security fraud. Interestingly whilst the article draws examples from minicab drivers, one parent families and building workers, it is a picture of New Age Travellers that heads the article. The picture used for this article is exactly the same one as used on 29th September 1992. It therefore awakens the stereotypical image without reference to contemporary events. Readers are reassured that the “dole staff” are still handing out the cheques. Few will remember this is exactly the same photograph they saw nine months before even less that claiming benefit by Travellers had by this time become even more difficult. In addition to this, there is the assumption that those in the photograph are cheats. This builds on the old sedentarist stereotype of the ‘gypsy thief’ on which much of the police concern and indeed public opinion is centred.

Many people may find it difficult to comprehend why any benefits should be paid to a group of people who have effectively turned their back on society. Ian Dowell, Editor of the *Birmingham Evening Mail* was quoted in *The Independent* (7th July 1993) as saying,

New Age people are mostly dropouts, we feel, and people disillusioned by the mercenary attitude of Britain today - but are still quite happy to accept state benefits provided by the mercenary state.

### **The abductor / Kidnapper**

Douglas Hurd’s use of the word ‘brigand’ when describing a group of New Age Travellers conjures up both robber and kidnapper as the word means both of these things.

It is the latter definition that is discussed in this section. The notion that young children should stay in at night in case the Gypsies get them is not a new one. The fear of strangers, particularly those who are so obviously different is, like the previous examples above, a recurring theme. A narrative that is both actual and symbolic highlights this notion of the risk of kidnap or abduction. It is real in the sense that examples are given of young people running off with New Age Travellers. It is symbolic in the sense that the young person has somehow been corrupted by an alien ideology or point of view which may threaten the family or, more widely, 'normal' society. In an article in *The Daily Mail* (8th June 1993), a mother describes the anguish of seeing her daughter become a drop out. Whilst fairly sympathetic, the article accepts the premise that her daughter's association with New Age Travellers is dysfunctional and may be traced back to earlier hyperactivity and problems at school.

"Did I fail the son lost to New Age Travellers?" *The Mail on Sunday* (2nd August 1992); "Save my Kids from New Age Pigs", *Daily Star*, (August 1992); "Is it romantic to run away", *The Daily Telegraph*, (14th August 1992); "Just why did Sarah become a New Age Traveller", *The Daily Mail*, (21st November 1992); and on the same case "Sarah's tragic travels", *The Daily Mail*, (20th February 1993); "My lovely daughter is a rolling stone", *The Independent* (3rd May 1993). These articles all suggest a deep emotion of xenophobia, of difference; the feeling of 'them-and-us' is further accentuated by introducing a direct personal threat to the reader. It is almost as if the narrative is saying - you the reader may not be experiencing the threat of encampments, of actual squalor and filth, but there is a threat that we all face; this is the threat to the home, the family unit and our children.

By translating the threat from the general to the specific these articles and stories, whilst in some cases portraying a fairly sympathetic narrative, generate what Cohen has described as “a general anxiety over a newly-created problem”. There is a degree of open-endedness in the narrative. With the exception of Sarah who was fatally injured in a road accident, (an event which is implicitly connected to her chosen lifestyle), the other stories leave the reader to wonder what exactly will happen to those young people who chose an alternative lifestyle. The message seems to be, whatever the outcome is, it will end in tears. At this point, of course, public sympathy could go two ways. Firstly a construction of New Age Travellers as young people who have a difficult life on the road or secondly a group of people who threaten our children, who need to be controlled or better still eradicated in order to protect the innocent and gullible from following in their footsteps. The geographical implications of this threatening image is an important one as it translates the problem from what might otherwise be a threat confined to a rural concerns to one that is felt in towns cities and their suburbs.

### **The invading armies**

Just after one of the most notorious examples of police brutality against New Age Travellers, a number of articles appeared in the press covering the ‘trashing’ of Travellers homes by Hampshire and Wiltshire Police on June 1st 1985. The following headlines highlighted the incident the following day. “Battle of Peace Convoy”, (*The Times*), “Stonehenge Peace Battle”, (*The Observer*), “The Battle of Stonehenge” (*The Daily Telegraph*) These obvious references to warfare are, in part, understandable and therefore, to a degree, legitimate descriptions of what went on. (With the possible

exception of *The Daily Mail's* headline "Stonehenge Hippies Attack Police" which appears to be an inversion of the truth).

However, within the press narrative military metaphors were used to describe New Age Travellers on a number of occasions for example "Farmers warned over hippie invasion threat", *Western Daily Press* (15th November 1993); "A last ditch stand", *The Daily Mail*, ( 9th November 1993); "Trojan horse gets Travellers past gates", *The Independent* (26th June 993); "Misery march of the high tech Hippy army", *The Mail on Sunday* (6th June 1993); "Grunge invaders", *Western Daily Press*; "Escape of the Hippies" (1st June 1993) ; "Campaign braces for hippy invasion threat", *The Guardian*, (30th April 1993); "Hippy rabble attack", *Craven Herald* (3rd August 1992); "The Army should have dealt with this rape of rural Britain", *Shropshire Star*, (29th May 1992).

These examples listed above are samples of newspaper headlines that both invoke the military metaphor and aggregated together create an impression of military organisation. It has been noted previously that media typifications of 'deviant' groups tend to make things simple, to homogenise events and actions that are complex. The calling up of a spokesperson, the 'leader of the Hippies', creates an often artificial image of cohesion and organisation. This process is particularly significant to the creation of the invading army myth.

Firstly it creates in the public's mind images of legitimate conflict i.e. war. If the police are faced with controlling an organised barbaric horde of 'invaders' then, of course, it seems entirely appropriate that military methods are used. The very title 'battle of the

Beanfield' for example suggests a military conflict that has been alternatively described by others as a systematic entrapment.

Secondly it brings together a number of otherwise unrelated situations under the rubric of the public order. The issue of access to Stonehenge and other sacred sites is imbricated onto the more general public control issues surrounding the organisation of festivals and or raves. These two issues are then superimposed on the general threat of Travellers wandering around the countryside leaving a trail of damage behind them. In simplifying these very different issues and bringing together in the public mind a general blurring of notions of legitimate social control, the media open up an agenda for discussion on methods of control which are focused on a reaction to 'organised invasion'. The issues of what to do about a problem of temporary sites and a debate around who owns the land in the first place is displaced by what appears to be a more urgent debate on the protection of the general public

In common with other themes it accentuates the image of 'the Other'. A grouping is constructed of a force of 'non human' 'aliens'. This is enhanced by the selection of a number of 'grotesque' images that accompanied the text. A relationship between the public's image of the threat and necessary measures required to deal with it slowly develops. If these people are 'aliens' then the measures needed to control them will need to be developed accordingly. The possibility of these measures being applied more widely is temporarily suspended as the focus remains on the urgent need to 'deal with the problem'.



## **The Hippie**

The use of the Hippie as an alternative to New Age or Traveller was extremely prominent in the press narrative between 1985 and 1994. It occurred in local and national newspapers and was by no means restricted to the broadsheets. “520 Hippies Pack Cells” (*The Daily Mirror* 3rd June 1985)” No home here Earl warns his Hippies “ (*The Daily Express* 5th June 1985), Hippies disperse After Dawn Battle at Stones” (*The Guardian* 22nd June 1988) “Festival to Face Hippy invasion”(9th August 1991 *South Wales Post*) “Plan for Hippy Camp is Ditched” 17th February 1994 *Bristol Evening Post*).

On the one hand the use of the word Hippie may be seen as a fairly innocent attempt to describe a group of people, many of whom share some of the values attributed to the preceding Hippie culture, but on the other the term Hippie is not a neutral one. This is especially true in the context of the press coverage of “deviant groups”. In the reporting of deviancy and the social construction of crime, it is a well documented phenomenon that whilst the manifestation of a particular deviant group may change over time, the news narrative follows a recurring theme (Cohen 1972), (Rock 1973). As the news stories unfold, one is left with a feeling that this is a story that has been told before. The significance of this process is its preconditioning effect. The reader is preconditioned to make certain assumptions about the group. Just as the title ‘the new Teddy Boys’ can immediately conjure up an unpleasant image of violence, so too the already implanted images of ‘the hippie’ are re-activated by use of this word. This theme is explored by Kermonde in the sense of a premolded story, defined as acceptable through adherence to certain ‘properties of entextualisation’ (Kermonde 1981). The images are those that have previously been associated with it.

Associations with drugs, or in extremis 'drug crazed' are popular stereotypes, which in turn provide a link between a group of people and their alleged unlawfulness. Not only does this provoke alarm in the sense that these people are themselves dangerous. There is another very obvious threat to the young and innocent in terms of the effects of these people on them. Thus the narrative is of young people being seduced away from their homes by the lure of illegal drugs.

### **A coalition of images**

As has been stated before the New Age Traveller is as much a myth as it is a reality. The term could never do justice to the differing groups that it attempted to describe. In addition to this problem was the real shift in the group that was being described between 1985 and 1994. There has been some suggestion (Davis *et al* 1994, Earle *et al* 1994, and McKay 1996) that the group shifted from mainly those who were drawn to a 'hippie ideology'. These people took to the road as part of the development of the festival scene to a predominance of younger homeless economic refugees from the mid 80's to the mid 90's. However, the amalgamation of the rave scene and later road protesters with the phenomenon of the 'New Age Traveller threat' provided some difficulties in the continued hippie label. The rave scene with associations of young lives in danger from drugs also provided impetus to the press coverage giving it a new lease of life. Throughout the latter part of 1993 press coverage focused on the debate around the CJ&POA. Measures to help police evict trespassers and deal with unauthorised camping, (aimed predominantly but not exclusively at New Travellers) were put next to those

designed to prevent gatherings on land in open air of 100 or more people at which amplified music is played during the night, (raves).

The significance of this was to create a view that this was all part of the same 'problem'.

The problems associated with the free festivals at Stonehenge were blurred into those of the gathering at Castlemorton Common and the rave scene more generally. The arguments against the free festival scene were translated into those against raves.

Additional concern was raised with the publicity given in all forms of the media to the perils of MDMA, (Ecstasy), which was seen, (probably fairly accurately), as an integral part of the rave scene. In one sense this amalgamation was a reflection of what in fact was happening, but its effect was to deepen the threat and to further widen the gap between a description of a fairly heterogeneous group and the stereotype.

David Penny in letters to the Guardian wrote:

It is convenient for the Government with the connivance of some of the media to foster the illusion that Travellers are the main organisers of raves. This deliberate confusion will make it easier for the police to "Seize and remove any vehicle", (under Clause 48 of the Criminal Justice and public Order Bill). Under the pretext of stopping a rave, a travelling family could lose their home, with children taken into care and the parents treated as intentionally homeless criminals.

As the beginnings of contemporary protest emerged the environmentally positive aspects of the DIY culture became more newsworthy. In this way the 'New Age Traveller' unlike the 'Greenham Common Woman' survived the press onslaught by a combination of incremental change, the fortunate coincidence of united opposition to 'the Bill' and a growing awareness of global environmental issues by the public.

## Conclusions

Sedentarism as a media constructed discourse can be identified as running throughout the press coverage of New Age Travellers and sets the narrative apart from the traditional moral panics associated with ephemeral youth counter cultures. Whilst it is true that the reaction of the press to the 'convoy' and its fascination with the annual migration to Stonehenge had all the hallmarks of a moral panic, a number of additional factors can be identified that has led the narrative to some unpredictable paths.

Thus, even before we consider these additional factors, we can see that the press narrative on New Age Travellers is not directly comparable other similar groups but is more closely related the Greenham Common women in that both narratives draw on deeply held prejudices. In the case of Greenham these are essentially embedded in sexism, in the case of Travellers, sedentarism. In both cases whilst many of the phrases could be picked 'off-the-shelf' from the 'reaction-to-deviance-moral-panic-cliché superstore', there are others that are found locked away in specific vaults marked 'Gypsies' or 'Women'.

The result of the coalitions that occurred in opposition to the CJ&POA was to profoundly change the image of Travellers. As a result of the Bill and the development of new forms of contemporary protest, the DIY Culture as it was later to be named, (Purdue *et al* 1997), (Brass *et al* 1997), (Dearling 1998) began to actively and effectively challenge media stereotypes. In addition to undertaking effective media manipulation through involvement in road protest the evolution of the DIY media itself was an effective counterbalance to mainstream media coverage. The publication of magazines such as Squall and SchNEWS has been an object lesson in the production of quality information

with extremely limited resources. It seems unlikely that the media could now descend on New Age Travellers with their characteristic amnesia and rediscover the hippie scrounger. In 1995 attempts to revisit the Beanfield were, on the whole, a reminder of how things had moved on in the preceding decade.

There was a fairly diverse (if not entirely balanced) coverage of the phenomenon; this became more diverse as the government proposed primary legislation on the issue. It was not the case, as in for example Hall *et al*'s apocryphal 'mugger' that the press narrative simply expressed the same message but used different language in doing so. There were a number of examples quoted above that clearly demonstrate the existence of positive well-written articles that challenged the notion that New Age Travellers were worthy of censure. In addition to this the positive coverage was responsible for the exploration of the new alliances exposing the squatting movement, the environmental protesters and members of the rave scene in a positive light. Whilst most of this was found in the Weekend Colour Supplements of *The Guardian* and *The Observer* it was not exclusively so. For example positive coverage also extended to *The Financial Times* and *The Evening Standard*.

That is not to say that hegemonic ideas of the media representing 'ruling class' interests are totally redundant. The issue of land ownership central to the debate about what was going on with these new Travellers cannot be fully understood without reference to the question of who owns land and by what right. The dominant message was certainly that these people were a problem and something had to be done about them even though there

remains little evidence that collectively they were responsible for any criminal activity or more than a symbolic threat. As Ericson *et al* have noted

whilst news is clearly ‘programmed’ within the economic, political social and cultural and technological criteria of the news-media institution, its programs can be used in myriad ways to visualise deviance, negotiate control , and represent order (1991:358).

It may be that whilst the press narrative started off in classical moral panic mode the case of New Age Travellers evolved in such a way as to challenge the ‘moral panic’ interpretation of sequential events. The postmodern spin developed by the contemporary protest alliance against ‘The Bill’ added a degree of unpredictability to events that cannot be simply explained in the easy slogan of ‘unforeseen consequences’ of legislation.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

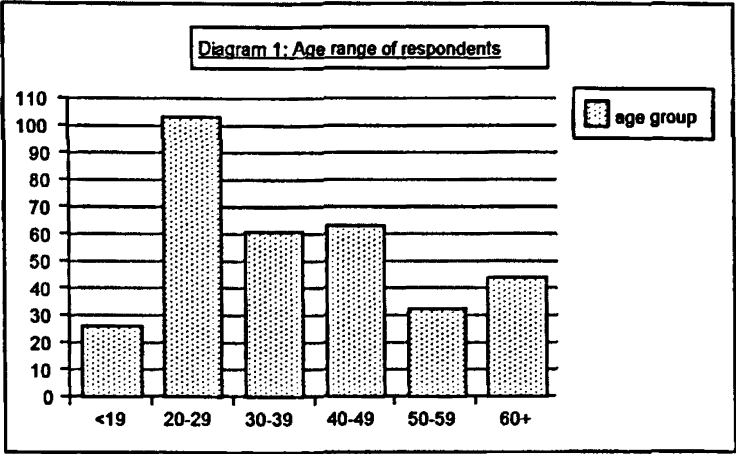
### PUBLIC OPINION

#### **The population sample/ biographic details**

In all there were 341 completed questionnaires. 70% of the respondents had lived in the area for over 4 years and only 11% under a year, this compares to 11.3% recorded in the census for Leamington who had moved in the last year. The population sampled thus represented a significant proportion of individuals who could have been exposed to local as well as national news coverage of New Age Travellers.

The sample comprised approximately 57% men and 43% women. This compares to the population for the Parish of 13,509 males (52%) and 12,422 females (48%) and for the District 37,479 (52%) males and 34,442 (48%) females aged 16 to 64. All demographic census data below refers to the 1991 census. The majority of respondents were aged between 21 years and 50 years, although the group included respondents who classified their age as under 20 or younger as well as those who were 61 or over. The age group 21 - 29 years represented 105 of the 341 respondents (31%).

Diagram 1 below illustrates the age range.



Approximately one third of those who chose to answer the question on income stated an income of under £11,000 per annum, including students, those who were unemployed and those who had retired. 42% had an income of between £11,000 and £26,000 per annum. Only 13% declared an income of over £26,000, 10% declined to give information on income.

247 respondents (72 %) read a local newspaper at least once a week and this was generally one of two free newspapers delivered in the area. This compared to 79% who read a national newspaper at least once a week. In the sample 81% of males and 79 % of females read a national newspaper.

Of the total number of respondents 22.81% were recorded as not reading a newspaper or giving no answer. An additional 20.47% were recorded under the category “other”. This meant that they either took more than one newspaper or the newspaper was not included in the list of alternatives provided in the questionnaire. Of those who did name a newspaper there was a fairly even spread with a proportionally high number (compared to



national sales figures) of respondents who said they read the ‘broadsheet’ newspapers.  
The full breakdown is illustrated:

Newspaper	Number of respondents
The Times	20
The Daily Telegraph	35
The Daily Express	13
The Daily Mail	32
Today	9
The Sun	36
The Mirror	22
The Star	2
The Independent	9
The Guardian	35
Other/ more than one	58

There was a noticeable relationship between the newspaper taken and the self assessed attitude. For example, of those who read *The Telegraph* no respondents described themselves as either ‘friendly’ or ‘tolerant’ to Travellers whilst those who read *The Independent* had no respondents who described themselves as either ‘hostile’ or ‘suspicious’. This could have been due to the particular coverage of the newspaper or simply a reflection of a wider worldview that had influenced the purchase of a newspaper in the first place. The assumption that the majority of respondents would have formed an image of New Age Travellers from information heard on the radio, seen on the television or read in the newspapers appeared to be the case.

Respondents were asked if they listened to the radio. 52 % listened every night / day 42 % sometimes and 6% never. There was a detectable increase of listeners in the higher age groups (63% of those over 50 years old listened on a daily basis). However, intermittent news updates may have covered local and national events such as the ‘Hippie Convoy’ from 1983 to 1986 and Castlemorton Common in 1992 as well as the local issues of Travellers in Offchurch and Wellsbourne.

Of the total 343 respondents only 16 (5%) did not watch television at any time.

Respondents were asked to select their preferences in viewing. The following illustrates the responses:

News	141
Light Entertainment	162
Documentary	155
Drama	173

Respondents were asked to identify the source of their first information about New Age Travellers. 48% accounted for their first information on this subject as derived from television. The second most frequent response was ‘from conversations with friends or colleagues’ (12%). 13% of respondents stated that the source of information was from the press (5% local and 8% national). 10% described their first source of information being ‘other’/more than one source.

Respondents were also asked to define when they first heard the term New Age Traveller. 60% said between 1-4 years, 31% over 4 years and only 7% said it was under a year. 2% were unable to define a period (those who had not heard of the term were not asked any further questions. This represented 6% of the total respondents).

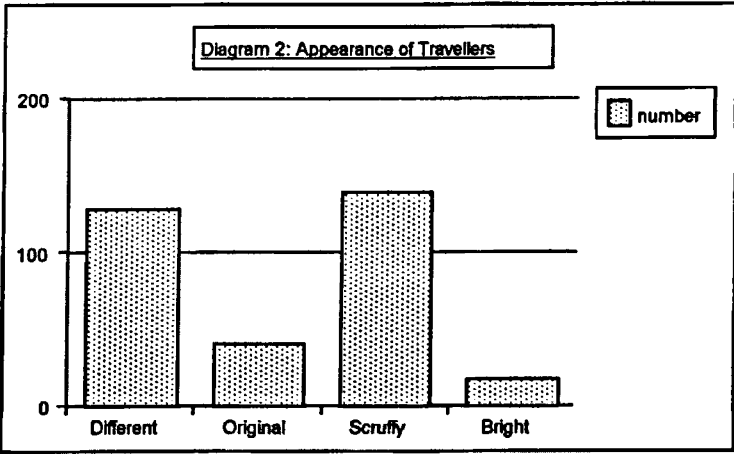
### **A collective image of the New Age Traveller**

The next section of the questionnaire was aimed at establishing a view of New Age Travellers focusing on the popular debate of the term itself and the common stereotypes that resulted from this. The section explored issues of dress, honesty, religion, environment and employment. These questions allowed both an investigation into attitudes towards New Age Travellers and the possibility of cross referencing to the 'self-defined' attitude to Travellers.

In the recent years leading up to the questionnaire exercise, an image of New Age Traveller dress had leached into popular fashion through a number of media sources. By 1994 there was a revival of late 1960's fashion some of which could be seen as a repetition of a kind of hippie theme combined with what was then called 'grunge' characterised by the ubiquitous 'D.M.s' or 'Para' boots. This eclectic style in turn influenced popular images of New Age Travellers. I was therefore interested in how people would conceptualise a New Age Traveller based on their appearance. This was particularly significant in a number of police operations designed at excluding individuals from particular areas or sites based on their dress. Clark (1996) for example highlights attitudes of benefit workers based on stereotypical views on dress. To measure the attitude of the respondents in relation to appearance was therefore potentially an

interesting area. Whether individuals dressed in boots, with a large over-sized jumper, dreadlocks and various rings in their ears noses and so on could be defined in a number of ways depending on the respondent's particular perspective and the values they attributed to clothes. Some might find this original, some might find this simply scruffy, and others might take a fairly neutral view and define this particular dress as 'different'. Whilst this appeared a superficial, an large proportion of respondents (nearly half) who attributed as their first source of information on New Age Travellers as television, suggests that the 'cue' of the visual image must assume some significance. The visual identification of a group is clearly an important part of the process by which a group is identified and discriminated as being different.

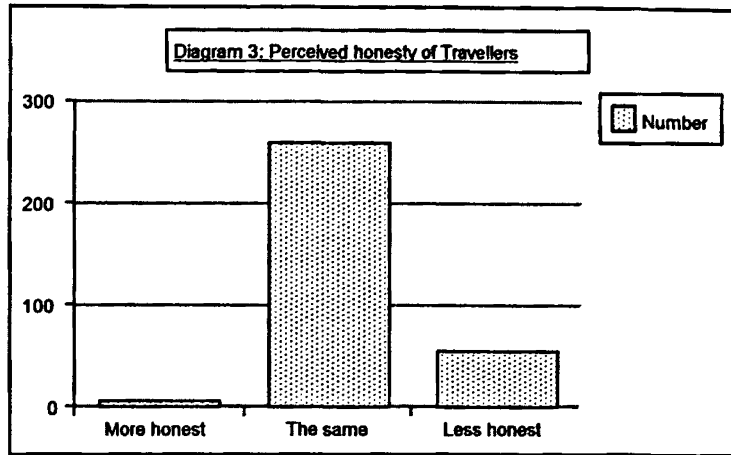
Nearly 40% of respondents opted for a fairly neutral description of "differently" but the highest single category was "scruffily" which represented 42% of answers. The positive terms 'originally' and 'brightly' represented 12% and 5% respectively. Diagram 2 illustrates the distribution of answers:



There was no significant change between 1994 and 1995. These responses are examined more closely when cross-tabulated with 'attitude'. The 'scruffy' image of Travellers is significant in the possible values attached to Travellers. Scruffy could mean that

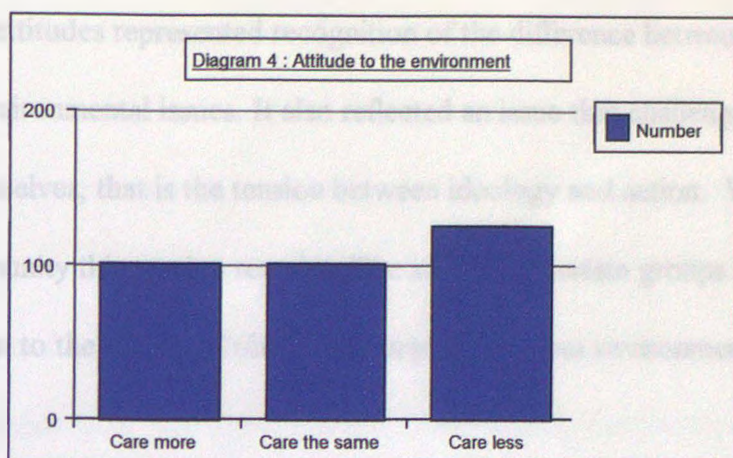
Travellers are not concerned with mainstream values associated with hygiene. It could be interpreted as a threat because of its implicit rejection of society's norms. Scruffy also denotes 'unclean' with the implication of being disease ridden/unhygienic. This image has two further implications, firstly it is a position that would support local authority and police joint operations justified on the platform of public health. It also has a more general effect of separating the Travellers from mainstream society and placing them as objects that need to be controlled, contained or, *in extremis*, removed. If Travellers are perceived as a health hazard their rights as human being can be subsumed in order to protect the majority. The results bear out, to some degree, the claims made in the previous chapter relating to powerful image of the 'Unclean Traveller' that is held in the public's mind.

The next question looked at honesty. The traditional distrust of nomadic groups is both widespread and ingrained (Fraser 1992), (Hawes and Perez 1996), (Acton 1997a), (Acton 1997b) and therefore can be inflamed by press reports which highlight the notion of 'the hippie scrounger' and the petty thief. It therefore seemed to be appropriate to test the view of respondents on this issue. A substantial majority (79%) replied that New Age Travellers were probably as honest as the rest of us. However, a significant minority (16%) replied that they were less honest. 2% believed New Age Travellers were in general more honest. Diagram 3 illustrates this:

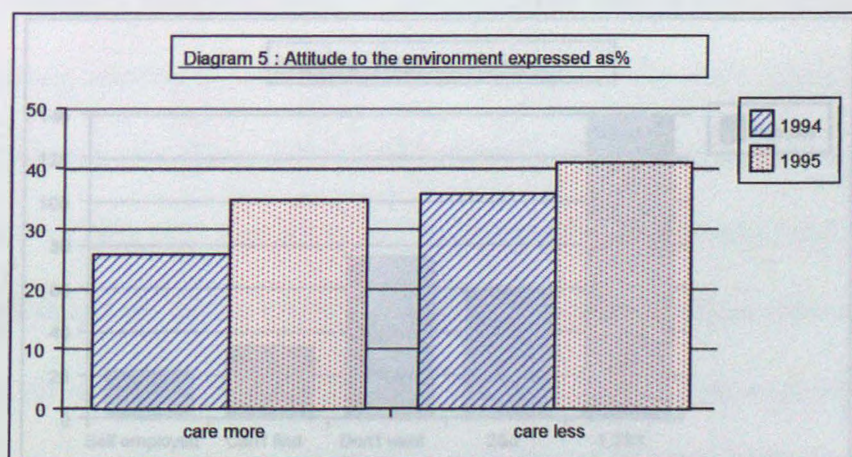


It may be reassuring to Travellers that the neutral answer was so popular, however, there was a significant minority who believed Travellers were less honest. For a group of respondents who, on the whole, had no direct contact with New Age Travellers it would have been surprising to give answers that could purport to judge this issue at a distance. It may be significant that nearly 16% could generalise to the extent that New Age Travellers were less honest.

There seem to be two conflicting images of New Age Travellers in terms of their relationship to the environment. They were seen either as guardians of ecology (the ‘eco-warrior’) or as thoughtless, degraders of the environment. It was therefore interesting to ask whether respondents felt that New Age Travellers cared more or less about the environment than the population as a whole. The results demonstrated recognition of both positions. Whilst 38% felt that they cared less about the environment, a significant 30% felt they cared more leaving approximately 31% who felt that generally they cared as much about the environment as anyone else. See Diagram 4:



This is significant because respondents were more likely to choose one of the two ‘contradictory opposites’ rather than opting for the neutral answer compared to their response to the question on honesty or religion. In the 1995 sample there was a perceptible positive shift in opinion towards Travellers. This was in the context of their behaviour toward the environment. In 1995 35% felt Travellers cared more about the environment compared to 26% in 1994. However, the respondents who felt that Travellers cared less about the environment also increased from 36% to 41%. Thus a 9% favourable shift was countered by a 5 % unfavourable shift.



This can be explained by the continuing concern for local environmental issues against a more global recognition that Travellers were receiving positive publicity for their role in ‘alternative protest’. The bi-polar attitudes towards Travellers in respect of

environmental attitudes represented recognition of the difference between local and global positions on environmental issues. It also reflected an issue that challenges many of the Travellers themselves, that is the tension between ideology and action. Within the Traveller community this tension remains. The actions of certain groups of Travellers are of great concern to the Dongas Tribe, for example for whom environmental concerns are paramount.

The significance of the image of the social security scrounger has been discussed in some detail in other sections and it is fair to say that there is a differential in view regarding the stereotype of how New Age Travellers survive economically. Views could vary from a traditional idea of the ‘romantic’ nomad living off the land and engaging in small-scale handicraft on one extreme, to organised benefit defrauders on the other. A view of the drug dealer who enhances his or her dishonest income by pedalling drugs to the young and innocent of mainstream society sometimes exacerbate this negative view.

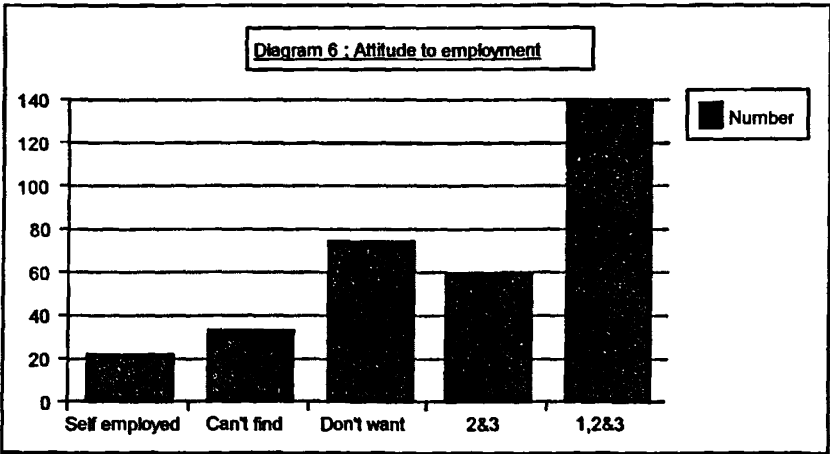


Diagram 6 above represents the answers given. Answers 2 & 3 are ‘can’t find work’ and ‘don’t want to work’. A mix of the three answers includes the category of self-employed



The reason for differentiating between the answer 'mixture of all three' and 'mix of 2 and 3' was to 'capture' those people who felt that self-employment was not an option that New Age Travellers were taking. A fairly superficial consideration of this question might result in the response 'a mixture of all three' rather than the other more complex option of a combination of 'not wanting to work' and 'being unable to find work'. 42% of the respondents felt that New Age Travellers were a combination of people who 'couldn't find work', 'didn't want work' and 'self-employed'. However, 22% of respondents felt that New Age Travellers did not want to work and only a small minority felt that New Age Travellers were mostly self-employed (7%) or couldn't find work (9%).

There is then a perception, in the minds of the sample questioned, that New Age Travellers 'don't want to work'. Of course the idea of 'not wanting to work' needs to be unpacked as it could mean a number of things ranging from a general tiredness associated with the daily routine to a strongly held conviction that paid work was a feature of oppressive capitalist labour relations. If this means that New Age Travellers are perceived as not wanting to work and therefore sit around idly while others do, it may become problematic for them. The whole issue of paid labour is no doubt a central issue in the identity of New Age Travellers. The changes in Welfare Benefit regulations have certainly influenced the reality of the conscious choice not to work as it becomes increasingly difficult for Travellers to sustain this option without recourse to fraud. A quantitative approach cannot answer the questions raised by this issue but provided an interesting platform for further research of a qualitative nature particularly discussion and participant observation of Travellers themselves.

Lastly in this subsection, respondents were asked whether they felt that New Age Travellers were more religious than the population as a whole. The overwhelming majority considered that New Age Travellers were about as religious as most people (71 %). Marginally more (17.3%) felt they were less religious compared to the 11.6% who felt they were more religious. In the same way as there is a paradox in the environmental theme we can see here a conflict between the image of 'heathen' 'thoughtless brigands' whose connection with the spiritual world seems at best tenuous and the 'mystic' image invoked by the 'New Age' tag. What is different however, is the high percentage that gave the neutral answer.

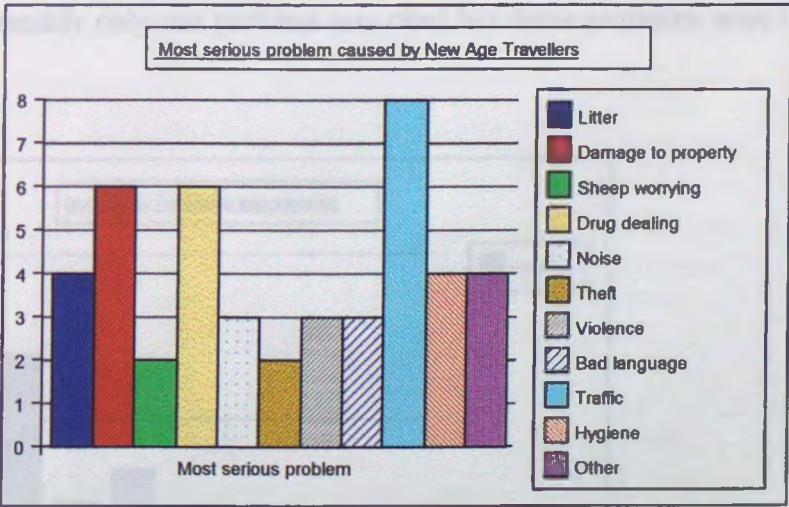
### **Problems with Travellers**

Of the sample 42% had personally met Travellers. This included passing by the local sites, walking past Travellers in the street and so on. Of this group all had met Travellers within 20 miles of Leamington. This was a surprisingly high percentage and validates, to some degree, the selection of Leamington as a sample area.

One of the main questions that a study of this nature must address is the actual threat that Travellers as a group pose to mainstream society. It was the perceived threat of the Traveller lifestyle that was partly responsible for the changes in legislation and was often used by advocates of legislative change as the reason why change was necessary. It was therefore important to look in some detail at the real problems that Travellers had imposed on the local sedentary population. An examination of criminal statistics and discussions with Warwickshire Police failed to identify any provable link between Travellers and criminal activity, although the police suspected that certain thefts and

burglaries were connected with local New Age Travellers (see Brown 1996). There was some evidence of involvement with drug dealing, evidence supported by other police areas. Issues of other types of criminal activity such as benefit fraud are discussed elsewhere. In this section the focus was on the actual problems associated with Travellers that were experienced by local people.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not New Age Travellers had been a problem to them personally. 44 respondents (13%) replied yes. The following answers need therefore to be read in this context. Respondents were then asked to identify from a list of the range of possible problems, those that they had experienced. The results are illustrated below:

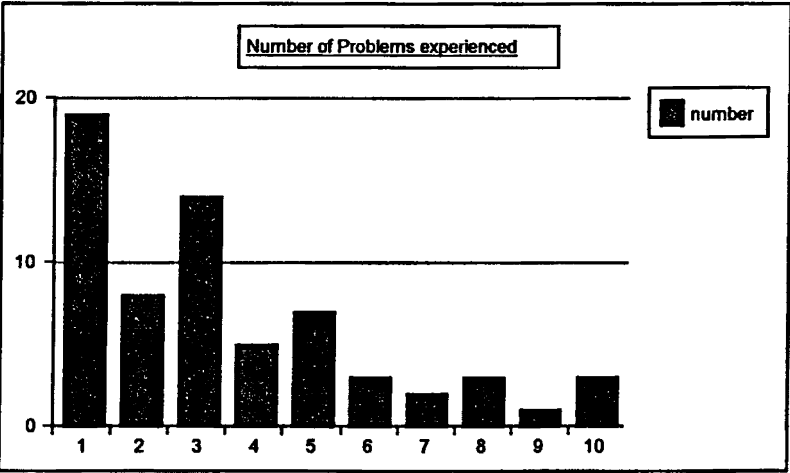


8 respondents cited traffic problems as the most serious problem. It was not possible to analyse further what type of traffic problems these were but it can be surmised that this could be a combination of Travellers themselves causing congestion and the police operations aimed at Travellers causing congestion. This was probably more of the latter. The second most frequent problems were 'drugs' and 'damage to property'. Here further exploration of the issue would have been helpful as the incidents of drug dealing seems

high and it is not clear if the respondents were talking about personal involvement of drug use or problems caused to them by other people's involvement.

The remaining results show very small numbers of people who claim to be personally affected by New Age Travellers. This tends to link into the statistics relating to the self-categorization in terms of attitude that shows a normal distribution with both sympathetic and unsympathetic views but a majority neutral view. Thus it appeared that personal experience influenced attitudes to New Age Travellers to a limited degree only and that in the case of this sample, there was a need to consider other influences.

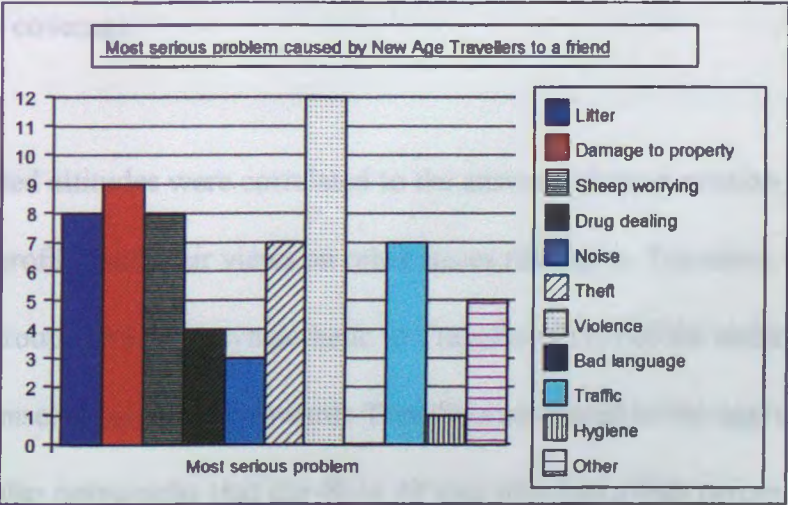
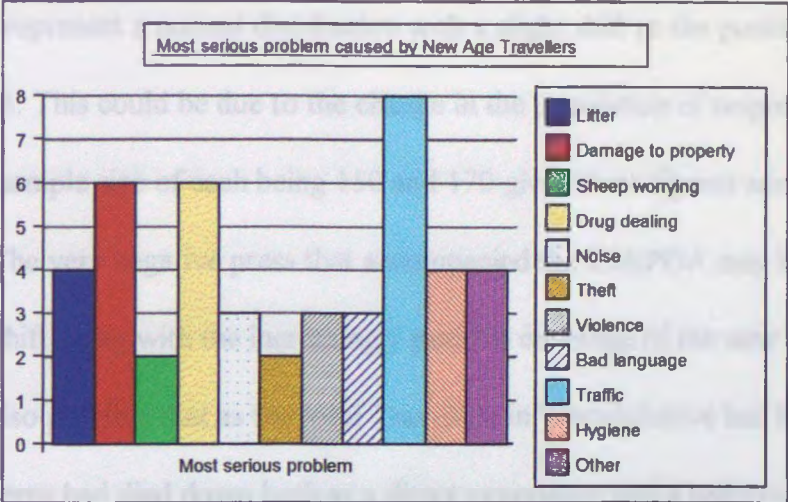
The number of problems cited by each respondent was also calculated. The graph below shows that generally only one problem was cited but those problems were often grouped in threes.



This pattern was replicated in the answers given in respect of problems that were not directly experienced but that were reported by friends. This is partly explained by the similarity of categories such as litter and hygiene.



When asked if New Age Travellers had been a problem to a friend or someone known personally to the respondent, the number of problems rose slightly to 64 representing 18.8%. There was also difference in the distribution of problems. Most significantly reports of violence grew from 3 to 12 incidents of drugs fell from 6 to 4. The two profiles for 'problems' are compared below.



### Attitudes

As a simple guide to test the attitude that respondents attributed to themselves, they were asked to pick from a choice of five alternatives ‘hostile’, ‘suspicious’,

‘neutral’, ‘tolerant’ and ‘friendly’. The table below shows the results as a percentage of the total overall and by year.

	Hostile	Suspicious	Neutral	Tolerant	Friendly
Both years	5	21	40	23	10
1994	9	22	40	21	9
1995	1	22	40	25	11

These figures represent a normal distribution with a slight shift to the positive between 1994 and 1995. This could be due to the change in the population of respondents however, the sample size of each being 150 and 170 gives these figures some statistical significance. The very negative press that accompanied the CJ&POA may have been a factor in this shift along with the increasingly positive coverage of the new forms of protest. It is also possible that as the local Travellers in Warwickshire had been moved on the local concerns had died down both as a direct experience and a reduction in local negative press coverage.

The self-ascribed attitudes were correlated to the answers given in relation to the respondents’ profiles and their views on other issues relating to Travellers. Generally the younger age group were more sympathetic to Travellers (31% of the under 19 year olds describing themselves as friendly towards Travellers compared to the aggregated figure of 10%). It was also noteworthy that the 40 to 49 year olds had a high percentage of ‘friendly’ scores although in this group less tolerant responses were recorded. Conversely the older groups scored high on hostile and suspicious. 47% of 50 to 59 year olds recording suspicious and 14% of ‘60+’ age group recording ‘hostile’. Women scored consistently more positively in their attitude scores than men in each category being 8 % lower in the category ‘hostile’ and 8% higher in the category ‘tolerant’.

There was some evidence that those who had met Travellers were less hostile (by 2%), less suspicious (by 6%), more tolerant (by 13%) and friendlier (by 10%). This could be attributed to the positive personal experience of local encounters. The spread of answers also indicated a clearer demarcation of views. Thus personal experience tended to reinforce or counter preconceptions.

19.7% of the sample believed that Travellers dealt in drugs, 35% felt that they did not and 45% said they did not know. When cross-tabulated with the question *have you personally met New Age Travellers?* of those who answered yes, the proportion changed to 25% of the who believed that Travellers dealt in drugs. 36% felt that they did not and 38% said they did not know. This represents a slight shift to the view that Travellers are involved in the dealing of drugs. There was no detailed follow up questions on the type of drugs being referred to but this issue is examined in more detail on the chapter on Traveller lifestyle and identity.

The correlation between particular aspects such as employment, religion and dress were less significant. There was an interesting correlation between those who were 'hostile' and who took the view that Travellers did not want to work (47%). This compared to the aggregated value of only 22% who felt Travellers did not want to work. However, opinions on the environmental attitudes of Travellers bore no relationship with the respondents self attributed attitudes. 75% of those who claimed to be 'hostile' were 'neutral' on the issue of Travellers and their attitudes to the environment.

## **The media and police**

Respondents were asked to give their opinion of how the media and police dealt with New Age Travellers. 60% felt the media treated Travellers critically. Thus whilst the effect of the media was clearly significant on public opinion, the public appeared to be aware that it was, on the whole, a distorted view. Only 2% of respondents felt that the media were too positive. This contrasted to 28 % who felt the media treated Travellers very critically. This view extended to those who had described themselves as hostile (53% felt that Travellers were treated critically by the media). The distribution of attitudes towards the media handling however, shows a strong consensus (53.8%) on the critical way in which the media treated New Age Travellers.

This general view of the relationship between the media and Travellers contrasted with the perception of the relationship between the police and Travellers. The most frequent response was that the police were 'fair' in dealing with Travellers (48%). 20 % of the respondents expressed no opinion and 19% felt the police were unfair most of the time. The extreme views, 'too fair' and 'unfair all the time' represented 7% and 5% respectively. This must be of some significance to the police who need their actions to be legitimised by public support in order to carry out their operations effectively.

Attitudes to the police treatment of New Age Travellers were in marked contrast to those on how the media treated them. 46.24% felt that the police were fair most of the time. From this sample at least, public opinion seemed to be very supportive of the police. 16.8% felt that the Police were unfair most of the time and only 6.3% all of the time. The



most supportive group were those who regarded themselves as 'suspicious', (57.14%) of whom felt that the police were fair most of the time.

Respondents were asked to tick any number of possible measures that they supported.

The measures listed below elicited the following support. The numbers are represented as a percentage of the total number of respondents:

- a) Making it easier for New Age Travellers to get planning permission for temporary sites - (45%)
- b) Making it easier for New Age Travellers to get planning permission for permanent sites - (43%)
- c) Stop paying any benefits to Travellers - (18%)
- d) Stop paying selected benefits to Travellers - (21%)
- e) Banning Travellers from this county - (6%)
- f) Banning Travellers from this country - (3%)
- g) Increase police control of Travellers - (21%)
- h) Decrease police control of Travellers - (13%)

### **Temporary sites**

With hindsight, the temporary sites question was ambiguous; it could be construed either as the temporary provision of a particular site which would be re-designated at a later stage or a site where Travellers could only stay for a limited period. Generally however, this option the most popular measure for respondents. 29% of those who classified themselves as 'hostile' to Travellers supported the measure compared to 18% who classified themselves as 'suspicious, 48% who classified themselves as 'neutral' and 59%

of those who classified themselves as either 'friendly' or 'neutral'. When this issue was debated in the House of Lords many peers made the point that it was a retrogressive step to remove the obligation for local authorities to provide sites for Gypsies. However these sites were not necessary for New Age Travellers who preferred to live outside the formal provision of local authority sites.

### **Permanent sites**

The number who supported permanent sites was similar to the number of those who supported temporary sites with the exception of the 'hostile' and 'suspicious' categories. It seems that both temporary and permanent sites were measures that would help solve the 'problems' associated with New Age Travellers.

### **Benefits**

As in the previous issue, the issue of benefits was broken down into two questions. Whilst representing only 21% support for the cessation of selected benefits and 18% support for removing all benefits, the issue of benefits was clearly important to some of the respondents. However, neither the cessation of all benefits or selected benefits enjoyed the support of even a quarter of the respondents. This concern may be exacerbated by the apparent contradiction of a lifestyle that, on the one hand rejects consumerism, and the work ethic and yet on the other appears to rely on a more structured and organised society in order to survive. The degree to which New Age Travellers represent a spectrum of ideology adds further complexities to the issue. The need to identify the nature of selected benefits raises the question of exactly how this relates to the general availability of benefits in 1994 and 1995. Analysis would need to

include housing benefits in particular and the impression given to the general public of the fraudulent claiming of unemployment benefit and income support by New Age Travellers.

The answers relating to benefits correlated strongly to the self-classification of respondents in terms of their attitudes to Travellers. Of those respondents who declared themselves hostile to New Age Travellers, 73% were in favour of removing access to all benefits for Travellers. This dropped to 33% of those who classified themselves as suspicious. For the remaining groups it was supported by less than 10% each.

### **Police powers**

There was some support for the increase of police powers in dealing the problem of New Age Travellers (21%), but this was counterbalanced to some degree by nearly 12% who felt that there should be a decrease. This division of opinion was highlighted further when taking into consideration the self classified attitude of respondents. 59% of those who described their attitude hostile were in favour of increased powers whilst 9% of those who declared a friendly attitude supported increased powers. Even for those people who described their attitude as neutral there was only 10% support for the measure. These data were collected before and after the 1994 CJ&POA received Royal Assent and therefore it could not be analysed to detect any change in attitude subsequent to actual increases in police powers regarding *illegal trespassers* etc.

In 1994, 22% were in favour of additional powers however, in 1995 this had dropped to 19%. By 1995 only 8% of those who saw themselves as 'neutral' supported the idea of additional powers. There are two possible conclusions to be drawn from this. Firstly that

there was little support for the legislation in the first and secondly that having received Royal Assent, there was not a substantial degree of satisfaction expressed by the respondents in terms of the potential effectiveness of the new legislation. The overall marginal shift from 22% to 19 % suggests that the further changes would not impact greatly on public opinion. People in Leamington, it would seem, were not particularly concerned with the lack of police powers in the first place.

Of those respondents whom had personal experience of problems from Travellers 47% wanted increased police control compared to 15 % who had not. However, those who had experienced problems represented a small minority of the sample (13%).

#### **County or Country ban**

The banning of Travellers from either the country or the county received little support (6% for a county ban and 3% for a Country ban). It would be surprising if this rather draconian measure did enjoy anything more than marginal support, particularly the ban from the country which reminds us of recent 'ethnic cleansing' in the former Yugoslavia. However, banning from the county has been *de facto* the strategic response of Warwickshire Police and the County Council. It is also worth noting that of those respondents who described themselves as 'hostile' in their attitude to New Age Travellers, 29% supported the idea of a ban from the country. The fact that such an extreme suggestion could be taken seriously at all by the small group who identified themselves as hostile could be seen as worrying to those who have not forgotten the *devouring*

## Conclusions

The choice to include a public opinion survey was a difficult one. As Gamson has suggested, the relationship between personal experience, mediated experience and the resulting views and attitudes that we develop are not as straightforward as many writers on public opinion would suggest. Van Swaanigen, for example, lists a number of factors that could lead to a condition of social intolerance such as

the increasing pace of life, fear of losing ones own identity in a multi cultural society and the loss of normative points of orientation after the 'end of ideology' (1997:180)

These may have nothing to do with the perceived or real threat from the deviant. These 'postmodern' factors, which, it is argued, cause a general anxiety, can provide a platform from which opinions develop. It is the resulting stated attitudes and beliefs, drawn from the general malaise of modernity, coupled with the media amplification which are important in assessing the impact of the media on public opinion as well as the use that this opinion is put to by policy makers.

I would argue that the opinions held by the public in regard to New Age Travellers, and more specifically the censure of Travellers, is an important part of the process of social control in its own right. In addition to this, public opinion also provides legitimacy to the actions of police and local authorities as agents of social control placing it as a central issue in an enquiry into social control.

With the caveat that this snapshot is only part of a more general enquiry and is specific to an area selected for its proximity to a number of Traveller sites, the results nevertheless help to make sense of some of the factors that contribute to the social control.

From the survey we can generally conclude that respondents have developed their attitudes towards Travellers as a result of information from friends and the media.

Watching television was significant in the lives of respondents and was probably influential in shaping their attitudes as well as reading newspapers.

There was a correlation between the newspaper read and the self ascribed attitude.

However, it was difficult to define the net direction of this causal relationship i.e. did people who read *The Guardian* hold these views as a result of reading it or was it their previously held views that persuaded them to buy the paper in the first place. From these results it would be reasonable to conclude that a *Daily Mail* reader would have been provided the information to develop a fairly intolerant or hostile position with regard to Travellers.

Respondents were generally aware of unsympathetic media coverage of Travellers suggesting a degree of reflexivity and thoughtfulness in their interpretation of media information. They were, on the whole, supportive of the policing methods as far as they were aware of them in Warwickshire. This must be encouraging to both the police and the local authorities in that area as it suggests a degree of 'legitimacy' for undertaking what has amounted to a policy of exclusion. However, only 6% of those interviewed supported a formal county ban of Travellers (if that were indeed practicable) and thus

whilst the police do enjoy public support in this area, a greater public knowledge of the police practice of exclusion may reduce that support.

Respondents' self ascribed attitudes tended to relate to their views on the image of the New Age Travellers i.e. those who saw themselves as hostile to Travellers visualised Travellers to be scruffy, dishonest, environmentally destructive and unwilling to work. Those who described themselves as friendly saw Travellers in a more positive manner across the variables of honesty, dress etc. This is important for two reasons, firstly it verifies the self ascription of the respondents which was used in a number of variable correlations and secondly it provides some support to the idea that the 'media-metaphor-typologies' had actually been 'deposited' in the minds of the public.

From the evidence above, New Age Travellers cannot be seen as a 'threat-based-on experience'. The fairly high proportion of respondents who had experienced some form of contact had not themselves experienced direct difficulties nor had people with whom they had personal contact. If we are to inquire further about the threat of New Age Travellers it must be in terms of their symbolic threat to the dominant culture, lifestyle and ideology and not in terms of theft or violence to the person. Brown (1996) supports this in his research into policing New Age Travellers.

That is not to say however, that Travellers are always wrongly accused. Some Travellers do pose a nuisance particularly to farmers who rely on the management of land to survive economically. The perceived threat seems however, to be out of proportion to the

empirical evidence of the difficulties caused by Travellers as listed above. This was borne out by the experience of a number of Travellers that I met particularly the bender community at King's Hill and the Dongas Tribe.

The police tactics in dealing with Travellers were subject to considerable criticism in 1985 in the aftermath of the 'Battle of the Beanfield'. A concerted effort by Hampshire Police however, reversed this view within two years. Warwickshire Police too received some fairly negative coverage on their policy to exclude Travellers when the Criminal Justice Bill was first drafted in 1992. In the context of the CJ&POA, there is added support for the proposition that the influence of a small, but vociferous, minority was a contributory factor in the development of legislation. As a counterpoint to this general censure, the support given by respondents to provide temporary or permanent sites demonstrated in the survey runs in direct opposition to the amendments made to the Caravan Sites Act that took effect in November 1994.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **POLICING NEW AGE TRAVELLERS**

#### **A police perspective on the issues of policing New Age Travellers**

In order to make sense of the relationship between police and Travellers from the point of view of the police, a number of constabularies were selected for semi-structured interviews. Officers were selected for in-depth semi structured interviews to ascertain their views on a number of issues including their definition of New Age Traveller.

#### **Definition**

Interviewees were asked to define New Age Travellers. The responses to the question of identity and definition of the term included the following:

A. It's a term that has developed from the old Hippie convoys which developed in the 1970s period and I would differentiate them from being the Romany or Gypsy Travellers. I suppose they're New Age because they are a fairly modern organisation, I would perhaps even call them 'a cult', they're called New Age Travellers because they're not traditional in the Romany or Gypsy way, they are a completely separate group and they're a fairly modern version of a group of Gypsies.

B. They're people who've chosen to live a lifestyle in some form of mobile accommodation, truck van or bus, coach or caravan without any without any obvious means of support.

Interviewee C also defined New Age Travellers in relation to Gypsies. On the one hand he maintained that it was easy to tell the difference but pointed out that in applying the law to these groups there was no distinction.

C. Well, police officers, like the general public can tell the difference between New Age Travellers and non-New Age Travellers, you get a problem of definition. I've tried to scope out a definition whilst its

difficult to do that. You, I'm sure, can go on a New Age Traveller site and you will know this is a New Age Traveller site and you can go on another site and know it's not a New Age Traveller site. In our Policy Document we purposely don't try to do that because the new Criminal Justice and Public Order Act doesn't make the distinction. So we are basically saying Travellers means all Travellers and we also talk about illegal trespassers which is basically anyone illegally trespassing including hunt saboteurs and or others we use the generic term having said that, we acknowledge, and I'm nearly paraphrasing now I'll quote from here, *"Notwithstanding this the force will continue to recognise cultural ideological and other differences between various groups of Travellers."*

The Interviewee offered an additional practical definition for differentiating between traditional and New Age Travellers:

C. In practical terms my distinction is this. If I'm on a site with New Age Travellers and I say, hand on heart, "This is not a good place to be, it will be really good if you weren't here tomorrow" then they will stick two fingers up and they'll be there as long as they choose to. If I do that with a group of traditional Gypsies who are travelling and I say "Look fellas, this is not a good place to be it will be really good if you were not here tomorrow". They will say "Can we stay until the day after?" and I'll say, OK and they'll be gone.

Interviewee D saw a strong relationship between environmental protest and New Age Travellers.

D. But in the police service we probably lump together the alternative lifestyle coupled with environmental protest as being New Age Travellers, so there is usually an element of quite a different approach to life. For example the difference I would see between them and say, Gypsies is, for example, they are seen very much as an ethnic group that is still actually subscribing to some of the accepted societal things. So they do send their kids to school they do carry out types of wage earning for example tarmac and to some extent they abide by the rules albeit that they choose to be outside in the way they live. I think the New Age Travellers *are further down the spectrum* of being outside of society's norms by saying we don't accept those rules we don't accept that our children fit into that and we want an alternative lifestyle where we can choose how we live. I guess that creates more problems in particular the communities who perceive them as a threat and that's where we get drawn in.

Interviewee E who worked in a county with little recent experience of Travellers had only a vague notion of the group.

E. They are of no fixed abode and they move from place to place, from site to site throughout the country. The New Age part, I dunno perhaps I wouldn't like to say exactly what that means but its just, I would say it was a bit of a craze at the time I mean it seems, as far as I am aware, it seems to have died down of late.

Brown (1995:42) used 159 returned questionnaires to ascertain police perceptions (mostly male constables (73%)) as to what attributes define a New Age Traveller. The following table is taken from his research and shows the seven most frequent responses.

Definition	Respondents	%
Dropouts	65	40.9
Benefit claimants/spongers	61	38.4
Dirty smelly people	41	25.8
Live in vehicles	31	20.1
Live alternative lifestyles	23	14.5
Hippies	19	11.9
Drug users	19	11.9

(Source: Brown 1995:98)

Even accounting for a different methodology the results are in sharp contrast. This is further illuminated when looking at the derogatory comments concerning New Age Travellers in Brown's research. Whilst some contrast could be explained by the anonymity of Brown's respondents, the taped interviews undertaken by the author were generally of middle to high ranking officers. It may be the case therefore that the

considered views of those in command do not necessarily percolate down to those at the 'sharp end' of policing. This is important when one considers the impact of these opinions, which are more relevant to how Travellers are treated on a day to day basis.

From the answers given by the Interviewees, one might also conclude that a dilemma faces the police. On the one hand some would want to treat all illegal trespassers in the same way, and yet not only do they feel the groups are easily discernible, they also feel, that the New Age Travellers are more difficult to deal with. Unlike the traditional Travellers they are likely to start up raves and the subsequent drug dealing that goes with it. In addition to these points, police officers made a more general reference to New Age Travellers operating with little or no respect for the law; in effect, 'outlaws'. This raises the question of how, in practice, the police would actually deal with New Age Travellers differently. Groups which operate outside society's norms who may contribute to large scale gatherings that in turn lead to expensive public order policing would presumably need a different approach to the traditional Travellers. It also raises the question 'How would people be treated by the police, technically breaking the law (by for example 'parking up' in a lay-by) but not perceived as either Traditional or New Travellers. It may be alarming to police Commanders that many of their officers hold such openly hostile and prejudiced views on New Age Travellers and yet are being expected to treat all illegal trespassers with an even hand.

## **The Technology of policing New Age Travellers: Surveillance, the Intelligence Units and Operation Snapshot**

Before describing the problems associated with Travellers from the point of view of the police I have examined the methods developed to address these problems. The process of surveillance has, in the past, caused concern with the British public. However, as a result of police concerns about Travellers two National Intelligence Units were set up in 1985. In the words of the Derbyshire Constabulary Action Guide on this topic “The collation, evaluation and dissemination of intelligence in relation to the movement of potential illegal trespassers” is a vital element in the planning of police strategies.

There is obviously some difficulty in discussing in detail methods of surveillance as they are, by their nature, secret. On this issue Interviewee B was clear:

There are other aspects of intelligence gathering that we won't discuss, I mean it is quite understandable and it's quite right that we shouldn't do.

However, there was much information given on the development of surveillance systems and some indications of the methods used. The opportunities for obtaining intelligence cited by one force include day to day policing such as arrests for shop theft etc. Clearly other forces use ‘undercover’ intelligence and the use of informants. Interviewee B gave a fairly detailed description of the information system.

We have had an intelligence unit here for years, since, we had it in 1985 and we've had it ever since. In the earlier years, that is from '85 and in the next few years it was a sort of a temporary thing that would get revived during the summer and then closed down in the winter. Other forces were aware that we had one and we asked them to feed us information and we would feed them information.

The Interviewee explained the evolution of the northern and southern Intelligence Units.

...so the forces got together and said "look we ought to get this sorted out", what was decided was we would have the intelligence centre for the south of the country that is everything from a line basically from North Wales acrosswards, everything south of that would be ours and everything north of that would be Cumbria. They generate information to other forces, the forces that subscribe because other forces are paying for it, they give us information, we collate it, sort it and then feed it out to those that we think need it...it's not intended, and was never intended to be an intelligence unit for Travellers. Travellers are an element of it quite obviously, um but it's everything else that's associated with the problems associated with Travellers. So we're gathering information on drugs and on dealers and on people who are making money out of the events that arise when Travellers settle. So we're looking at people who are supplying generators, and power and stages and lighting and food and catering and all those other things So that's the purpose of it and that's where it all gets fed in and then we disseminate it out. The other thing we do is that if ... Travellers are settling or there is a rave taking place or some event taking place somewhere within the south of the country then because all that stuff is on computer...it gets downloaded onto lap tops, and the lap tops get sent to the force where the problem is developing. They have then got as much up-to-date information as we can give them, and when their problem is finished, they have an up-date or do whatever they want to do with it because they've got their own trained people, the lap tops come back and we will put that back into our computer, or edit it or whatever has to be done and it's got this constant system of weeding out the out-of-date useless information. What the force's do is they keep our intelligence unit updated with the local situation in their counties, and most times they do not need to do anything special for that because the bobby is responsible for an area of Yeovil for example then he is going to know roughly how many Travellers he's got on his patch and how many vehicles there are there, and if he does then that's a bit of a bonus and that will get fed into his own force and his own force will feed back that to the unit here and that's the way it works basically.

There was some mention of the use of intelligence by Interviewee A.

We were obviously picking up information throughout the period in 1993 about Traveller's movements and so on, we then approached...the County Council who chose at that stage not to move anybody on from the site.

The latter two interviewees were interviewed in late 1996 and early 1997 (post CJ&POA) and at a time when Travellers and protesters had become more closely associated with

each other. Interviewee D whilst acknowledging the surveillance, emphasised the need to put this into the context of modern policing, where resources were being reduced and the Home Secretary's Key National Objectives along with the forces own Key Performance Indicators were taking their toll.

D. I think everyone is aware that we do carry out surveillance and that might mean actually looking at those kinds of people and trying to identify who the organisers are. I think we would also try and encourage some of them to inform. Again useful informants in a general criminal sense are seen as a cost-effective way of dealing with it and there's no reason why we wouldn't do it in those situations as well. But I would put a strong caveat on that. There is a danger in going away thinking that these are all subversives and the police trying to infiltrate them. We simply don't have the resources or the time to do that unless we genuinely think that people's actions are going to be a large scale policing operation for whatever reason so we wouldn't be putting huge amounts of time and energy into it. It's not that much of a priority for us. We've got so many other priorities of crime and traffic.

Later in the interview he commented.

For instance, I don't think we run a New Age Traveller unit here. We run an intelligence unit to look at all things, but if during the summer... we anticipate the possibility of large gatherings of New Age Travellers then yes, we have set up dedicated units and we have started to gain the intelligence so that we know if New Age Travellers suddenly decide to come.

Interviewee C also played down the surveillance of Travellers as an issue for his constabulary. He denied the use of informants in that particular constabulary.

The question there almost presumes there is a network of Travellers and a network of police officers who are monitoring the Travellers and that is not the situation. The fact is police work is going on all the time almost one hundred percent of it is not related to Travellers. So in terms of intelligence, it's not what you would normally think of in terms of criminality. It's not that kind of intelligence gathering. Its simply being aware of movement that might lead us into problems i.e. problems of disorder or criminality which we will go into more in a little more detail but there is certainly no intelligence gathering in terms of having insiders or having Interviewees or that kind of thing...but to describe that as intelligence gathering is a little bit overrating it really.

About three years before the most recent interviews there had been some criticism of the use of surveillance techniques used by police in the press. Interviewee B explained the events around 'Operation Snapshot' from his perspective.

B. The unit was set up about fifteen months ago, it was set up in it's present form although as I say it was several years and we decided that what would be a good idea.. on a day throughout the country we would take a snapshot..... We didn't actually make that public but the media got to know and we started getting questions about this huge surveillance operation, called 'Operation Snapshot' and what the hell is it all about... what we couldn't get across to them, no matter how hard we tried, it seemed, was because they had this idea. It started with an article in the *Sunday Express* I think, one of the Sunday papers, where they had this story written about police officers lying in ditches, undercover and hiding up the trees and all sorts of things, a massive operation,... .. a snapshot which required photographs of all the Travellers and all the vehicles and so on, ...we couldn't get across was that we just did a snapshot, we didn't take one photograph, what we did was on a certain day let's just see how many we've got.

In addition to the two Intelligence Units the ACPO National Strategy suggests each force will operate its own intelligence gathering system to supply their designated unit via their Intelligence Liaison Officer. The guidance recommends that this covers all aspects of trespassory assembly and notes "cognizance is made of the primacy of interest in the subversive elements by Special Branch and A.R.N.I. (Animal Rights National Index)".

A recent informal discussion between the author and a senior officer indicated that the information units might at a later date be merged with the central intelligence unit operated by the Metropolitan Police and Special Branch. Further to this another informal discussion suggested a possible role for the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) in taking over the existing role of the less well resourced Northern and Southern



Intelligence Units. If that were to happen, which seems likely, then it may threaten the public support for NCIS which to date has concentrated on organised, serious crime.

### **Problems associated with Travellers**

Having defined the group and examined the issue of surveillance, we can now move on to examine the problems New Age Travellers present from the police point of view. Brown (1995) found that having contacted each of the 45 constabularies within England and Wales including the Transport Police and the Ministry of Defence Police, it was difficult to 'pin down' information on arrests and 'process offences'. These are offences dealt with by way of reporting for summons rather than by arrest. It was equally difficult to obtain information on responses to complaints from the public. 75.5% said they had no records which would identify New Age Travellers with regard to arrests. 91% kept no records for 'process offences' and complaints from the public that could be attributed to New Age Travellers (Brown 1995). Whilst Brown found it difficult to find specific quantifiable data on the actual problems caused by Travellers, he quotes a number of respondents who were asked if New Age Travellers were a problem to them. The responses are worth listing in full.

- They are a bit of a problem we had to close a beauty spot for 6 months, as there was a health hazard.
- We used to have a lot of problems with big festivals but after a couple of years of big operations to prevent them they are no longer a problem.
- They are not a problem. We don't allow them in, we just block the roads because (county) will take them.
- Dirty bastards we just move them on, our ACC hates them and has put out his own policy.
- We don't tolerate them. We give them a hard time and they go to (County).
- A lot of the problem is they are unsightly.

- When I've gone onto site I've actually found them reasonable to speak with and quite friendly (Brown 1995).

Researching Police Annual Reports between 1990 and 1993, Brown (1995) found 36% had references to New Age Travellers but again the references were not quantifiable. He was also able to access information directly from the Intelligence Units in Devizes and Penrith. His results here are interesting in that they highlight the extremely low number of actual recorded arrests in 1993 and 1994. (72 in 1993 and 93 in 1994) The majority of these were for possession of controlled drugs, many of which resulted in cautions. In contrast with this, the example of the existence of a Kalashnikov AK47 (also given to the author when interviewing at the Intelligence Unit) and high value drugs were given as a counter point to the otherwise minor nature of criminal activity directly attributable to New Age Travellers. Brown's questionnaire to individual Police officers provided the following results. Only the 10 most frequent problems are quoted.

Personal experience of a problem	Problem	%
None	50	31
Drugs	23	14
Traffic	20	13
Trespass	18	11
Uncooperative or abusive	17	11
Having no fixed abode	16	10
Theft and Kindred offences	15	9
Public Order	14	9
Begging	11	7
Dogs	10	6

(Source: Brown 1995:99)

Whilst drugs appear high on the list, the majority of police officers had experienced no problems with New Age Travellers. Brown's research suggests that the response to the actual offences attributable to offenders is out of proportion to the response they have attracted from the police.

Returning to the original research, a number of potential or assumed problems that may contribute to the disturbance of the normal life of the country were identified by the Interviewees questioned by the author. Firstly there seemed to be a division between those problems associated with large gatherings of people at festivals for example Castlemorton Common (see Baxter 1992) for details of the 'invasion' and implications for policing), but also the Phoenix Festival in Stratford and, of course, Stonehenge.

Separate to this, but related was the second issue of policing small groups using the 1986 Public Order Act to prevent large populations building up. Thirdly there was a problem presented by virtue of being on "someone's back doorstep", (a general but repetitious nuisance). Fourthly there was a problem of increased theft, criminal damage, fifthly, particular issues around drug misuse and sixthly, general environmental issues associated with noise, other forms of pollution and hygiene.

Inevitably this is a classification that overlaps: in particularly between groups 1 and 2. In the later interviews the link between the build up of large gatherings and problems with drug use were reported to be quite strong. For example Interviewee C. was clear about

the relationship between the numbers of Travellers in one site and probability of disorder and drug dealing.

I hate to be tied down to a specific number but the general view is 12 to 16 vehicles. Once you get bigger than that, there will always be someone on that site whose way of making money is to run a rave, and the way they make money is either by charging to go on, selling drink or reputedly selling drugs.

As a general statement concerning the spread of alleged offences committed by New Age

Travellers Interviewee B suggested the following:

B. I can only speak third hand because we've had no direct experience of it, but it's noise, it's nuisance, it's disruption, it's disorder, it's pollution in terms of the people who live locally, don't actually want them there. They're living in a lane or track or area and they are polluting because there's no facilities there, there's no sewers or drains, or that sort of thing. There is a much higher percentage of certain types of offences than you find amongst the rest of the population, primarily drug abuse, thefts and some burglaries and some handling stolen property.

C. If you use the term public disorder in general, the main things we will be concerned about are the threat to public order, the potential for public nuisance and... as I mentioned before, raves and with that goes the potential for drug dealing and related offences.

Interviewee D provided a more general set of concerns:

D. Well you're back to what is your definition there. So if you take my definition, which included environmental protesters, then there are some clear issues to do with public order and issues for example with the roads protests and that's what I mean by public order. There are essentially lawful processes taking place are being prevented by what are seen as New Age Travellers.

### **Large gatherings**

Castlemorton Common was probably the most significant single event in crystallising Part

V of the CJ&POA. Interviewee D supports this view.

Arguably that (Castlemorton) was the lead on some of the powers and really, if you step back from it, you could ask what problems has that

caused. We had similar things happen in this county and largely its about communities feeling threatened.

The view of Interviewee A was that a major part of police intervention was to prohibit large gatherings in order to avoid the potential problems that would occur.

In Castlemorton Common, the problems down there, where the residents were completely surrounded by the Travellers... The Travellers were calling to the houses, asking to use their toilets, breaking down fences, causing these sort of problems, minor, trivial things but if they're repeated as I said they tend to build up in people's minds. Once they're affected in that way then they're very ready to complain and hope that something will be done about it.

Interviewee D also used Castlemorton as an example but this was tempered with some doubts as to the wisdom of using police resources at all in situations that not have been as serious as claims from the media would suggest.

But we've also seen in this area large numbers of New Age Travellers meeting together in the summer and of course we have the famous example of the solstice in the West Mercia Police area where they took over a piece of common land and turned it into... Castlemorton. It's about large scale partying and believed drug use and so on and not much more than that. I guess my view was when I dealt with New Age Travellers a couple of year ago, was that if they went away and did what they wanted to do in a quieter part of the country we would all be quite happy. It's just that they choose to do it in a populated area and sort of publicly flout the rules that kind of draws the police into it and we are then under some pressure both from the community and the politicians to be seen to challenge it. But I'm not sure the police are necessarily happy at being drawn into that. I personally am not, from a policy point of view, but we see ourselves making choices here about how we use our resources, and if that's the choice, then at times, I feel uncomfortable about that.

More serious account of the threats imposed by festivals was given by Interviewee B who used the example of the last free festival at Stonehenge to convey his view of the attendant problems of large groups of Travellers and associated groups.

When you look at '84 when there wasn't absolute anarchy, but it was close to it and there were some serious offences committed on the site and associated with the Travellers that were there. I mean there were

robberies and protection rackets, there was open drug abuse, drug dealing, there was violence, there were people shot, there were sixty stolen vehicles were found burnt out on the site after they left. I mean all of those things were partly a result of the way in which the thing was being policed.

Interviewee C however, was clear about the logistic and cost implications for attempting to deal with Travellers in large numbers which he recognised as being intrinsically problematic.

...so my view has changed. The original view was let it develop, let the law take its course, let the landowners take their action and in two or three months the action will be taken and they'll be moved on. My view has changed on that because of the practicalities of trying to move them when you actually feel I want to move in this situation once the numbers are bigger than, (and I'm picking twelve as an approximate number) then it becomes almost impossible without very large numbers and you get the potential for the *Beanfield* we are now, and nothing could be written in stone, but the general principle now would be to try and prevent large sites developing if that is possible we can't, and this isn't for publication, or at least for attributing *,we cant in all honesty say we will act because the cost benefit analysis is just not in favour of doing it,* and a Chief Officer would be foolish to give his senior officers a '*carte blanche*' to act without regard to the cost but in principle it will be to try and prevent large numbers gathering. (My emphasis)

### **Policing small groups**

Interviewee A. described the problems presented by illegal campers and the action needed to make sure that the Travellers were moved on before they could settle and possibly attract more Travellers.

The first thing we need to do in these circumstances is to find out who owns the land the Travellers have gone on to...with the co-operation of the land-owner if it's done almost immediately then under the Public Order Act we can ask these trespassers to leave. We usually give them a reasonable time to move off and we've had several instances in the county since the beginning of 1993 when we've used this to great effect and it's been quite effective. It also cuts down the amount of manpower you need, person power I should say, resources that you require to move people on if it becomes difficult, and very often the Travellers are in a

sense law abiding because if you give them a Court Order or an Order issued under some kind of legislation they do recognise that there is a lawful authority behind the request and generally they co-operate and there aren't that many problems.

Referring to the situation in his county he continues:

The activities there generally started causing problems with one or two local residents who had a couple of businesses that were in that vicinity. We were sort of monitoring the situation there throughout but the difficulty in both the (site) and the (site) was that initially we couldn't find out who the owner of (the site) was, and so from a civil point of view for him to get an order to repossess his land or an injunction to have the Travellers moved off, because it was complicated by the sale so we had to go through Estate Agents and so on, but eventually he was traced and in fact he lived abroad. ... those sites caused us concern because at the beginning of the year and the New Age Travellers historically have the festivals and our concern then was that these would be the first pockets of another *Castlemorton* so we were conscious that could happen.

Interviewee B reported that there were no longer problems with New Age Travellers in his county. This was, in part, attributable to the police policy. He referred to the neighbouring counties which, according to the Southern Traveller Information Unit, accounted for fifty percent of the Travellers and vehicles monitored by the police. The issue of policing small groups raised the question of police discretion. Whilst the police have certain powers under the POA as does the local authority, if designated (prior to the 1994 CJ&POA) under 1968 the Caravan Sites Act, it is a discretionary process as to how proactive the police choose to be at informing the local authority. In the case of Interviewee A the impression gained was that, in the interests of prevention, a proactive position was adopted which had the net effect of moving small groups of New Travellers out of the county. At the start of the research period (October 1993) there were three sites but within six months all had been moved on. In another county studied, a proactive approach had resulted in 'removing' Travellers from the county altogether. It would be

worth further investigation to compare the police strategy of all counties and how this compares to the national strategy relating to co-operation between forces. Clearly there is evidence that some police forces adopt a 'fortress policy' whilst other appear to have a more tolerant policy towards Travellers. This is in direct contradiction of the ACPO National Strategy and may lead to additional costs being met by those constabularies that adopt, for the time being, a more tolerant approach. If this were to be the case then it is easy to envisage that a hardening of police attitudes may result as a response to ever tightening constraints on resources. This would further increase the pressure on those Travellers who have chosen to stay in this country to abandon the nomadic lifestyle.

### **General nuisance**

Interviewee A described, on a number of occasions, the nuisance caused by Travellers which, although not serious in isolation, became problematic if it was repeated over a period of time.

What you might loosely term nuisance offences...and then we had complaints of dogs worrying livestock, you know animals being injured and I don't think they were actually killed but the dogs were worrying sheep and cattle and then the farmer becomes upset about it. Through the criminal law there is an offence of dogs worrying livestock and police can take action and deal with the complaints but the broader issue is the fact that Travellers are allowed to remain where they are.

Interviewee B noted that generally his county had experienced no problems with Travellers since the major public order problems of the mid 1980's but when asked to characterise the range of offences he provided the following list:

Problems that have been associated with Travellers, that is nuisance, complaints from the public about damage, about problems associated with drug abuse and other complaints, criminal actions associated with



criminal damage, have not been seen in this county to any extent but certainly they have been in neighbouring counties.

Lord Scarman's suggestion that public tranquillity should have a greater priority than law enforcement (made in the context of the Brixton riots) may be applicable in terms of a police strategy in dealing with Travellers. It was clear that in some counties this approach was the informal policy; the reasons for this could derive from a number of sources.

Firstly the financial restraints that police forces face today would have the effect of reprioritizing certain offences and 'nuisance' activity. Secondly the increasing pressure from the Home Office via the Home Secretary's Key National Objectives to make progress against specific key performance criteria would tend to move police activity to those areas specified in the Home Secretary's Key National Objectives.

### **Increased theft and criminal damage**

None of the Interviewees provided hard evidence of Travellers contributing to an increase in theft or criminal damage although the quote below suggests that arrests had been made. Secondary sources of data such as Brown's study suggest only about 30 such offences in two years (1993 -4) were found in the Intelligence Unit database. Only 8% of police returning Brown's questionnaire reported this as a problem. A typical response is given below

We recently had one (site) at (A town) where they've been there for nearly twelve months and of course the nearest town to (village) is (A town) and they go shopping or whatever. I know that some of them have been arrested for shoplifting and burglary offences in the village near to where the camp is set up.

It was however, difficult to obtain precise information regarding the link between alleged offences and criminal convictions. In reply to a question on the increase in successful prosecution Interviewee A. had some difficulties.

I don't recall, if you want an emphatic answer on that I would have to check, I don't recall that anybody was actually taken to court for any complaint, the trouble with the complaint is that you have to identify the offender of course. This is often difficult to do in these sort of circumstances, so whilst the complaint goes through that range of criminal activity or civil activity they are not always detected in the sense that we catch who is responsible.

### **Pollution and local authorities**

Police cited pollution as a problem; it was also implied by many of the derogatory remarks made by police in Brown's survey. Police interviewed by the author felt that they needed to be involved in terms of preventative action. This was generally undertaken in the form of joint work with the local authority in moving Travellers on or 'civil' prosecution. It is clear that local authorities have a significant policing role themselves and that the police often work closely with the local authority to evict Travellers, either at a district or county council level. For example Derbyshire Police Action Guide suggests "the County Emergency Planning Officer may be consulted to co-ordinate the County Council's response". It would be wrong however, to assume there is always a clear cut relationship between local authority action and the type of problem anticipated.

As part of the primary research an 'Emergency Planner' was interviewed. This confirmed the relationship between emergency planning and police in one county as well as confirming actions that were designed to stop Travellers from staying in the county.

Our role there is really being forewarned to know they (New Age Travellers) are coming, there is very little we can do from the local authority's viewpoint before they come, other than be prepared and be ready to you know '*shut up shop*' if they are in the area. I think from discussions I have had with the police over the years is that they are going to get short shrift in (The County). They will pass through and I think that is what has tended to happen over the last few years, they have tended to camp around the outskirts of the County or over the border. They have actually avoided (The County) because they have had the sort of thing of well we will get moved on pretty quickly so lets go to somewhere where they are not so hot off the mark if we are in the County...It's given us that reputation for toughness. I vaguely recall the then Assistant Chief Constable going on the radio saying they will get short shrift if they come into (the County), we will keep them moving.

Thus the mere appearance of Travellers across the borders of the county is seen as a potential public order issue requiring *Emergency Planning* to prevent them from settling.

## **Drugs**

The problems of drug dealing was perhaps most strikingly highlighted by the drugs squad officer who was interviewed about Travellers. The following two quotes provide examples of his view on this matter.

New Age Travellers, from my point of view, they are a little community on site and they probably feel relatively safe on there with regard to any criminal activity they want to be involved in, particularly drugs, safety in numbers I suppose. I mean everyone knew that the Travellers were up at (the site) or sites like that and it was just like a magnet to the local users and small suppliers and it is just a question of pulling up on the site and you would be sort of surrounded by a certain number of people offering to sell drugs. It's that blatant and the deal takes place there and then and they drive off. It's as simple as that.

He also mentioned the difficulties in tracking dealers who were not known through the usual intelligence networks. The sale and illegal use of drugs were mentioned by Interviewees in the context of offences associated with Travellers, but the relationship

between drug use and Travellers (with the possible exception of the Drugs Squad Officer) contrasted sharply with the media view of ‘drug crazed Hippies’. From the interviews with the interviewees, the issue of drug use and supply did not seem to be particularly significant over and above the concerns about drug use and the young people generally, although connections were made between drug dealing and raves and drug dealing and large gatherings /festivals. Examples of other responses were as follows:

D. It’s about large scale partying and *believed* drug use and so on.

C. ...and the way they make money is either by charging to go on, selling drink or *reputedly* selling drugs.

Referring to the difficulties that festival organisers encounter Interviewee A. referred briefly to drugs:

But the knock-on effect is they can be dragged into allowing their premises to be used for drugs.

## **Public Support**

Public attitudes to the police have changed dramatically over the last few decades, since the ‘Golden Age’ of the 50’s. This may be, as Reiner (1992) suggests, due to a fundamental shift in our society as it reaches a state of post-modernity in conjunction with a more specific concern related to the ‘Criminal Justice System’. These have been the notorious miscarriages of justice, the Royal Commission, and the accelerated production of Criminal Justice Acts since 1982. Public opinion of the police has enjoyed a checkered history; it is therefore of some considerable importance that in this study, public opinion, is examined in relation to the police’s role in preserving social order and their interaction with New Age Travellers. The tactics used by the police in policing the

Wapping dispute and the miners' strike showed not only that confrontation was expensive, but also risked losing public support for police actions.

There was a considerable difference between the coverage of New Age Travellers by local media compared to the national media. Interviewee B. described the change that occurred as a result of one particular news story concerned with the farmer, Les Atwell. His particular circumstances turned out to be a critical event in local public opinion. Guidance notes for the police in media relations stressed the importance of highlighting the intention of preserving the peace to maintain public tranquillity and to prevent illegal festivals and to deal rapidly and effectively with lawbreakers. This is aimed at dispelling the idea that police are agents of the state, working only in the interest of a few wealthy landowners. Police guidance also stressed the need to emphasise support from landowners and local authorities and the co-operation between police forces. It was also thought necessary to bring to the public's attention the fact that 'preventative' policing was less costly. There appeared to be some evidence that the costs of confrontational, medium to large scale operations was not only high on the police's agenda but was an issue that would provoke public sympathy, as in the final analysis they would have to pay. Lastly it was suggested that:

any examples of local disruption caused by potential festival goers causing disorder, crime, damage, vandalism, nuisance are all issues which will consolidate public opinion behind police action, and public figures should be encouraged to express their support (Derbyshire Constabulary 1996. 'Action Guide to Illegal Trespass and unlicensed 'Rave Parties').

## **The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994**

Two Interviewees were asked to comment on the changes that had occurred as a result of the CJ&POA. One respondent, whilst acknowledging there was, in practice, little difference in his area, was concerned on the effects of traditional Gypsies of the new criminal trespass laws combined with the repeal of certain sections of the CSA. There was speculation just after the Act received Royal Assent that it would not be popular with the police because might cause unnecessary friction between themselves and the travelling community as a whole. Referring to a question asking for examples of differences that the Act might have brought about Interviewee C replied:

On the ground, in practice I think its not. My fear and concern when the change occurred was that non-New Age Travellers would be adversely affected as a result of the change. Our previous policy was, before New Age Travellers were on the scene, that we would not be involved in moving on New Age Travellers just for the sake of it as a matter of policy even when New Age Travellers came on the scene and Section 39 became available under the old Public Order Act. We had a clear written understanding in this Force that Section 39 would not be used as a matter of course.

The use of the Act is however, a central feature to the ACPO national strategy which suggests that each force should consider the use of police powers, particularly the CJ&POA.

Yes, the main difference is the involvement of other agencies and that follows from the Act giving powers to local authorities as well as police. It changes some of the local authority powers...local authorities are no longer statutory required to provide sites but they now have powers to move on whether it was Travellers or Gypsies but there is also this issue of tolerance written into the Act...our feeling was the powers were best seen as complementary.

Regarding its helpfulness in dealing with the policing of Travellers, interviewee D was only marginally positive:

...(changes in legislation) have been helpful because they have clarified some of the powers.... From a more strategic view there is concern in the police service that we are now being used to enforce what would be previously civil issues criminal so trespassing on land which historically has never been a criminal matter. It effectively now becomes criminal in certain circumstances. Over a long period of time that means the police are being required to do more things because demands are being placed on us during a time of reducing resources. Secondly the type of thing we are being asked to do are more confrontational and more likely to lead us down the road of enforcement rather than being community spirited.

However, Interviewee B was able to comment on the use of the POA before amendment.

Bans on processions, Section 39 of the Public Order Act, and that has been effective...that particular part of the Public Order Act is quite ideal for it. The part of the Public Order Act that relates to trespass on land, we have made full use of that, but of course that is not quite as helpful as it could be because you've got this restriction on the powers that apply with a certain number of the vehicles, and certain actions that is taken when people go onto land and so on, and that is a safeguard and I can understand the reason for it, but when it comes to putting it into effect it does give you an additional restrictions which may not fit the particular circumstances that you have got.

### **Recent changes in policing**

Nigel Brearley and Mike King (1996) summarise the considerable developments in respect of policing social protest in recent years. To some extent these developments overlap the developments related to the policing of New Age Travellers firstly when the Travellers are also protesters but also in the context of Travellers being part of 'large gatherings' or raves. The developments suggested by Brearley and King are summarised as follows:

- Improved community Liaison has 'headed off' spontaneous disorder in a number of localities.

- The development of tension indicators has enabled improved forward planning and facilitated preventative negotiation and action
- The use of detective work pre- and post- disorder, as well as improved evidence gathering during disorders has reduced the immediate necessity for confrontation in some cases.
- Contingency awareness and training has improved markedly
- Improvements have been made to control officers on the ground
- The range and quality of equipment has also improved, giving rise to a greater flexibility in terms of police responses to disorder.

(Brearley and King 1996: 113)

There are clearly economic constraints that face all police authorities which are having a dual effect. On the one hand resources are being targeted when and only when a real need arises and secondly there is a move to what is described as a proactive approach. This latter development would include the increasing reliance on surveillance that could bring into question the perception of police legitimacy particularly when it includes the surveillance of 'respectable activists'. Interviewee D echoed these concerns but implied another dimension to the problem of public policing; that of the growing influence of 'managerialism' in the public sector. (See also Sheptycki 1998)

It's also being squeezed by being targeted towards performance indicators and so on and if you put all that with this, then the likelihood is that this 'holy grail' of policing, which is policing by consent and community focus of police, which is very much the flavour of this area, will become less and less relevant and will become less and less our service because we will be doing things like this and will be putting enormous resources into what is civil trespass turned criminal and therefore we've got less resources to do other things. Certainly we have seen that in some of the environmental protest that have happened.



The Interviewee was less convinced that tactics or strategy had changed as a result of the growth of contemporary protest. He described the watershed as the miners' strike of 1984. Interviewee D saw both an increase preventative measures and military tactics as characterising the recent developments in Public Order policing.

We haven't really had any of the large scale road building protests ...I guess it goes back to the Miners' strike. That for me, was the fundamental shift in public order policing, and what we saw there was a militarisation of the service how it was organised and commanded things were run on military grounds. I think as we have become more sophisticated and we recognise...that we are far more intelligence driven and therefore if we think there is a likelihood of a large-scale protest whether that is animal exports or road building then, yes, we would treat that in much the same way. On the basis that's cost effective policing as much as anything. If you know when the demonstrations are going to come then you can take some risks on the numbering. I think in the strategic view that is certainly the case. More locally it depends on what you are actually trying to deal with.

## **Conclusions**

The attractiveness of alternative lifestyles and ways of thinking about the world may have led to a different style of public order policing in Britain. In some respects these changes can be seen as the consequences of policing in a post-modern age (Reiner 1992, Sheptycki 1998) where the old certainties of class conflict dissolve into relativism and diversity. Here diversity of view becomes a serious challenge to the legitimacy of police action as it represents articulate and influential coalitions of contemporary protest focused on environmental issues. On the other hand there is still much resentment of the apparent impunity of such contemporary folk heroes such as Travellers and more recently individuals such as 'Swampy' who can be perceived as causing so much public expense.

Clearly the police have a difficult task. The task is to respond to Travellers themselves, to respond to public concerns and simultaneously maintain public order. This is particularly true of their experience of larger groups of nomadic people (and non-nomadic) congregating together which in the past has been problematic to them. In the context of diminishing resources, and the influence of managerialism on constabularies across the country, the thought that valuable resources could be spent in a major confrontation at the expense of missing potential Key Performance Indicators must seem abhorrent to operational commanders.

In the minds of the interviewees that I talked to, there seemed to be a fairly clear idea of a discrete group of people who could be identified as New Age Travellers by their appearance, by their vehicles and their involvement in contemporary protest. These people were seen as a potential threat to public order and it was seen necessary to engage in surveillance and to employ covert methods of intelligence in order to assist in the monitoring of suspect groups and individuals. Ultimately there was a perception that failure to act 'proactively' would lead to high resources being spent in dispersing groups. The objectives of these exercises appeared to be as follows:

- a) to break the groups up into smaller more easily manageable units.
  - b) to prevent the congregation of large groups of Travellers and associated groups who might otherwise organise illegal 'free festivals' or raves or some form of environmental protest
  - c) to tackle the potential of drug dealing
- and, less overtly,

d) to encourage Travellers to move on to some other location outside the jurisdiction of that particular police force.

Interestingly, there was a belief that New Age Travellers were organised, although the extent to which this was believed to be true was not apparent, nor were the reasons for these assumptions given apart from vague references to intelligence in respect of Travellers organising themselves in relation to attending festivals. The issue of organisation may be significant as the police response to an organised group swelling to a potential of 20,000 at an illegal festival will be different to small groups of people attracted to the nomadic lifestyle. Even so there was some evidence that groups as small as twenty would begin to attract police attention primarily through intelligence, followed by attempts to move on or break the groups up. It is likely that the degree of organisation, due to the growth of environmental protest and changes in technology in the last few years (the development of the Internet and cheaper mobile phones) has, in fact, led to a degree of organisation that was only presumed in 1994.

At the beginning of this research it was intended to look at changes in summary and indictable offences at a level of Petty Sessional Division. This was to establish or not any noticeable increase of particular offence type in areas where there were high concentrations of New Age Travellers. The idea behind this was to attempt to gain some measure of the offences that were being committed that led to the moral panic of the late eighties and the early nineties. This now looks like a naive objective, as the number of offences that reached court and therefore could be technically attributable to New Age Travellers would be so small and unreliable. Attempts by Brown (1995) to undertake a similar approach through information from the intelligence Units, Constabulary Annual

Reports and a questionnaire sent to individual Officers demonstrated conclusively that there is little empirical evidence to connect Travellers with criminal activity.

He concludes:

During the course of this study no evidence has been found to suggest that 'New Age Travellers' are responsible for large scale or prolific criminal activity.

However, if, as Brown suggests these people are not responsible for large scale prolific criminal activity why is the possession of characteristics attributable to the archetypal New Age Traveller a reason for virtual exclusion from certain counties and inclusion onto Intelligence data bases.

Police opinions relating to issue of drug dealing varied from those who felt that the nature of the lifestyle lent itself to this activity and those who felt that this behaviour simply reflected contemporary youth culture in a more general sense. It was clear that two interviewees felt that New Travellers had been involved in local burglaries and drug dealing although there was some contradictions that suggested the range of offences were similar to the normal population and an emphasis on drug use and criminal damage. The detailed piece of research into police perceptions as to the frequency and nature of offending by Travellers undertaken by Brown was helpful in this respect.

Public support particularly local public support was seen as a key element of the effective policing of Travellers. The relationship between this and media coverage was illustrated by the case of the farmer Les Atwell, whose role as an 'innocent victim' clearly helped to sway local public opinion. Whilst, in general terms, the reputation of the police is

declining particularly in inner cities only 20 years ago Belson's report (1975) on the relationship between the public and the Metropolitan Police demonstrated the police themselves 'quite appreciably underestimate the degree to which those reactions are favourable' (Belson 1975). (In view of the recent Stephen Lawrence enquiry, during which time the Metropolitan Police were severely criticised, this may not be such an underestimation). For Warwickshire Police, in respect of policing Travellers, Belson's conclusions were borne out by local research carried out by the author.

All interviewees alluded to the need for co-operation with other individuals agencies or organisations; this is supported by the ACPO National Strategy for New Age Travellers. There was reference for the need to deal with the issue of unlawful camping, using a combined approach, involving the local authority in what seemed to be similar to 'case conferencing' in order to develop a plan. Whilst this seemed like a good example of co-operation the process could be criticised for being proactive rather than reactive, i.e. assuming that there is an automatic need to 'deal' with Travellers.

The local authorities were clearly major players in the policing of Travellers. It was seen as helpful for local authorities to take a lead role in policing small groups of Travellers; in the case of larger groups, the police saw that they had the lead role to play. Concerns must arise however, in respect of the legitimate authority of the Emergency Planning teams working with the police to exclude Travellers from their counties. Not only is this contrary to ACPO National Strategy it raises very serious concerns of civil liberty.

Ironically, the response of the media to the surveillance techniques employed by the police in respect of Travellers has caused a similar degree of alarm. The Intelligence Units based in Cumbria and Wiltshire were the focus of disquiet which may have lead to a swing of support towards the plight of Travellers in tandem with a swing away from support of some of the measures brought in by the CJ&POA. The possibility of NCIS taking over the responsibility of the surveillance of 'illegal trespassers' is an alarming prospect the effects of which we can only guess at.

Linking co-operation with intelligence, it seems that before the CJ&POA forces were more likely to co-operate in terms of sharing information about the movement of Travellers (Operation Nomad and Operation Snapshot) than in a proactive and co-ordinated response to 'the problem' of Travellers. There now seems to be a much greater awareness, in some areas at least, of the need for inter agency and intra agency co-operation which is supported by the ACPO National Strategy. Looking at the spread of New Age Travellers across the country (see appendix) it is noticeable that in 1997 some counties do not have New Age Travellers living there; in some cases this can only be as a result of police policy and practice and not a result of geographic or demographic influences.

It can be reasonably concluded that the CJ&POA has had a significant effect on policing of Travellers, however, its effect seems to have been more complicated than the legislators may have anticipated. There was frequent reporting during the passage of the Act through Parliament of the fact that the police found the existing public order

legislation difficult to use in cases involving New Age Travellers. This view is not borne out by the police interviewed subsequent to Royal Assent.

There was also the recognition that a degree of tolerance from the public as well as the police themselves was necessary if policing was to be effective. The police regarded draconian responses as being counter-productive as they increased 'interest' (public support) for the group and, at the same time, act as possible stimuli for resistance. Events that took place subsequent to the implementation of the Act have borne out this concern.

Robert Reiner, in pessimistic mood, suggests a stark choice for our society; barbarism or Social Justice. In a post-modern world he advocates, *inter alia*, local policing which is "adjusted to the plural priorities and cultures of a much more diverse social world" (1992:782) but concludes that the odds seem strongly to favour barbarism. Mike King's response to this suggests that "given the dynamic relationship between policing and dissent, new forms of both (will) develop". (1996:105)

Attitudes towards Travellers, awareness of their lifestyle and of their differences must be an important factor in making sure that policy is reflected in practice. The attitudes of many police constables show a high degree of prejudice against New Age Travellers that in any other context would, or at least could, result in disciplinary action.

The fact that police operate in a world that is not wholly controllable by them seriously undermines the potency of allegations of organised or structural oppression. That is not to say that critical accounts of policing, particularly public order policing, are redundant.

The evidence above shows that, in the context of policing Travellers, the police have been severely prejudiced against the collective group and, on occasions, directly responsible for occurrences of public disorder.

There seems some validity to the view that influences far more threatening than the Travellers themselves may put in to question not only police effectiveness in controlling Travellers but may suggest that they are losing control of their own destiny. One of Sheptycki's (1998) postulates of postmodern police brings together concepts of 'customerisation' (O'Malley 1996), and 'marketization'. These two terms could also be called as managerialism. The idea of managerialism in turn relates to the notion of the hybrid of private and public forms of security (Johnston 1992): the events on Yellow Wednesday at Twyford Down, discussed later in this text, provides an example of the development of this hybrid.

The policing of this relatively small and vulnerable group can act as a map of the battle ground in British public order policing, its resistance to militarism and separate specialisms, its faith in policing by consent, its continued public support and its attempts to respond to cultural pluralism. It may also indicate how the police will attempt to avoid Reiner's potential dystopia. Lastly, it may indicate that the intentions of those who develop strategies to 'deal' with Travellers fail in the struggle to maximise resources through Key performance Indicators coupled with an increasing spiral of demands on policing and perceived increases in crime.



## CHAPTER NINE

### ETHNOGRAPHY: 'ALTERNATIVE' VIEWS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

No study of social control would be complete without consideration of those who are the formal target or specified object of control. This consideration cannot rely entirely on mediated information or secondary data but needs to be based on direct evidence derived from the subjects themselves. The travelling scene, for all its media attention, remains to many an unknown phenomenon. In the words of one of the Travellers I interviewed it was a kind of secret history:

It's been happening for the last 2 decades that it's like the secret history that people find... very few people find out and very few people know what's going on and I'm sure people who went to Greenham had exactly the same sorts of experiences for exactly the same sorts of reasons  
(Alex).

This aspect of the research was designed not simply to be a cursory consideration before moving onto other chapters, but an attempt to understand the very disparate group of people who are captured by the term 'New Age Traveller', their ideologies, situation and experiences. I wanted to look further into the 'push/ pull' factors that have been attributed to Travellers as an explanation of their particular lifestyle. It was also important to investigate from the point of view of Travellers themselves, their experiences of social control and reactions to attempts at coercion. In writing this chapter, I have combined information derived from contemporary texts, raw data collected by another researcher and data gathered from my personal experience as a 'participant observer'.

Even allowing for the relatively short period of this study i.e. 1993 to 1997 the name 'New Age Traveller' began to seem a little outdated and certainly remains unpopular with

Travellers. Many Travellers have joined a wider social movement of contemporary protest. It was, I felt, necessary to spend some time briefly exploring other dimensions of the 'Travellers scene' particularly connections with road protest and the rave scene etc.

The purpose of this chapter therefore is to gain some understanding of how Travellers resisted the attempts to criminalise a lifestyle and how it felt for them to be the object of social control. I will examine the claims made by others of Travellers and test these through reference to Travellers themselves. It is, by its ethnographic nature, ideographic rather than nomothetic and cannot attempt to represent the views of all those who now make up the DIY culture. It is however, a genuine attempt to describe the experiences of the people with whom I spent a little time and to attempt to understand the process of control from a different perspective to those responsible for part of the controlling mechanism. Whilst there is some evidence that many Travellers have emigrated to Ireland, Portugal and Spain, this ethnographic study was, in the main, concentrated in south-west England between 1997 and 1998. I was fortunate however, to be able to obtain some primary data in other geographic locations.

In any account of this nature it is easy to appear to be part of an anthropological discourse with its attendant connotations of the passive in order to codify and reassemble the 'salient' points and thus lose the very essence of what it is they are experiencing. I have, for the purposes of clarity, excluded the kind of detail that would otherwise reduce my experiences and observations to rambling and over long account. However, in doing so I am aware that I run the risk of falling into the trap outlined above. It is thus perhaps worth stating at this stage that passages below which err towards a 'passive/descriptive'

mode, are an attempt to help the reader rather than an indication of my distance from the subject. A lasting impression from this fieldwork was the tremendous energy and commitment demonstrated to a lifestyle which demands a high degree of physical, mental and, in some cases spiritual accomplishment. Any account that failed to acknowledge this impression would be, in my view, weaker for that omission. Three sites were selected for study. I outline below a brief description of the sites along with some discussion on gaining access.

### **The King's Hill Collective**

The King's Hill Collective can be seen as solution to increasing pressures of living on the road for Travellers who were bringing up children and as a solution to (and rejection of) mainstream consumerist society by non Travellers many of whom were originally city dwellers. Nevertheless because many of the members had direct travelling experience, this community provided an example of one extreme in a continuum between those Travellers for whom the tag 'New Age' is a complete irrelevance and those for whom it is at least understandable if not desirable. This group is on the 'New Age', ecologically aware, ideologically 'hippie' and 'sorted' end of the New Age Traveller continuum discussed in the previous chapter.

The site, which overlooks Pilton farm (the site of the Glastonbury Festival), is slowly maturing now with numerous trees, vegetables and a fully functioning water bore hole which supplies the site with drinking water. Water is extracted on a weekly basis using an old petrol engine and pump. The water, which is filtered by a series of sand traps, is inspected on an annual basis. The collective is concerned to demonstrate its willingness to

adhere to regulations were this is possible and not contrary to its collective ideology. There are 16 plots, each at some stage of the development of the site, having a bender.

The benders are almost exclusively constructed of light green Tarpaulin over a hazel wood matrix. Stainless steel flexi-vents lead from stoves in the benders. These act as chimneys supported by a single branch driven into the earth. The stoves are usually home-made conversions of gas cylinders which have been cut and welded into shape although there was an solid fuel *Rayburn* installed in one bender during the study period. Inside the benders bedding is arranged on wooden pallets or platforms and there is often an additional gas stove for cooking. Water is supplied either directly from the holding tank or stored in water barrels. Lighting is almost exclusively by candles or 'hurricane lamps'. Twelve volt batteries and in one case a wind generator supplies electricity for radios and in one case a small black and white television. Some of the more established benders had a variety of trees and shrubs around the canvass construction including apple, pear and fig trees as well as a variety of fruits.

The collective is serviced by a pay telephone located in an old red telephone box. Its position, in the middle of a field, is as incongruous as the lamp post in C.S. Lewis's Narnia books and is in a way reminiscent of the TARDIS of Doctor Who, adding to the slightly surreal or magical atmosphere of the place. Inside a small domestic pay phone is installed and managed by one of the community.

At the centre of the site is a clearing of grass that acts as a communal area surrounded by a small circular mound inside of which runs a circular ditch in the fashion of a place of

worship. In the centre of the circle is a small collection of sea stones collected from a nearby shoreline. There are four gaps in the mound representing the solstices and equinoxes, which correspond to the cardinal points of the compass. Each section of the mound was constructed during the period of the year that it represents. There are symbols representing Beltane and other significant calendar dates placed appropriately on the circle.

The King's Hill site owes its existence to Chris Black, a man who was broadly sympathetic to alternative lifestyles and provided initial financial support to the project. Chris Black purchased the field and 'loaned' sixteen plots to a number of Travellers and bender dwellers. The newly formed community developed a 'constitution' and organised a system whereby the loan of the plots was paid back over a period of two years through weekly contributions to a central fund. Thus after two years the land belonged to sixteen stakeholders.

### **Initial contact**

Whilst I was interviewing Steve Staines at *Friends and Families of Travellers*, Christine, one of the founder members of the community had come in to update FFT on the latest developments in the planning case for the site. After some discussion I was to find the site and visited early on Saturday morning 7th June 1997. The bender I first visited was about 22ft across and decorated with numerous Native American, Celtic, Indian and other 'New Age' artifacts. Our first discussion established the possibility of a number of regular visits to the site for the next nine to ten months. This would provide the opportunity for a number of taped, semi-structured interviews as well as the opportunity for some

participant observation. During my visits I took contemporaneous notes and used a micro-tape recorder for the interviews. Whilst there were, in effect, two primary lines of enquiry a number of themes emerges that together will act as a structure or framework for the account.

### **Dongas at Pixie's Wood**

It was at Pixie's Wood near Falmouth in Cornwall where I managed to spend some time living with, and interviewing, some of the 'Dongas Tribe'. Following a number of much larger demonstrations at Twyford Down the tribe moved away to become involved at the camp at Solsbury hill and at one time or another at many of the famous anti road protest sites. As McKay (1996) puts it

the role of Travelling in Donga Action should not be overlooked : Sam and Steff were New Age Travellers prior to camping up on the hill in the spring and summer of 1992 and as we'll see, travelling became a central feature of their later Dongas identity as they went onto the freedom Trail." ( McKay 1996:137)

The Dongas' reason for travel was not the same as other contemporary gave i.e. to follow the festival circuit or a way of coping with the economic conditions of the 1990's but a way in which to proselytise as much as a way of protest. Stella describes the travelling routine:

It's not really an overnight thing, unless they are doing a long journey and they are walking for a whole week to another destination in that case they have to stop every night and what we do is we get there before dark, someone will go and collect the wood, some will collect some water, although we do usually travel with water and someone will actually get the bender up and someone will start cooking. So it's like everyone does their job. By the end of the night you've got the bender up, the meal's ready, fire's there (Stella).

The stated objective of many of the people I talked to was to make people aware of environmental issues and to re energise ancient spiritual sites. It was by following this 'spiritual trail' that this small group claimed to have arrived in Cornwall.

We started to realise that the lifestyle was really important and living close to the land and living in a way that was not, personally, that we had to try and live like communally and try and share with others and not have an impact. And also to reconnect with nature in a way that we thought we felt that people were sort of spiritually dead that they'd lost the connection with the land and that's why that they could trash it basically because they didn't even know, it wasn't that they didn't care for it, they weren't even aware that they were trashing it because they'd lost that connection and so it was about regaining that connection and to try to enable other people to re-establish that connection through enchantment really through enchanting them into it with the music and with the whole magic of it really, with the whole magic of being out in the woods and having lots of music played and that sort of thing (Alex).

Getting access was, in the most part, a fortunate opportunity. Having met a couple that were involved with the Dongas Tribe, I was able to arrange an interview and further discussion led to the offer of a contact in north Wales who had been one of the original group. She was apparently keeping a low profile, as there was a warrant for her arrest associated with activity at the Newbury protest site. Later an invitation to join the 'Cornwall posse' to celebrate the winter Solstice resulted in a five day visit which allowed me to organise a few taped interviews and get to know some of the tribe.

Pixie's Wood was the site chosen by the 'Cornwall posse' to spend the winter solstice of 1997. The group comprised several of the original Dongas Tribe who first camped out on the track ways adjacent to Twyford Down in 1992 as well as Travellers who had subsequently joined the group in the intervening years. The camp, which consisted of a Bell tent and a number of small benders, was situated in a woodland valley about a mile

from an ancient barrow known as Pixie's Hall. During my stay some attempts were being made to contact the owner in order to negotiate permission to stay on the land for an extended period in return for the some basic woodland management and the clearing of rubbish from the wood. These attempts proved successful but did not prevent the group being evicted in early January by the police. Water was collected from a tap in 5 gallon 'Jerry' cans and occasionally directly from the stream.

The group comprised approximately eight to ten young men and women who were being joined by friends for a celebration of the winter solstice. There were four donkeys and a mule that were used to pull small carts on which were placed all equipment necessary for living in the nomadic lifestyle possessions were thus limited to the bare essentials. This was particularly true for some of the group who had only hand carts on which to carry their possessions, some occasionally to carry equipment on their backs. Having handcarts was a preferred option of some of the group to carts drawn by donkeys as it allowed for a greater degree of mobility. Donkeys and mules were seen as a better option to horses as their consumption of both food and water was dramatically less than that of horses. Donkeys could be left to graze on a small piece of bracken covered hillside adjacent to the woodland which would have been totally inaccessible to horses. At the time of my visit three goats were being kept for milk. The goats wandered freely around the campsite and provided an incentive to keep things tidy, as food left unattended would simply be eaten. Food was usually cooked communally and eaten together. Food consisted of fresh vegetables and fruit as well as array of dried beans, pulses and chapati flour. All cooking was done on an open communal fire. The communal food preparation and consumption was more pronounced than at King's Hill Collective where it would occur only on special



occasions like, for example the celebration of a new moon. At Pixie's Wood it was a regular event. There was some evidence that 'traditional' gender roles existed on the site. Three of the women confirmed that on the whole women still did the majority of the food preparation, but by no means all of it. Income was generated through both claiming benefit and busking. Members of the group were gifted as musicians and many played more than one instrument. The playing of music was an important aspect of the lifestyle and had the effect of displacing any electronically generated music. Music was played as a communal social entertainment, to act a method of engaging with people external to the tribe and therefore to break down barriers and as a way of generating money through busking.

### **Paradise Quarry**

Paradise Quarry was a disused quarry near Glastonbury on the road between the towns of Shepton Mallet and Wells. It had for some time been a popular site for contemporary Travellers. The site had acquired a reputation for heroin use. At the time of my visit the land was owned by the local authority although an eviction process has started as the land had been sold to a private company for use as land fill. The Travellers had been given the option of buying the site but the option was not taken up partly due to some problems of communicating the option to the site and partly the risk of becoming responsible for the planning permission. The site had a history of evictions and re-occupations (Johansen *et al* 1994). The council had installed water containers, which were changed on a weekly basis along with refuse collection bins. There were also a couple of 'Portaloos' supplied by the council. The impression of the site was similar to that experienced by Johansen of a fairly dirty and fragmented community.

I first heard about Paradise quarry by reading the account of New Age Travellers produced by Johansen *et al* (1994). In December 1997 I discussed the possibility of being introduced to some of the people there with Shamus from the King's Hill Collective. He agreed to introduce me to Pauline who worked in Glastonbury and lived on the site. Pauline agreed that it would be OK for me to stay at the site the next week for a few days. I arrived the next week earlier than expected and talked briefly to Paris, (the daughter of Chris and Sylvia), and Sham who had been staying at the site for about seven weeks. By the end of the day a number of people had agreed to do a taped interview.

### **Some emerging themes from the ethnographic study**

#### **Diversity**

It is perhaps worth re-stating that the term 'New Age Traveller' covers a wide range of people. The idea that New Age Travellers are predominantly young middle class 'dropouts' is not accurate as the following quotes suggest: "essentially I'm a blue collar worker, I'm an engineer. I come from Scunthorpe" (Sham). As Lisa noted in respect of the King's Hill Collective in a conversation with me:

You got the ones that mummy and daddy had probably bought them a bus and funded that for them. I'm not saying it's wrong but they actually you know, they'd actually kind of bought the whole set up, you know and got the big boots and done the whole lot and they was out there.. and then there was people that was genuinely out there because that's what they knew. That's their survival. That's all they knew how. That was their means you know. That was their means of doing (Lisa).

However, within the context of the contemporary travelling community the range of lifestyles, ideologies, backgrounds and 'world views' is wide. The ethnography, focusing

as it did on three distinct groups, provided some indication of the differences between those living in the bender community, those on a more traditional site and the 'Dongas tribe'. The fieldwork also helped to illuminate some of the boundaries between Travellers and associated groups. For example it was claimed by a number of Travellers, who talked to me, that the link between road protest and Travellers was greater in the minds of the police than in reality. Talking to both Travellers and to the staff from the Southern Intelligence Unit, it was accepted some Travellers were attracted to protest sites because they provided a relatively easy 'park up' during which time court proceeding would grind on slowly. This behaviour does little justice to the link between travelling and protesting which in many cases is more profound. Many of the Travellers I spoke to knew of, or were involved in road protests, however, many did not; Travellers represented only a small proportion of those involved in the road protest movement(s). It is also worth pointing out that for some Travellers e.g. the Dongas Tribe, that their whole reason for being, revolved around road protest and therefore to claim that they were involved in a protest in order to find an easy park up would be wholly inaccurate. In fact many of the Dongas expressed the view that active involvement in the road protesting was likely to involve an increase likelihood of arrest as well as being a generally exhausting process.

I was really used to being evicted because of the protests anyway so it was really calm compared to being on the protest site (Kel).

Positions on the environment, consumerism, politics were fairly widespread although it would be fair to say that many shared a view of party politics as being both corrupt and irrelevant; this was not however, exclusive. For example some members of the King's Hill Community voted in local and national elections.

## Reasons for the lifestyle

In earlier parts of this work there was some discussion on the 'pull' or 'push' factors that have caused people to choose an alternative lifestyle. Travellers can be conceptualised as economic refugees from the effects of homelessness, changes in state benefit regulations and rising unemployment resulting from a declining industrial base, as is suggested for example by Davis *et al* (1994). This position is also supported by the questionnaires returned to Brown (1995). On the other hand Travellers can be seen as actively choosing a lifestyle because of an ideological conviction, a view very much supported by this research. In the sense that I am using the concept of social control both pull and push factors are, in themselves, important components of the social control process. Social exclusion as a component of control works on a structural level providing an environment by which the travelling lifestyle becomes relatively attractive. Once excluded, the symbolic and real threat caused by those who chose to be on the outside can stimulate the need for coercive reaction. The reasons for being a 'Traveller' are also important to notions of control, as it is the ideology that many Travellers share, that is the perceived threat. In some respects it is ideology and lifestyle that are the objects of control. Steff suggests a number of reasons why he is a Traveller and its purpose in relation to the

Dongas Tribe:

Lots of reasons I suppose...providing a space where people can gather and be together ... But also to ...travel about the land to celebrate the seasons...and to go to the special places and celebrate and link ourselves in with the landscape... which... personally I think is really important thing to do. If you want to live in a way that's more in tune with nature and the land (Steff).

The desire to live a travelling lifestyle appeared in many cases to be not only deeply felt but also was identifiable at an early age. Reasons clustered around a rejection of city life,

the conventions of the settled community and a strong desire for space and freedom, particularly freedom to move:

So I've always wanted to live like that and I never accepted as a kid, that you had to give up what you wanted to do and as a kid I enjoyed it... being in the countryside, living in a caravan and doing a lot of outdoor things, just living outside and moving around just like this feeling of being on holiday and being on an adventure. I didn't see why being an adult meant you had to give that up (Hedge).

From a little fuckin kid I've always wanted to travel...Just love it. I don't know. Like being in Sheffield for three and a half years I were bored totally bored wi' me life, thinking "Is this fucking life?" All right I've got me Krishna consciousness and everything but is this it? Because if this is it mate, Krishna take me away I'm telling ya, one day (Klisa).

I was never very happy living indoors...I just didn't like the landlords number, the shared facilities, being in a town. I didn't really like being in a town where it was all buy, buy, buy all the time and it was too tempting to want all these things in life, what I didn't really need...not finding what I really wanted out of life in respect of living like that...and then I saw people living out in the woods and benders and then I thought cor that looks really good. No rent to pay, living on the land loads of space and I really liked the wibbly wobbly homes and the way you could actually make a home yourself by your own hands just really appealed to me. So that was it (Lisa).

Sham, from Paradise Quarry had thought about this for some time and had constructed a classification of four major reasons; political, social, creative and spiritual:

Politically it's a big fuck off, in it, the very existence, the very notion of land squatting and not wanting to be part of this sort of paid labour, you know, the system as whole, I am sure you understand what I'm on about. Dropping out and living on the road was basically a political decision. It comes back to all them early *Crass* records and all that other shit. That's one reason it appealed to me that was a lot stronger then than it is now

He felt that the political aspect of the travelling scene was much less these days than in the past.

They don't have the feeling of permanence, they just bumble onto sight for the summer and bumble off again. You know what I mean, there isn't the

commitment that there was among a lot of people 10 or however, many years ago. Socially I'm part of a international social scene; I've got friends in Ireland, I've got friends in Spain, I've got friends in Portugal, I've got friends in Norfolk, Yorkshire fucking Wales, Scotland... I'm a draughtsman by profession. It would be extremely limited compared to what it actually is but I've got to know loads more people. Creatively it's an outlook for me engineering skills, you know what I mean. Again if I'd been a steelworker I would have had a shit load more money but living like this gives you an edge. Living in countryside that's what that boils down to. The towns, cities and towns going down the pan aren't they. You're far better off living out here with the butterflies and the buzzards. But that's what I refer to as spiritual as I can't really think of any other way to conveniently explain it (Sham).

From the evidence gathered during my fieldwork, the attraction of this lifestyle was often triggered by personal experience of festivals, meeting groups of Travellers or experience of the squatting scene. This was often expressed in the discovery of a 'kind of parallel universe' that had been unknown to the individual, but to which a latent affinity had existed prior to the experience and seemed to make sense in a world that appeared unpleasant boring and confusing. This could be seen as Johansen (1994) suggests a reaction to the uncertainties and disembeddedness of late modernity. Often the very positive feelings of community appear as a contrast to previous life experiences. The examples below illustrate the link with the squat and festival scenes.

And he said, "Well, if you get really stuck come on stay with us we are living in a squat down Mill Road." Ah, squat alright. Heard of squats... "It's great! If you get stuck come and see us." ...So I went to this address and there was Steve and all these mad people there and just moved in. And that was it...So there I was, squatting and working which used to be quite common. I don't know how squatting goes on these days I think it's less and less. So it's quite a classic introduction like people in newspapers say about squatting and about homelessness and, you know, providing shelter for people gives them a leg up and that squat gave me a leg up to find time to think what I wanted to do (Hedge).

What made it happen was the Stonehenge 84. I went to the Stonehenge festival in 1984 and we went on from there really...Children with really

bright eyes... a sense of tribe and community and the sense of being with people I'd met before. Something that was spiritually satisfying (Clare).

I'd no idea that there was a travelling scene, you know, the festival scene, because I come from Scunthorpe a little a fuckin town, you probably know where Scunthorpe is anyway. I'd no idea of its existence at all until some friends, some people that I was lingering with at the time decided to go to this festival that they'd heard of... and as soon as I got there I thought, fuck this, I'm going live like this. It was instantaneous you know what I mean. It was instantaneous that this was what I was going to do and it didn't fuckin matter how I got or did it or what or what form it took, I was going to live on the road with all these other mad fuckin hippies (Sham).

The first festival I ever went to... I saw these homes, beautiful little sort of van homes ...and my heart just went, "Ah this is it." I just knew, I thought this is like family...and spent 2 days at the festival...I met musicians there called the *Space Goats* and really got on well with them and played music with them. They offered to take me to a place called The Rainbow Circle in Kentish Town in London. I've never heard of that and I thought wow that sounds good and what it is like is the church that was empty and the squatters friends of mine squatted the church, sort of like a living together community (Stella).

I just happened to be watching the news with some friends of my parents and they were showing the running battles with the police around Stonehenge and I later found out that this was what's now known as the Battle of the Beanfield. It stuck in mind you know large number of unusual people trying to get to a sacred stone circle and them trying to stop them and wondering why; what it was all about? I ended up in Canterbury and the summer after my first year there was a small brief festival down in Kent...you know completely turned my reality inside out to see people doing something in a completely non-commercial way without any official sanction or organisation and no sign of any police anywhere and everything very harmonious...there were people there who had probably been to Stonehenge and Glastonbury and so on. It was just a small gathering but it just opened up this doorway in my mind of what was possible and I started going to festivals after that (Mat).

When I first encountered any real people doing it rather than hearing about it was getting involved in the Oak Dragon project 1987 or 88 where I was contracted to produce illustrations for all their PR material (Trystan).

I remember sitting in a field in Glastonbury out of my face and looking out these stars darting about and sort of thinking I could feel myself

coming down and couldn't do anything about it at all and thinking like, I'm coming down and I left normality in this straight light and I'm coming back down to meet that line and I could be a fraction of a centimetre off that line. I'd be thinking, I'm down and I might not actually be down and I might just be that bit 'skewiff' for the rest of my life and I would never know and I'm not sure what exactly happened, I've looked at things a bit 'skewiff' ever since and I think it does literally alter the doors to perception. So that sort of I started getting into that whole kind of counter-cultural side of it (Alex).

The quote above provides an example (one of many) where the specific use of drugs particularly hallucinogens associated with the festival scene was an important factor in the adoption of the lifestyle. Many of the people I talked to linked their perception of environmental issues, spiritual matters, seeing things, as Alex would say, in a 'skewiff' way, with the use of hallucinogens including cannabis. This was both a factor in making a decision to lead an alternative lifestyle and a mechanism by which it was maintained:

I got exposed to 'those forces' and so that was, I think, to be quite honest, I honestly believed that, like doing a trip really opened my head up. I'm really convinced about that (Alex).

I started experimenting with psychedelics and things like that and gradually my mind and my sort of spiritual awareness, if you like, were opening up...and I can actually define a specific moment when I had been going out into the Welsh mountains camping and eating magic mushrooms basically that was the sort of reason why I started doing it (Josh).

I don't know what made it, probably the LSD or the magic mushrooms made it instantaneous...that was it anyway, once I realised that there were other people doing it (Sham).

Once involved in this particular lifestyle, patterns of behaviour and the circumstances people found themselves in, particularly their relationship to authority, often reinforced the attachment to the lifestyle chosen. This was either through use of cannabis, or by virtue of having nowhere that was legal to stay, or by involvement through contemporary



environmental protest. The lifestyle itself, simple as it is, predisposed people to take a more sympathetic view of environmental issues. Whilst this was by no means universal, many Travellers having little environmental sensitivity, the Travellers that I came across were keenly aware of the environment.

People's experiences often seem to have predisposed them to a travelling way of life which was then activated by a particular event or series of events (c.f. Matza's theory of 'delinquency drift') but without necessarily 'techniques of neutralisation' or delinquent attributes. In some cases family relationships were strained:

Tony, who were me dad were a total twat anyhow, and when I found out he weren't me dad it fuckin blissed me out because I thought he ain't got nowt to do here anymore. I just shut him out of my head. And then there's our Tom who's really been like me dad but he's an alcoholic. Robbed a grand's worth of jewellery off me, giros, tenners, you can't put a tenner down, but he's not a bad person (Klisa).

Ties with conventional societal norms were often weak or problematic. Kel provides an example where family traditions predisposed her to the travelling lifestyle through early experiences of the festival scene.

(My mother) had always taken us out to Avebury for all the gatherings of the Solstice and taken us to festivals and that sort of thing, so I'd always had a bit of an insight into it anyway and always really loved going to festivals going with that sort... of people, and then when I left home I... met a lot of people in Brighton who were doing sort of 'actions' and alternative newsletters and there was a lot of stuff going on (Kel).

Recognition of the materialist basis of contemporary society and a positive rejection of it was important in defining the lifestyle. I believe this was not a 'technique of neutralisation' but a genuinely felt conviction that straight society was more *criminogenic* than the alternative solution which itself had become *criminalised*. As Lisa puts it:

It was wrong but I thought that I wanted these things which I didn't probably want or need at all in my life, but felt that I needed them because other people had them you know. It was just one of those things, you know what's it like. Every girl wants a 'Barbie Doll' or whatever it is because that's what society that I was living in. Society put that shit on me. So there I was conforming to society in its own way (Lisa).

This relationship with festivals has been attributed to the development of the contemporary 'Travelling scene' and was borne out by one of the interviewees who bridged the gap between the hippie scene of the early seventies and the development of the festivals at Stonehenge. As has been shown in the previous chapter, the festival scene was an important influence on the decision to travel from the mid-seventies and remains a significant factor. It is possible that this has been displaced by the rise in popularity of contemporary protest, which provides an alternative introduction to living in the rigorous conditions experienced by most Travellers:

I had an interest in going to what we called pop festivals and free festivals in the beginning of the seventies, Windsor Great Park, Stonehenge and the August Bank Holiday, major free festivals and being captivated by the interest I had in people and what was going on in those events. I became a regular attender of them. (Tash)

The process of transition however, was not always unproblematic from 'straight' society to travelling lifestyle in some cases personal problems for example sexual or physical abuse or alcoholism led to re-evaluation of the previous lifestyle.

I was lecturing in photography at College and I was also becoming very disillusioned with the society in which I lived and trying to make sense out of that society and I become an alcoholic and paranoid schizophrenic. I was sort of losing it and the only thing that was coming to me through that time that I needed to do was to actually go and live in the woods on my own (Brian).

I was having problems with drink and drugs and I had already known some Travellers. I knew some people who were on the road already and they were quite good friends and offered to help me out and they took me

on the road with them its as simple as that to keep me away from the scene that I was in...It was the first site I ever went onto and I just fell in love with it and it's as simple as that. I just fell in love with it, the freedom, the freedom of not being tied to bedsits and grotty flats and things like that it just appealed to me (Colin).

These examples, and others not quoted, demonstrate a recognition that their misuse of drugs (heroin and alcohol) led to a travelling lifestyle. One of the people I talked to had a fairly serious heroin habit and it was, in his view, only by adopting an alternative lifestyle 'getting close to the green stuff' that he was able to come off heroin. Thus the reduction of substance misuse was seen by some as a product of the lifestyle whilst many Travellers would see the use of hallucinogens as a contributory factor in 'taking to the road'.

For some Travellers a particular moment was vividly recalled as the turning point. The following examples illustrate the similarities and differences of these moments. The similarities are mainly in the sense of magic, a sense of freedom and the influence of the beauty of the countryside. There was, in tandem with this, a recognition that paid work and the opportunities available to them in a conventional lifestyle were not attractive or realistic options.

I was happy in my work more or less until one morning one of the salesmen came down the stairs in the basement of the store and he didn't look very happy and he was muttering to himself, and I heard him say "God I'm 28 it doesn't half creep up on you" and I looked at him and I was 17 and I said to myself "I don't think I want it to creep up on me", and I thought for a couple of days about how this could be best prevented. Having thought about it I went to see the Branch Manager and asked him for a years unpaid holiday, and he was a kindly man and he agreed to it and I bought a sleeping bag and guitar and I hitch-hiked with a friend, who was similarly disposed, to St Ives in Cornwall (Shamus).

Around about that time I bumped into... a sort of little Mrs. Tiddywinkle character I met down in Cornwall who was involved with the Oak Dragon Project ...through that I got to doing their artwork...I suppose

answered something of a dream of mine which had been there for quite a while even as a kid always a fascination with living outdoors and being under the stars and living on the ground and back to nature all that kind of thing ...the idea of like the magical landscape of Britain if you like and actually having a more sort of interactive life with it rather than it just being a whole set of ideas and history you know it became something real that made a difference in my life and other people's as well (Trystan).

For Matt it was his first contact with the Dongas Tribe at Solsbury Hill.

The real turning point (was) when I stood watching the sun come up over Solsbury Hill and this crowd of people turned up who struck me as being completely different from what I had ever seen. I couldn't quite pin down what it was but the word 'tribe' or 'tribal' came to mind and these people seem to give out some sort of radiance or something ineffable in that I wanted to know who they were and where they were and where I could find them. This turned out to be the Dongas Tribe who shortly before had been evicted from their camping site at Twyford Down and had moved up to the woods near Avebury ... again without actually communicating directly with any of them they left a very powerful impression on me (Matt).

The next two examples come from Josh who later joined the Dongas Tribe and Steff who was one of the original six who camped on the Dongas near Twyford Down.

But I actually enjoyed the camping and just having a backpack and sleeping bag and an army poncho and camping out in this beautiful place near Hay on Wye, it was a tiny little valley with a waterfall. I had been camping out there and I was, after being there about a week, and suddenly I had this moment of realisation... I suddenly realised that it actually didn't matter if I got a lift or not because I had my bag with me and a little stove with me, and that actually I was as free as a bird, and if I didn't get a lift that was fine. I would just bed down somewhere and make a cup of tea in the morning and carry on, and there was this terrible feeling of freedom and liberation (Josh).

(I) just ended up at Winchester because...it just sort of felt like the right place to go at the time and we gradually got drawn into events at Twyford. We heard that they wanted to put a motorway through the place and gradually the picture started to become more and more clearer of what was going on and it sort of became obvious that what needed doing was to actually reclaim the place by living on it. I suppose that's what I believe in really is just kind of...being on the land...in a situation like that is such an important place that it needed defending and the only

way to really do is to be there if you want to protect something you can't really do it from a distance using bits of paper and that you have got to be there and that's the only way really ( Steff).

The sense of community was also an extremely important factor for many of the people I spoke to as a reason for taking to the road and remaining there. Some people had actively sought the feeling of community, others stumbled upon it during attendance at a festivals or found it as a result of being forced on the road through homelessness.

I want to feel safe in a community of people that care for me and that look out for each other and I want to bring up my kids in that sort of environment as well because I think we're really losing community spirit as well (Kel).

This group of people...actually help people up, give each other a hand, or at least an opportunity to prove what they were like. That's how I've ended up at Kings Hill (Hedge).

And that was it then, and it was like wibbly wobbly land where it's really great and you seem to be on the earth and get more in touch with your emotions and it's like, it's not corruptible, it's not so corruptible as out there in the concrete world there. Everybody's looking at how you're dressing and stuff. The trees didn't care what you looked like or what you had. That didn't matter. It was the respect for the trees that mattered. It was just a completely different thing. I just really loved it (Lisa).

## **Being controlled**

Earlier in this chapter, a range of behaviours described as harassment, discrimination and victimisation were presented in the responses given to Brown's survey on the more overt forms of the policing of Travellers. 40% of the respondents claimed to have suffered harassment in some form. This was slightly higher than the response I received. From my own study it was clear that Travellers had been the victims of some fairly rough treatment from the police, resulting from political action (as in the case of those involved in road

protest) and from the day to day evictions or conflicts around 'park ups'. Colin who had lived as a Traveller for a number of years gave a typical account:

I have not been involved in any trashings from the Police but I have been threatened in the sense that...if I haven't moved on when they have asked me to move on I would have my vehicle impounded I would be arrested I would be made unwelcome...We turned up on the Ridgeway in an ambulance fully legal as it was a public highway and the local police there started to freak out because they thought there was going to be a whole bunch of Travellers turn up. ...it was just my friend and I and our two dogs and this bender and there was 7 police vehicles, 7 police vehicles and I think there were 21 Police turned up where our bender was looking for stolen plastic tarpaulin (Colin).

#### A number of other Travellers referred to similar incidents

Yeah, yeah, we've been moved on loads of times. I mean I can't remember now there's been so many occasions like. Um, I can't think of any examples, and it often happens that you arrive somewhere and its like, you get someone come up straight away and say, 'No you're not staying here' (Steff).

We went down a little bit just in to Oxfordshire. We got 48 hours. We ended up at a site that had been evicted back in the courts that afternoon actually and they got till Monday to get off so we stayed there until the Sunday night then moved just another 3 or 4 miles a little bit further into Oxfordshire. Got 48 hours there, did it one more time got 48 hours and in the end this bloke said "Look, you might as well fuck this scene off because its obviously not going anywhere" (Sham).

And then a farmer came in the middle of the night shouting at the top of his voice with a shovel in his hand. Get off the land I'll ring the police up and he threatened to hit one of us over the head with it. He said "I'll hit you over the head. You've gotta go." It was really, we're laughing now, but at the time it was weird. It was really scary (Stella).

Anyway it was fuckin half nine, ten o'clock on the Thursday morning, shit loads of pigs turn up and it became apparent that they were gonna fuckin boot us off after all. I don't really know. It's difficult (Sham).

Castlemorton Common represented a link between the Traveller and rave scene and it is in the context of the raves that many Travellers found themselves in conflict with the police. Similarly the relationship between travelling and squatting provides an example of

conflict as the examples below illustrate. It was pointed out that incidents of violent police conflict that were situated in the 'protest environment' had a very different feel. Being arrested at a protest or 'action' was part of the point of the 'action; whilst it was extremely demanding physically and mentally it was a victory of sorts. The day-to-day evictions had a cumulatively negative effect which made some Travellers move to different parts of the country or indeed leave the country. There was a difference between being hassled for travelling and being hassled for protesting; being part of a situation where people were being arrested was part of the process of protest itself. As Hedge put it:

There are so many individual incidences but I've never been seriously in jeopardy really apart from Newbury but Newbury was different. I got myself in the firing line and I accepted that if I was arrested all my rights were infringed, I was beaten up or assaulted or locked up, I'm failing but that was the risk I took...I didn't get assaulted too much. I got arrested a lot but they, they managed to caution me once but every time they got me down the police station the police reaction in the holding cells in the actual processing part. They just didn't have the heart to do it because they knew it was a waste of time really, but most of them were not interested in it (Hedge).

That was probably my first experience of being stopped and searched and the police stopped us trying to get the festival and I remember. When I was first on the road with my backpack going to festivals and things being stopped and loads of road blocks and all that and yeah I've had a few convictions. Travelling like this we tend just to work round it, sort of on the move and I think the major things I've had with the authorities has been on road protests really which is a very different sort of thing whereas when you are just living somewhere and they come and evict you it's really a different kind of horrible thing to the road protest which is more empowering even though they evict us (Josh).

But I've been at a raves somewhere outside London and the sort of like surrounding countryside where the riot squad showed up and it looked like they were going to steam in and get really heavy. They had all their shields and stuff and for some reason backed off and went again but we were absolutely freaked. It was one of those situations where I think that at the last minute they were given orders not to go in but they all arrived

and like we were sort of like legging it across fields and stuff and then they all sort of retreated, and that was pretty scary (Alex).

So there was me and Howie coming down from the drugs we had taken the night before. Nice day looking at this bloody building we had just squatted and the fucking riot police came charging up the drive, bloody great droves of them frantically trying to close the door as they came charging through the door like drag us outside shove us on the ground and all that stuff and that, arrested us really heavily and Howie as normal resisted arrest and got thumped. Just typical really and that's my first arrest and so that was just ridiculous (Alex).

Many Travellers experienced violent coercion not by the state (through the police or local authorities) but through a kind of 'reverse direct action' from farmers or those employed by them. In some cases this was to remove them from land in others it was simply an easy target or to remove them from the proximity of a settled community. The following illustrate a range of contexts.

So we found a lay-by.. We took a couple of bits out of the back and put them out the back and then just lay out the bed and took them under the van. Then a posh car sort of drove past and about half an hour later just as we were settling down, we'd settled the children down ...and this guy came up with a shotgun and 2 Dobermans, and said "This lay-by's private and you've got to go" and just sort of used his gun casually. This guy had 2 Dobermans straining at the leash, growling not barking or anything because he was obviously tense so the dogs were all reflecting that round and he was using this gun as a casually pointing it to go off like. "We've got 3 sick children". "I don't care, this is private property"; and that was welcome to Wales (Christine).

We got burnt out of Trevaller Woods. I came back and that was burnt out. It's just really sad. I mean I didn't really have many possessions but it was sad the fact that somebody could come along and actually burn your home and you had no where to be. I was in Steeple Woods and they started chain sawing the woods away and then they'd get the vigilante types who would come along and sort of cause a lot of trouble, aggravate you, may be throw canisters of gas exploding you know, stuff at your bender and things like that (Lisa).

They're not bothered if you went down to them and said, "Hey my homes getting trashed and there's people from the rugby club or whatever are coming up. They're actually booting our homes and throwing in gas



canisters and stuff like that and there's children up there, babies, you know, it's really dangerous and they're scared. Like cor." And they would just say well you don't pay rent, you don't pay taxes, you don't live in a house basically, and they wouldn't wanna know and they would laugh at you ...they wouldn't go round at all because...you stepped out of society and so therefore even if you paid your taxes and you were still working...as far as they couldn't give a shit about that. As far as they're concerned you're just one of them, you've stepped out of society, it's your choice you've chosen that (Lisa).

## **Police tactics**

From discussions with Travellers it was possible to get some understanding of their perceptions of police tactics in dealing with travelling groups. The method of breaking up large groups into smaller ones by escorting groups to a particular destination or prohibiting movement in certain directions seems to be a lesson that has been learnt from Castlemorton Common. It also adds weight to the notion that it was the original police tactics that were, in part, responsible for the build up of large numbers in the first place. Examples given above demonstrate that in most cases the police will act with overwhelming force in order to achieve a successful outcome such as an eviction or the breaking up of a large group suspected of congregating for a rave. Often a search for drugs was used as a pretext for stopping Travellers or searching vehicles. Interestingly in the example below the Travellers claimed that the police knew who they were stopping. This indicates that for some Travellers, particularly those who had some involvement in protesting, they were being monitored.

Because I remember trying to go to the White Goddess (festival) later that summer with Howie and getting completely pigged and the police shoving this notice through the car with a White Goddess.. Me and Howie got nicked trying to get to free festivals after that, after Castlemorton they just weren't happening. They got their tactic right and they worked out what their tactic was. It was just split the convoy up.

Instead of like herding the convoy and everyone had to be together. They sent 30 vehicles that way and 10 that way and 2 that way and split everybody up (Alex).

At one point there was a massive, massive big posse of them with horses and donkeys ...they got a very very hard time of it, the winter before last at Dartmoor. They got completely badly pigged up there. They got really harassed and one of the reasons about thing like that is that their group was just too big and there was too many animals and it sort of got a lot smaller in size since then. It's that thing with numbers it's a very threatening thing (Alex).

### **Traveller tactics**

As a response to their experiences a number of tactics emerged of how Travellers dealt with coercive efforts of the police, landowners, and the general public. Perhaps the most successful of these were behaviours that were intended to charm or diffuse potential conflict. The Dongas Tribe used music as a method of proselytising but also as a way of reducing tension between local people and the group. Kel, one of the Dongas Tribe explained the importance of getting a positive message across to the settled community:

A lot of people expect you to be taking a lot of drugs, just really lunching out and really lazy and that sort of thing. When people actually come down to the camp and see that we've got kids and we're really busy all day and we do a lot of creative stuff and we play music and it's quite obvious to see once you sit down and just take it all in I think people can quite often have their opinion changed (Kel).

A week before my visit the Cornwall posse was asked to play music in Truro Cathedral by the Bishop of Truro as a "celebration of God and for the pleasure of the Christmas shoppers". In the words of Stella who played music with the Space Goats referring to the Dongas:

They've done a lot of music now, a lot of busking together and offering to do dancing in village halls including the general public. Get everyone into what they're doing (Stella).

Trystan described an example where he was able to negotiate with the police who may have otherwise intended to move them.

I was parked up with my girlfriend there was this one vehicle that we were in and we had been parked up for a couple of hours just having dinner and it was a bit late going to bed. A vehicle pulled up, and there was a gentle knock on the door and realised it was the police. They had a chat with Jules, my girlfriend at the time. It was her wagon, on her doorstep, you know, the idea is you talk to them they are going to be much more kind of gentle if they are talking to a woman than if they meet a guy because they can be more confrontational. They realised we weren't too lunched out we had our trip fairly together and fairly eloquent and they left us alone and in the morning we went (Trystan).

Some people mentioned the importance of children although as one of the examples above illustrates this was not always successful. On some occasions however, the fact that children were involved would make a difference. The example below is given in the context of a potential dispute with a farmer.

We were stressing the fact that we'd got children and it was very stressful. That was very difficult. They said yeah yeah, their hearts sort of melted for a while ( Stella).

Children were the key to the *Buckley* case which was taken to the European Court on the basis that the children's welfare would be in jeopardy if the family were evicted from a site which they owned but for which they had no planning permission. Children also featured prominently in the process of Lord's amendments Committee Stage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 through a coalition of children's charities.

One of the Travellers noted that his 'middle class credentials' appeared to make a difference to the treatment he received from the police. This is factor became important in the context of policing contemporary protest.

Having a middle class accent you know when you talk to people about accent it's amazing if the police ever got quite heavy just drop into the conversation the fact that you had a couple of lawyers, solicitors in your family and legal costs wasn't a problem and they soon shut up, because it's one thing they can't deal with is you know the people they're protecting really, the people they think are, the people they look up to or basically provide a service to when they're trying to boss one of their children they think "Oh God, this could get quite messy", so they sort of leave it alone" (Hedge).

It would also be wrong to give the impression that Travellers were passive victims of farmers and landowners. The use of the media was seen as important to both sides in eliciting public support and thus a degree of legitimacy of action. In the case of the Dongas at Twyford this tool was used as a mechanism to reduce the potential violence used by security guards and the police. Alex explained the significance of positive reporting of the Twyford Down protest in 1992.

Times had gone, times had changed and we got a very sympathetic press so that was kind of like the catalyst so the underground press because at the same time all the Earth First! groups were started off so that all kicked off the underground press was very fair and the mainstream press was as well and I think the very seminal articles by Jon Vidal set the tone for the whole movement to be honest. It was like these poor people, the indigenous Indians trying to defend their homelands kind of thing and it did set the tone really the way the whole press had been reported (Alex).

It would also be wrong to give the impression all Travellers had experienced major 'hassles' from the authorities. Not all Travellers had experienced negative responses; Kel gave an answer similar to many of those who travelled with donkeys or handcarts.

No, I can't think of any individual situations. But yeah, often we're met with "Oh my God there's Travellers on my land and I want you off now." They've got this impression of who you think you are and you're there to trash their land and really take the piss out of and be horrible, 'brewy' (Kel).

In addition to the overt conflict experienced there was a general feeling of being watched and of the 'authorities' being interested in what they were doing. This was coupled with theories of conspiracy, which were about the destruction of the travelling lifestyle by the 'state'. There is certainly clear evidence that information on many 'illegal trespassers' is passed on by the Intelligence Units at Devises and Penrith to police forces across the country and that this was more than simply a registration number of a vehicle.

In the following quotes reference is made to the fact that the 'travelling scene' in this country may be dying, that the 'sorted' Travellers had already made the move to Europe. In a final analysis the romantic attachment to 'Albion' may be strongly outweighed by a rejection of the politics of the nation state of the United Kingdom. The two quotes below provide a flavour of the reasons given to me for making the move.

I don't wanna stay in Britain. Britain has got nothing to offer me. They are so tight on the land. In the end I wanna piece of land. I don't feel as though I'm British and this is where I wanna be. This is my home. It's never been like that for me. I love me mam and everything but apart from me mam I ain't got no blood relatives, you know. They're just relatives but they're not me blood relatives so there's only me mam. I'm quite happy to go live in Europe (Klisa).

Ultimately I'd like to think that...I spend most of me time in Portugal and come back to see relatives and pick up spares in this country but initially I just wanna go through a 3 month reconnaissance mission and put myself about as much as possible and see what the crack is and avoid the worst of the English winter and I have to say the winter is the prime motivation for going. The second reason is I suppose the scene in this country has gone completely down the pan and most of the people that are still up to it have already gone to Portugal or Spain or there on their way to Ireland or whatever (Sham).

### **Drug use and the 'heroin conspiracy'**

References such as 'the doorway of my mind' given by one of the Travellers hint at the significance of drugs in the process of developing a travelling lifestyle. Other references are less oblique. To claim that all New Age Travellers used drugs would be a nonsense but equally, to ignore the importance of cannabis and other drugs as an important element in the Traveller lifestyle, would be an oversight. This view is reinforced by the experience of many Travellers who mentioned the use of amphetamines, 'magic mushrooms', LSD and Cannabis as being influential in maintaining and adopting the lifestyle. Many Travellers I spoke to related the festival scene and the use of psychedelics as an explanation of their decision to opt for an alternative lifestyle. Regarding the use of drugs generally, the Travellers I spoke to gave a range of opinions similar to that found in mainstream society (taking into account age group). The possible exception to this was the almost universal acceptance in the use of cannabis as a recreational drug. Almost all Travellers I interviewed smoked cannabis and defended its use as not only a recreational drug but as a medicine against the perils of alcohol tobacco or in one case, heroin: cannabis was smoked as routinely as drinking of coffee or tea. The majority I spoke to would not smoke cannabis if mixed with tobacco in a 'joint' as the addictive nature of tobacco and its associations with 'big business' which were seen as negative. Generally this would not inhibit the daily routine of collecting wood and water or preparing food etc. Cannabis appeared not to be a source of dispute nor a way of avoiding the realities of life. 'Magic mushrooms' were used recreationally and in a kind of ceremonial way or as part of the process of partying.

In sharp contrast to this was the general view on the use of heroin. There was some evidence that the use of heroin was of particular concern to the travelling community as

the effect it of on a site would be devastating. This was particularly true in the cases where children were involved. People I talked to claimed that, where possible, they would attempt to prevent the use of heroin on a site or have to move:

I felt that we were completely victimised by the police in that scene and that we have to do our own policing basically that's what you have to do you know. It's like when Smackies came onto the site you'd just gotta 'F' them off you know. Before you know it a lot of other people are getting involved in it as well (Lisa).

The effect of heroin on a site community was seen by many Travellers as subtly different to its use in a housing estate for example where the social effects would be more dispersed and thus less dramatic. In addition to the direct discussions on heroin use at Paradise Quarry Lisa, gave the following account:

It was just really, really sad. I didn't know them and they moved right up to the very top of the woods and they was hardly there you know. As they're not. They're always searching for drugs and I donno know he think he must have O.D.'d. He was up there with 2 other people who was heavily into smack for a long time. They'd had not lived there for very long at all. I didn't even see them the whole time they lived there. And then the next thing I knew, that guy had actually died (Lisa).

The use of heroin, or rejection of it, was seen as particularly important to many Travellers and in some cases was subject of interpretations of a conspiracy to destroy the travelling lifestyle. A number of theories were put forward. One involving the collapse of BCCI which may have provided an economic incentive to many small businessmen with connections in Pakistan being attracted into drug trafficking thus explaining the flooding of the market with cheap heroin. One idea suggested state organised activity designed specifically to discredit the 'Traveller scene'.

Putting these theories to one side, the fact remains that the association between Travellers and drugs remains high in the public's mind buoyed up, to some extent, by media attention. It is also worth remembering that the limited studies of police records that relate to Travellers would indicate that the majority of arrests of Travellers have been for the possession of small amounts of cannabis. Thus in terms of the methods of control employed for example by police, the continued use of cannabis by many Travellers becomes an important focus of attention. The police can, and do use their discretion of arrest to target Travellers. Police action is legitimised by the association of Travellers with drugs and the further connections with the festival and rave scenes.

### **Legitimising coercive control**

Two major incidents occurred in 1992 that precipitated the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act and changes in legislation with regard to social security benefits. The first was the invasion of Castlemorton Common and the spectre of rave culture the second was the media led panic relating to the hippy scrounger personified at Kerry by what is thought to have been an orchestrated move by the Benefit Agency. Both of these events acted as legitimising forces for the control of Travellers. Travellers were probably in a minority at Castlemorton however, it is perhaps worth quoting Alex who attended the festival and considers the impact of the festival on changing public opinion:

Finally got there and that was the start of it. I couldn't believe what a massive thing it turned into. It was huge. It was absolutely massive. Yeah, it was full on. I mean I'd been to a couple of free festivals before but that was it, that was like, it was actually the last one I ever went to... Yeah, Castlemorton was kicking, really excellent. Looking back, I can see other points of view which I was not prepared to see then and I could see how the local population could have been scared shitless and freaked out by loads of complete out-of-it people staggering around on their doorsteps and I don't agree with Spiral Tribe sort of thing with like "fuck



you, we're going to party and we don't give a fuck about anybody else", because they certainly don't like that attitude when it happens to them and so I don't like that sort of like stuff we're going to party. I don't like that, I mean I like to have to have a good time but I don't like to do it at the expense of other people (Alex).

Lastly in terms of social control the issue of benefits is worth mentioning as a mechanism of direct control itself and as a mechanism for legitimising other forms of coercive control. As Colin Clark (1997: 125) points out the "fanatical hatred of New Age Travellers is at least partly founded on misrepresentations of New Age Traveller identity" in the context of "work and social security payments". Clark suggests that the "welfare system, in conjunction with other department policies (for example the Department of the Environment) are acting as instruments of social control" (1997 :126). Generally Clark makes the point that the benefit system provided not only an example of a potential 'big brother' situation in the sharing data between agents of the state but is itself predicated on sedentary lifestyles and is thus intrinsically anti-nomadic. For a detailed account of the part played by the DSS see Clark (1996,1997a 1997b).

Surprisingly the 'actively seeking work' clause has not been a problem for the majority of the King's Hill Collective who do sign on. They do however, differentiate between what passes for actively seeking work in order to qualify for benefit and making useful contacts with the surrounding communities which may actually lead to job opportunities. Most of the community supplemented their dole with either a planned recreational programme or the occasional odd job or selling / bartering of goods.

Of the Cornwall posse many used benefits as well as busking as a means of survival although this was by no means exclusive. Some Travellers I spoke to recognised the drawbacks of being reliant on benefits and were attempting to live more independent lives by a combination of income generating ideas such as busking, fruit picking, working in the festival /camp scene during the summer and so on. Whilst one person I talked to suggested that many Travellers were “into benefit fraud in a big way” casting ‘New Age Travellers’ as benefit scroungers appeared to have little substance to it.

### **The seduction of consumerism**

Whilst many Travellers were clear that their decision to lead a certain lifestyles was related to strong feelings about the ‘consumer society’, some had no such views. Of those who held strong views about consumerism there was some evidence that the attractions of a more materialist world was having an effect. This was evident at both King’s Hill and, to a lesser degree the Cornwall posse of the Dongas. This always presupposes that the route back to a more conventional lifestyle is open, that the opportunities are indeed available. In addition to this I came across an example of an individual who had sold their house and adopted an alternative lifestyle but was being penalised by having some residual savings thus preventing access to benefits. By buying another house she was able to start claiming Benefits again. This case illustrates quite well the absurdity of Travellers, rather than settled people being cast as a drain on state resources.

### **Conclusions**

Some of the difficulty in summing up the experiences of Travellers is a reflection of the many influences that they experienced and their reactions to them. For example a

summary of the full range of social controls and influences in relation to New Age

Travellers would look something like this:

- Coercive means through public order legislation and the use of riot police centred on large gatherings, raves and protests.
- Police and local authorities intervention centred on trespass and illegal camping.
- Police checks for drugs, stolen goods etc.
- Police and Benefit Agency surveillance.
- State intervention through changes in Benefit regulations and the relationship between Benefit entitlement and home ownership.
- Changes in planning regulations, land use and minor legislation around Environmental health water regulations and so on.
- Minor legislation vehicle taxation/classification of mobile homes, buses and caravans
- Hostile reactions from local landowners and farmers.
- Hostile reactions from the settled community generally and vigilantes in particular.
- Attempts to trivialise, distort and misrepresent the lifestyle and identity.
- Assimilation into the mainstream through popular culture and cultural incorporation.

This is in addition to any other forms of violent coercive controls that they may be subject to, through association with contemporary protest such as government funded private surveillance and evictions by private security guards

The responses to these controls were on the whole short-term and non-strategic, mostly practical and sometimes symbolic. The experience of Travellers and their reflections on social control varied enormously. Many whom I talked to were politically aware and, through the conventional press or alternative press, kept themselves abreast of changes in legislation and the progress of various protests and so on. Communication through the passing on of incidents and so on was an effective way of keeping up to date.

Their rejection of traditional politics and their perception of its limited problematic did not necessarily lead them to turn away altogether from contemporary political developments or prevent them understanding the wider political context in which they found themselves. From the evidence gathered in the pattern of responses to these various forms of social control seemed to include resistance, amelioration, evasion and conscious protest

Perhaps one of the most effective forms of resistance was the activity associated with the opposition to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act which included the development of better forms of communication, the development of an underground press available to Travellers which covered up to date public order issues. In addition to opposing the process of legislation many Travellers particularly those at Sam's site, were using planning law as a method of securing rights to 'park up' on a semi-permanent basis. The King's Hill collective had also employed a solicitor and barrister to represent their case in the High Court and had written to Ministers stating their case in very positive terms.

Evasion as a reaction to control spanned a wide variety of activities from tactical moves designed to remove or reduce the possibility of harassment to leaving the country.

Keeping on the move was, in a limited way, a successful tactic as was travelling in small groups, using anonymous looking trucks and so on. Some Travellers however, have simply given up the struggle and moved away to Europe. It is equally true however, that many have employed survival mechanisms or positions of compromise which make their futures appear to be less threatened than in the beginning of the decade. Experiments with low impact, semi-nomadic communities, the expertise collectively held by Travellers in

the area of planning law, the growing support for movements of contemporary protest are all positive indicators.

The level of surveillance appeared to be alarmingly high. It was clear from my discussions that many of the Travellers were known to the police. Vehicle numbers at King's Hill had been collected and on a few occasions random stops and searches appeared to be anything but random. The Travellers I talked to seemed rightly concerned as to the legal or moral basis for this surveillance.

If there is a common element to the New Age Traveller identity it is a rejection of the mainstream. It is, by definition, an alternative to the values that underpin 'developed' modern societies and thus implicitly a rejection of the sedentarist ideologies on which modern societies are based. These strong affectual, neotribal identifications are, in the phrase coined by Hetherington, 'heteroclitic identities' "formed through transgressive performances in chosen, liminoid spaces"(1994:2). These transgressive performances can be seen as the reason why Travellers are subject to such a hostile reaction. New Age Traveller ideology, for want of a better term rejects the normal, the taken for granted and the seduction of consumerism. This is exacerbated by the element of Traveller identity that is loosely affiliated to movements such as *Earth First!*, *Reclaim the Streets* and more generally anti-road movements. In this situation Travellers move from being the passive victims of sedentarism to messengers of unwanted news, conduits of a reflexive society that is ever more aware of the damage that we are doing to the planet.

Stan Cohen (1972) was right to predict that there would be future moral panics and other “as yet nameless, folk devils”. This is because, as he suggests, “our society will continue to cause problems for some of its members...and condemn whatever solutions the groups find” (1972:). However, the nature of that social censure in the case of Travellers has led to a dialectic, which is still being played out. For many the game is still worth it. Whether driven into the lifestyle or as a result of its apparent attractiveness, there are a number of Travellers who will continue live in this way through continued choice. The moral panic of the mid eighties culminating in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 failed to deal with the ‘problem’ if indeed there was one. In some senses has created another one.

A fusion of anti sedentarist/ pro environmental identity appears to have ridden the wave of media condemnation and negative public opinion on a micro and macro level. This can be seen through individuals developing day to day tactics of resistance as well as organised counter manipulation of the media. The everyday trials of living the nomadic life or life in a bender community will, no doubt, continue. There is however, some optimism amongst many of the Travellers I spoke to that their lifestyle is important not only to them, but to a wider society. For this reason they are determined to continue living it.

SECTION V  
CHAPTER TEN  
CONCLUSIONS

I have tried in this project to describe and explain the social control of 'New Age Travellers'. This has been a difficult theme, as the concept of social control has remained problematic since its inception by Edward Alsworth Ross in 1894. The introduction and theoretical perspectives at the beginning of this dissertation attempt to defend the use of the term which, I believe retains value in the context of sociological criminology. The construction of the term 'New Age Traveller' is equally problematic. So much so that, like the term social control itself, it too could be described as a shallow fabrication, which fails to embrace a consensus of opinion as to where its boundaries are, let alone provide analytical utility. To use the clichéd term it is a 'Mickey Mouse' concept. This project is an investigation into the process by which, in the physical sense, a relatively small group of people became the subject of social criticism and controls, the form which this criticism took, and the subsequent reactions to it. Physical, because an important aspect of this process was directed at an abstract object, i.e. 'The New Age Traveller'. This heavily mediated fantasy, dreamt up by journalists and which grew in the public's mind over a decade was 'real', enough to be the subject of a debate in the House of Lords. It appeared in the Conservative Party manifesto of 1992 and was the putative target of draconian legislation. Years later it seems as strange as it did then that such ado could be made about these so-called 'mediaeval brigands'. That is not to suggest however, that 'New Age Travellers' were simply a post-modern 'simulation'. Real people who chose to live in a bus or truck or

who chose to settle in a bender community as a method of survival or whose form of protest involved travelling with hand carts and donkeys experienced a range of social controls in a very real sense. In the main this was as a result of their chosen lifestyle and ideology. Without the potency of the term 'New Age Traveller' the role of the media, public opinion and the process of legislative change cannot be fully understood.

This chapter will draw together examples from the preceding ones covering a number of themes loosely based on a 'checklist' devised by Stanley Cohen (1989:347) for projects dealing with the concept of social control; the checklist was designed to give conceptual substance and offset its allegedly 'Mickey Mouse' characteristics. A modified checklist for this particular project would be as follows: ideological context, target, law and state, agent(s), method, media, extent, purpose, effectiveness and alternatives.

### **Ideological context**

On one side of the dialectic we can see the ideologies that clustered on the contemporary ascendancy of popular capitalism espoused by Margaret Thatcher. This in turn was embedded in a deeper and indeed wider trajectory of consumerist ideology; a shift from the supremacy of production to consumption in defining social relations. Equally important is the ideology of sedentarism coined by Liégeois. In direct opposition to this were the ideologies of environmentalism/ecology, a rejection of the work ethic, the concept of land ownership and later, conventional political protest.

Before exploring these ideologies more fully it is important to stress in the context of a group which is heterogeneous, difficult to define and, in some aspects 'virtual', the



attribution of ideology should not be taken to infer homogeneity or indeed organisation. Travellers, as an ontological group, represent a range of ideologies. Some Travellers, for example, expressed considerable support for popular capitalism or at least had no ideological opposition to it. Generally however this was not the case. The archetypal Traveller, rejecting the notion of home ownership and more importantly the attendant mortgage and thus need for regular paid work, presented a challenge to the potential seductive qualities of consumerism.

In rejecting the seductive forces of consumerism, Travellers presented a symbolic threat to mainstream society. But the ideological threat extended beyond independence from Weber's 'iron cage' of modern bureaucratisation and from an instinctive distrust in technology and the assumption of scientific teleological progress. This aspect can be traced directly from the hippie ideology that developed in the 1960s highlighted so eloquently by Theodore Roszak (1971) and alluded to by Willis (1978) and later by McKay (1996). It challenged the dominant concept of land ownership embracing the ideas of Gerrard Winstanley and, taking the concept of land still further, it built a bridge between the 'primitive' tribal traditions such as those of the ancient Britons, the native tribes of North America (as the hippies had done) and contemporary environmental awareness such as Agenda 21 or *Earth First!*. The ownership and use of land, associated as it is with ecological considerations, was a key element to the process of control. Ecological concern was an explanation of tension between the controlled and the controllers but also in relation to the role of the media, explained the sympathetic shift in public opinion towards Travellers and the legal battles over site eviction

Low impact living is a common denominator, indeed a fact of life, whether you belong to an environmentally sensitive group such as the Dongas Tribe or the King's Hill Collective or are simply an economic refugee forced to live on the road. Ironically perhaps this 'common denominator' evolved into the platform of resistance that was to be manifested in the movement of contemporary protest, most notably *Earth First!*, Reclaim the Streets, the Dongas at Twyford Down and the tree house dwellers and tunnellers of Fairemile and Leytonstonia, and would shift public opinion and to a lesser extent media coverage from the 'drug crazed scrounger' to 'conscience of the consumerist'.

### **The target of control**

Two problems arise here: firstly, the question of whether or not the target was actually Travellers at all or simply a 'phantom' target manipulated to increase public support for the real target. Secondly, as I have also suggested before, the term is a difficult one to define, encompassing as it does a wide range of people of differing outlooks and lifestyles.

On the first point, whilst a theory based on a wider 'statist grand plan' is attractive, and indeed elements of this argument may be valid, it would be a mistake to underestimate the idea of New Age Travellers *in their own right* as the target of social control.

Referring to the CJ&POA, McVeigh suggests:

Furthermore as the State gears up systematically to repress nomads through this Act and other measures, the attendant erosion of liberties and paramilitarisation of policing will have consequences for every community in resistance (1997:8).

Whilst I reject the proposition that controlling Travellers is a kind of involuntary 'stalking horse' for a wider project, I agree with McVeigh that we need to take anti-nomadism seriously. There is no doubt that between 1985 and 1996 there has been a change in the target group. Indeed, some writers on the subject, notably Alan Dearling, would suggest that the whole scene has merged into what may be more usefully described as the 'DIY Culture'. This is not just an artificial blurring of boundaries, although some relationships between groups may be over emphasised and over simplified by the police but a real shift brought about by the CJ&POA. Assuming that Travellers were the target of control in their own right, parallel can be made here with the fate of Gypsies under Nazi rule.

When the Nazi party was voted into power in 1933, it had difficulty in defining 'Zigeuner'. These difficulties were further exacerbated in the drawing up of the 'Nuremberg Laws of 1935 and the rules for 'racial-biological evaluation' of Gypsies elaborated by Himmler in 1941. The difficulties in this case were partly overcome by the application of spurious 'scientific classifications', notably by Robert Ritter. The unification of the police, security and SS organisations in 1936 under Himmler was undoubtedly an effective instrument for the attempted genocide of Gypsies in Europe. The selection of Gypsies as targets for extermination, whilst meeting little public opprobrium, was *not* however a necessary step to the unification of the security services or to the broader genocide of Jewish people. It was firmly believed by a number of influential people within the party that Germany should be 'cleansed' of the majority of 'mixed blood' Gypsies because they were Gypsies and would contaminate the non-Gypsy population.

In a less dramatic way, to see New Age Travellers simply as a convenient scapegoat for a wider project misses the point that New Age Travellers, like Gypsies in Europe, were a target in their own right. But to return to the recent past, and acknowledging that the way in which the legislative process is formulated in contemporary Britain is not directly comparable to Nazi Germany, some parallels nevertheless can be drawn in respect of how the object of control is perceived. For example, in the public opinion chapter a small number of respondents felt that New Age Travellers should be expelled from the country. Police Officers who filled in Mike Brown's questionnaires described Travellers as "scrounging, thieving anarchists" and "scum of the earth". One officer suggesting they should be "napalmed - problem sorted". However the very difference embodied in a post-modern society suggests that we now have a looser image of bureaucratic and professional projects as I have mentioned above. These extreme and minority views compete with a myriad of vocabularies and hence the ability to put into practice the 'master plan' is sometimes harder than it appears to be at first sight.

### **Law and the state**

As Garland (1996) reminds us,

One insight that Friedrich Nietzsche shares with Emile Durkheim - perhaps the only insight shared by these very different thinkers - is that strong political regimes have no need to rely upon intensely punitive sanctions. Punitiveness may pose as a symbol of strength, but it should be interpreted as a symptom of weak authority and inadequate controls (Garland 1996:445)

Within the context of the domain of control two concepts and their relationships with each other need to be considered: those of the state and the law. Within the chapter on

theoretical perspectives I have discussed Melossi's (1990) contention that the old nineteenth century concept of the state has little potency in the process of understanding social control in 1990s Europe. Certainly, as Foucault suggested (1977), we need to look beyond the simply coercive naked violence of the state if we are to grapple with the processes and concepts that are needed to replace it with a more effective disciplinary society. We also need to recognise that the deposits of power in contemporary society are less easily defined as the 'leviathan' or 'the monolith' and instead must be replaced by concepts that adequately explain the complex, plural and conflicting agendas. That is not to say some explanation as to the patterns that emerge from these conflicts is provided by the concept of 'state', however loose that may be. The influence of increasingly intrusive telecommunications technology and the power of 'the media' have led to a greater degree of societal reflexivity which suggests the redundancy of the 'state-as-system-of-control' concept in its older, more rigid form. It is not just that the state may be going through a hollowing process, but as Harden (1994) suggests, it is contracting, that is becoming smaller and at the same time weakening its grip under the burden of 'managerialism'. However as Scheerer and Hess claim, the withering away of the old methods of coercive state control may not apply to all:

Those who live on the margins of society have little to expect from the gentle forms of medicalisation, therapeutisation, neutralisation and normalisation. There, beyond the enclaves of commodified happiness, the coming of age of young persons is not the continuous learning game with electronically geared reinforcements, but an often violent struggle in an environment that comes as close to the Hobbesian state of nature as any (Scheerer and Hess 1997:128).

It is precisely here, on the margins of society, that the balance of coercion and seduction may have shifted although, I would argue, not to the total exclusion of the latter. It is

here also, on the margins, where deposits of power and conflicts of interest, less visible in the mainstream, may be temporarily exposed, giving us clues as to their more general presence. If, as it has been claimed, it is difficult to see the patterns of state control in the post-modern world, it is by shifting focus (as one would do to observe a feint star) that the patterns of conflict become visible.

Law is a highly visible method of state control. I take it as axiomatic that the CJ&POA 1994 was, in intention and outcome, central to the control of New Age Travellers. Equally, as will be discussed below, it can also be viewed as the domain in which the dialectic of control is played out. Used by local authorities, police and landowners against Travellers, but also by Travellers as a defence against eviction or persecution. This is particularly true in the case of European and International law. There are many examples the use of Articles of 8, 11 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, all of which have been used to challenge a number of planning decisions. Other treaties and protocols used in this way include; the UN Convention on Human Rights (fourth protocol), the UN convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 8, 27 and 30, the UN Commission on Human Rights resolution on forced evictions (1993), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Article 12, and the Council of Europe's Directive on the cultural heritage and identity of nomads.

There are, however, a number of questions that arise with the invocation of this, at-first-sight, neutral concept of law. Firstly, there is the issue of *cui bono?* ; whose interests are involved in its creation. This is particularly relevant in relation to land ownership.

English law is predicated on the notion that the land rightfully belongs to those who

currently possess it; little time is spent considering the processes by which the current inequitable distribution of land ownership came about. More fundamental to this, 'land as a possession' is a concept 'naturalised' within modern western society (and now almost globally recognised as part of the natural way of things). Thus the impact of this on nomadic people or those involved in developing alternative lifestyle is often overlooked; Travellers are a threat to non-Travellers because they expose this inequality. Land law and modern concepts of land ownership provide the site for major conflict between nomadic people and sedentary mainstream society. Related to the previous concept, the Hobbesian sense of state law (necessary to prevent our lives from becoming poor, nasty, brutish and short) ignores these inequalities. Others would argue that law for the common good seems a very naive position. In relation to public order and the maintenance the Queen's peace, law is, by definition, open to discretion and reliant on the interpretation and actions of the police. In practice it is through the process of discretion that policing public order law is exposed from its overt claims to protect property and people to its deeper purpose, the protection of the very concept of property itself. This, in turn maintains the concept of land ownership and, as Neary (1997) has suggested the 'supreme' law of money capital.

On a very practical level, the use of law can be seen as a method in the social control of Travellers ranging, as it does across a number of mechanisms. These include the pivotal role of the CJ&POA 1994 and the myriad of legislative tools encompassing the control of caravan sites, definitions of nomadic people, planning permission, the framework of welfare benefits, the licensing and taxation of vehicles, the control of running water, general environmental health restrictions and the control and restriction of drugs.

The making of part V of the CJ&POA, as I have discussed earlier was the result of a number of coinciding interests and opportunities changing over the period of its origins until it received Royal Assent. Whilst Travellers provided an undoubtedly easy target to help in the development of the additional public order legislation, they were clearly more than the sugar needed in order for a wider public to swallow the bitter pill of draconian restrictions. These sections had their origins, amongst other things, in the pragmatic pressures for government to react to a mild moral panic focused very precisely on 'New Age Travellers' and fiscal pressures inherent in the provision of sites for traditional Travellers and more generally and benefits to those 'out of work'.

Law can be further classified as law making, i.e. those processes that operate in the Parliamentary sphere as an Act receives Royal Assent (or fails in the attempt), and the process by which law is interpreted by the Courts, i.e. a 'forensic process'. In the case of the New Age Travellers both areas were, and in the latter case remain, important aspects of the control. Indeed the subject of New Age Travellers demonstrates the relationship between the interpretation of law and primary legislation as illustrated in the debate surrounding the definition of Gypsy.

Within the 'parliamentary sphere', it is recognised that the influences are both formal and informal and can range from the specific point within a debate to an issue of general process. Under the rubric of law, a myriad regulations are in place that have gradually made living on the road more difficult; however two fundamental issues remain central to the process of the social control of Travellers, these are land ownership and civil liberty. Issues of civil liberty were marshalled as a defence at both the law making stage



and at its interpretation. Equally land ownership is at the heart of the legal process by which Travellers have been subject to and resisted control. In extreme cases, Travellers have simply left the country to seek areas where space is less of a premium, where regulations appear to be either less punitive or at least less assiduously applied, for example Ireland, Spain and Portugal (Dearling 1998). However it is only a proportion of Travellers who have taken this route. Many Travellers and supporters of the cause have chosen to resist the influence of law (draconian or otherwise) by first attempting to prevent it passing through Parliament or through further challenges to interpretation or by alternative legislation (mostly European) as a weapon of defence.

The development of the CJ&POA as described in the preceding chapter was the result of a number of quite independent influences. Originally resisted by Government, the 1992 election, growing pressure from 'backbenchers', the gathering at Castlemorton Common (including its alleged construction and subsequent exploitation), further demonisation related to benefit fraud, led to the Bill being laid before parliament. Opposition to the Bill clustered around civil liberty organisations such as *Liberty*, Traveller /Gypsy organisations and child care organisations such as *The Children's Society* and *SCF*. Numerous briefing papers to the House of Lords pointed out the social consequences of some of the more oppressive aspects of the Bill. Even the NFU, which originally supported the Bill, cautioned against the repeal of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act and the potential consequence of further disputes between landowners and Gypsies who would have no legal place to 'park up'. The Association of Chief Police Officers, late in the day, also warned against the consequences of criminalisation of Travellers whilst welcoming the potential for closer work with local authorities.

It was not however in the conventional lobbying of Parliament that the major acts of resistance took place. It was in the development of coalitions against the Bill, bringing together Hunt Saboteurs, Ravers and Travellers engaging in new forms of protest and ignoring conventional party lines that a new form of resistance emerged that was to carry on well after the Bill received Royal Assent. This development has been well charted by newspapers such as *The Observer* and *The Independent* as well as the alternative newspapers and magazines, notably *Squall*, but also others such as *SchNEWS*, *Green Anarchist*, and *Festival Eye*. Contemporary protest was a significant development for Travellers as it not only impacted on the public perception and media coverage of Travellers but also provided an additional feeling of solidarity and purpose for many Travellers. Additionally support networks with other groups were formed. It is worth repeating that for many Travellers the development of contemporary protest has had little or no direct impact at all.

In the cases of *R v South Hams District Council*, *R v Gloucester County Council* and *R v Warwickshire County Council*, (the later case being related to the site in Offchurch visited by the author in 1993 at the beginning of this project), 'New Age Travellers' claimed that the Local authorities had no legal right to evict as they had not provided adequate sites. The appeal failed in the High Court as in the Judges opinion these were not real Gypsies and therefore the Local Authority had no duty to provide sites. These debates not only led to changes in primary legislation but in the production of Department of Environment Circulars, notably DoE 1/94 and 18/94 that discriminated against Gypsy and Non Gypsy Travellers.

The continued resistance by Travellers subsequent to 1994 then concentrated on the interpretation of law. As Murdoch (1997) has pointed out, Circular 18/94 (issued 3 weeks after the CJ&POA) advised a policy of tolerance towards unauthorised encampments along with a requirement to investigate the circumstances of Travellers. Justice Sedley cited the circular in the case *Against Wealdon District Council*. This has become a *cause célèbre* within the travelling community. The *Buckley* case, taken to the European Court of Human Rights based on the refusal of planning permission and challenged Sections 77 and 78 of the CJ&POA in the context of Article 8 and article 14 of the European Convention. By 6 votes to 3 the Court held there was no breach. However a number of Travellers have sought planning permission for either land owned or rented and have used the process of appeal as a rather precarious, but necessary way of remaining parked up on 'illegal sites'. Settled communities such as the bender community at King's Hill have appealed to the DoE on planning decisions again citing article 8 of the European Convention. The European Court was also the arena where a number of Travellers brought into the public domain the issue of unlawful surveillance by British police forces through the development of the Northern and Southern Intelligence Units.

### **Police, local authorities and the Benefit Agency: agents of coercion**

It is interesting to examine the role of the police and the many ways in which they played a part in this process stretching as it does across such a wide range of behaviours and possible interpretations. At one extreme there is the notorious and yet instructive episode on June 1 1985 where the newly acquired skills of public disorder management

resulted in the destruction of a number of Travellers homes, and subsequent successful court case taken against the Hampshire Police. There is the development of the two Surveillance Units in Devizes and Penrith, which were in turn, subject to appeals in the European Court. There is also the example of the joint initiative between emergency planning departments and police, effectively blockading their county boundaries. There are the stereotypical and extreme prejudicial attitudes of the rank-and-file officers, the considered (and generally sympathetic) views of the more senior officers often only thinly covering deeper and older prejudices related to the travelling community (and the dispossessed). And yet, at the other extreme there were examples of sympathetic understanding from officers who had had regular contact with Travellers and who recognised the struggles of communal living and difficulties of raising children in challenging circumstance. There were examples of police who saw themselves as political pawns being drawn into a discourse of conflicting ideologies.

Research on police culture is divided as to the significance of these extremely prejudicial views. On the one hand they are seen as a safety valve necessary to cope with the tribulations of reoccurring conflict having no relationship whatsoever with the disciplined behaviour adopted whilst on duty, on the other hand they can be seen as the root of prejudicial action. Certainly the experience of the Battle of the Beanfield provided a warning against complacency on this issue and dents Peter Waddington's hypothesis that the extreme language of canteen culture is apparently harmless or even cathartic in nature. Personal experience at the July 1997 'Reclaim the Streets' in Bristol provided an example of 'fluffy' policing that ended in the confiscation and destruction of the sound system and arrest of the *Desert Storm* rig.

In the light of the evidence that police were seen by the public as treating Travellers with a degree of fairness, it is worth considering the role of the police as it is contextualised within a rapidly changing, post-modern environment. The development of a paramilitary national organisation that has the links to national intelligence aimed exclusively at 'illegal trespassers' is very different to the local community based-bobby. However it now seems likely that the rather limited operations of the old intelligence units will be taken over by the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS). Visions of coercive brutality aimed at the margins can be tempered by the greater force of managerialism that may effectively constrain the 'widening net' and redirect scarce resources to the more pressing targets, more easily connected to the 'Key Performance Indicator' or the Police Authority 'league table'.

To focus on the role of the police without reference to the other agents would miss the point. The argument that the police could be marshalled into an effective agency of coercive control as part of what was a Thatcherite/Majorite project in anticipation of a re-emergence of class warfare caused by abandoning state involvement in welfare, seems anachronistic. The State-as-monolith, with direct control on police activity, ignores the competing demands for resources, a shift to managerialism and an increasing orientation to the customer. This weakens the ability to link policing to formal government projects such as the miners' strike. The possibility of NCIS involvement in the surveillance of 'illegal trespassers' will not however face these restraints. Here the issue will be of public support and the long-term legitimacy of NCIS itself.

Local authorities, both at District and County level played a significant part in the control of Travellers through a number of actions and legal processes. Local authorities have, for a long time, organised themselves to deal with travelling people, often employing a specialist liaison officer to co-ordinate a response to illegal camping. Their role was central to the 1968 Caravan Sites Act having additional powers to remove Travellers from illegal sites if they in turn were 'designated': in order to achieve designation status they were obliged to provide official sites. However it is worth considering the full extent to which County and District councils played a role in the social control of Travellers which extended beyond the single issue of illegal camping to include the process of eviction, planning permission, environmental health.

These legal processes are centred on land ownership. If, as Sue Campbell (1995: 28) suggests "Democratic theory demands that the views and wishes of minorities are actively sought", it is ironic that local authorities who can be seen as the bastions of local democracy have become the instrument of such intolerance. On the other hand it is easy to see that the newer Travellers without access to local lobbying could be the obvious targets in the local authorities attempts to reduce public complaints. In the same way that it is important to contextualise the actions of the police, local authorities often played an intermediary role in precipitating a debate between Travellers and central government in the area of planning. What is surprising however, (and somewhat enlightening) is the way in which for example 'emergency planners' could conceptualise Travellers as an 'emergency' and mobilise resources in conjunction with the police designed to prevent them from settling within the county boundaries. If local authorities represented one of the more significant local and often punitive reactions to Travellers

then, on a national scale, a significant agent of control was the Benefit Agency, working to the rules laid down by the Department of Social Security.

During a particular phase of the moral panic in 1992, Peter Lilley, then Minister of State to the Department of Social Security, used the 'Traveller-as-scrounger' metaphor to ease in tighter restrictions to the access of employment benefit. The provisions enshrined in the Income Support (General) Amendment (No.3) Regulations were targeted at the 'usual suspects' including single parents as well as New Age Travellers but were clearly applicable to a much wider group and were driven by financial imperatives. An internal Benefit Agency Income Support Strategic Information Bulletin dated April 7 1994 suggests that Travellers would be targeted as a recognisable group; indeed advice was given to workers as to appearance, living conditions (including 'benders') and nomadic lifestyle as ways of recognising these people. These stereotypical descriptions seem now to be rather quaint and would not be sufficient to 'catch' the intended target group in a contemporary context.

Personal discussions I have had with Travellers support the view that the process of applying for benefits has changed over the last ten years. It had moved from a fairly relaxed system in which occasional grants could be obtained to a system that now had very little flexibility. The restricted funds allocated to each office had the effect of tightening up the system. This led to a shift in expectation from the view that a person was entitled to have money in order to live to a complete loss of the concept of entitlement altogether.

Ironically it is suggested by some Travellers that they are more flexible in their approach to surviving the harsher benefit climate than those isolated in council estates with less community support and possibly more deeply conditioned to consumerist norms. Many Travellers believe that it was the impact of the 1986 Public Order Act that led to the break up the festival scene. This forced Travellers to seek unemployment benefit who were previously managing to make a living by trading at festivals. On the other hand it has also been suggested to me by those close to the travelling community that many were indeed claiming and earning income through the informal festival economy. My personal experience suggests examples of both exist.

In any case there appears to be no evidence that Travellers are more fraudulent than any other groups who claim benefit. The fiction that there is formal employment available predicates the thrust of this government's discourse. Travellers need to play the recently introduced '*restart* interview game' if they are to seek support from the state. It is worth emphasising perhaps that, contrary to the media or government myth, many do not claim benefit on any regular basis managing to find alternative sources of income coupled with extremely low overheads.

### **Methods of control - Coercion, Surveillance, Seduction**

Scheerer and Hess (1997) point out methods of social control can be classified into both informal and formal. They clarify the distinction between the degree of formality and the degree of severity or indeed effectiveness. The forms of control include the overtly coercive methods of police intervention highlighted most graphically in the Battle of the Beanfield, the day to day, jointly managed evictions by local council employees and



police officers, the general disapproval of the public and the seduction of consumerism. The methods used against Travellers have been overt, covert, effective, ineffective, formal and informal; in reality the differing modes are interwoven.

Over the years, police control has given rise to a number of concerns. Whilst the 'Battle of the Beanfield' remains the most notorious violent confrontation, violent or threatening evictions continue. The attitude of many 'rank-and-file' officers to New Age Travellers discussed by Brown (1995) and earlier in this work will no doubt continue to ensure relations remain, on the whole, mutually suspicious. During the confrontation at Stoney Cross with Travellers and many years later on Dartmoor with the Dongas Tribe, Social Workers were deployed with police. This was to provide the necessary back up in cases where children needed to be taken into care and was understandably perceived as a threat by those Travellers who had children. Reports to *Friends and Families of Travellers* have examples of routine inappropriate harassment and a failure to consider the needs of, for example, pregnant women and their children (*Friends and Families of Travellers* 1996:31)

The use of Custodial remand or sentence however, seemed to be restricted to those involved in non-violent direct action at sites of road development and occasionally for drug related offences. Brown's (1995) study demonstrates that for the years 1993 and 1994 only small numbers of arrest could be traced to what were classified as New Age Travellers (72 and 93 respectively). The majority of these were for drug related offences.

Prior to the passing of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, and partly as a result of the success of the manipulation of public opinion regarding Travellers, there emerged of a kind of vigilantism. This included the informal 'Hippie Watch' schemes in rural areas and the once ubiquitous signs outside pubs in rural areas such as 'No New Age Travellers'. Vigilantism is routine for some Travellers; many have experienced it one or twice.

I was in Steeple Woods and they started chain sawing the woods away and then they'd get the vigilante types who would come along and sort of cause a lot of trouble, aggravate you, maybe throw canisters of gas exploding you know, stuff at your bender and things like that (Lisa).

*Friends and Families of Travellers* received much information on this type of attack varying from vehicles driving past sites late at night and sounding horns and shouting obscenities, refusal by shops to serve Travellers, violent attacks (including the burning of vehicles), attacks using stones and catapults and even firearms. Interestingly, subsequent to the Act, and partly due to a favourable shift in public opinion, these informal mechanisms appear to be less prevalent. A view from a local authority emergency planning unit indicates the methods they employed

Our role was very limited in that we had the police intelligence, we passed it on to particularly Planning & Transportation so that they could make the necessary arrangements to stop them from getting to the site, i.e. barriers and things like that.

Later in the same interview referring to New Age Travellers he recalls,

they have actually avoided (the County) because they have had the sort of thing of well we will get moved on pretty quickly so lets go somewhere where they are not so hot off the mark if we are in the County.

This approach was clearly very successful in the county concerned, as they had no recorded 'illegal trespassers' for three years. As a general measure whilst many of the

Travellers interviewed could not give example of particularly coercive events, many suggested that the prolonged feelings of being not wanted. This had an overall effect in 'driving them off' the road, either back into more conventional sedentary lifestyles, or setting up more static bender communities or emigrating. This was particularly true if young children were involved.

Physical methods of site denial vary enormously from place to place. Recently I have observed a number of steel arches erected in fields to limit access in Hereford and Worcester. In Powys and Warwickshire I have noticed earth mounds and ditches on lay-bys where Travellers once settled. *Friends and Families of Travellers* describe the use of large rocks in Cornwall as a method of access denial in addition to this Wiltshire often uses legal injunctions. "The down grading of droves and green lanes...(Which were previously classed as roads used as paths)...also effectively closes them to use by nomads" (FFT 1996:16).

The use of surveillance as a method of social control is worth some discussion here as it is relevant not only to Foucault's panopticonal vision of a disciplined society, but also relates to discussions about the direction of social control in the post-modern era. Perhaps more important to these considerations is the existence of specialist units devoted to the surveillance of 'illegal trespassers'. The dystopian vision of technological advancements in surveillance techniques is countered by the reality of information overload in a context of competing claims for resources as society becomes ever more reflexive, plural and complex. Police surveillance has resulted in Travellers being arrested for benefit violations, breaking of injunctions associated with road protest, and

‘pre-emptive evictions’. The information gained from our habits as consumers, information available to the major supermarket chains, and the exponential growth of CCTV in town centres and shopping malls might be more cause for concern than the ‘operation snapshot’.

The development of the Northern and Southern Intelligence Units calls into question fundamental issues on Human Rights in respect of Travellers. For some time ARNI the Animal Rights National Index has been used by Special Branch to counter terrorist activity in the name of Animal Rights. The growing concern, particularly related to costs of the anti-road movement and organisations such as *Earth First!* may lead to a centralising of the ‘illegal trespass’ information units to a single site to be managed by organisations other than county constabularies such as NCIS. The result of this would be in effect a further ‘turning of the screw’ in the process of identification, segregation and punishment of a group of people whose chosen lifestyle is now *de facto* outside the law.

It is in the health and education of Travellers children that a ‘medical’ process of social control emerges. In the debates in the House of Lords on the effects of CJ&POA many child care organisations argued for consideration of the welfare of Traveller children invoking the ghost of George Smith. The focus on Travellers’ needs, in terms of health care and child care, is a dangerous one as it can reinforce the arguments of those who take an assimilationist view of the problem.

New Age Travellers were often portrayed as the young middle class, 'playing' at alternative lifestyles. Like the Peace Camp at Greenham, by substituting an alternative image, the group is trivialised by media attention, which in turn influences public opinion. Through the incorporation of style into mainstream fashion and the rise to popularity of certain music forms, a more latent process of control is exposed and an element of 'New Age Traveller' ideology is neutralised. As Hebdige (1979) has noted this is a struggle for the possession of signs and meaning. This reading is helpful because 'New Age Travellers' can be conceptualised not only as the contemporary extension of nomadic/semi-nomadic communities in the UK but also as an extension of the counter-culture of the late sixties. See also McKay (1996).

As significant as the relationship between 'Gypsy Travellers and 'non Gypsy Travellers' is the relationship between the concept of New Age Travellers as a resurgent manifestation of the counter-culture of the late sixties and the numerous youth cultures that preceded the term New Age Traveller. In this sense the phenomenon and the processes of social control are most usefully conceptualised as a hegemonic tension between culture and counter-culture.

### **The media and public opinion: creating the myth, legitimising the process**

For the creation of the 'New Age Traveller' myth and its subsequent development we need to consider the media narrative, from its evolution as 'hippie scum' to the more sympathetically perceived 'eco warrior'. The role of the media in the social construction of 'daily myths' (Bergalli 1997) can be exposed by its reaction to and creation of the myth of the New Age Traveller. Without the media it is unlikely that many people,

particularly in the urban environment, would have known about New Age Travellers at all. The generally negative production of the phenomenon was perhaps most vividly portrayed in the texts and photographic records of the press such as *the Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, *The Daily Express* and *The Daily Telegraph*. In terms of social control, the role of the media in creating the 'folk devil' is of critical importance and cannot be overstated. The phenomenon of the 'New Age Traveller' was a media creation and followed a not totally unpredictable course familiar to those interested in the social construction of deviancy. Whilst there remains debate as to the functionality of this process, it is a process which runs parallel to any process of state conspiracy or coercion. It is not simply the axiomatic misrepresentation of truth that is at issue, it is the creation of 'truth' through the power metaphor, exposed by a post-structuralist reading, that moves public opinion, informs the process of cultural hegemony and provides legitimacy for parallel coercive action.

Comparatively positive accounts featured in the 'broadsheets' particularly, but by no means exclusively, newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The Independent*; these papers provided a counterpoint to negative images provided by the tabloids. Issues such as *The Guardian's* coverage of 'Operation Snapshot', exposing as it did, issues of civil liberty; the coverage of the case against Wiltshire Police could be seen as applying grit to the flywheel of uncontrolled State oppression. Over the years a series of documentaries appearing on television have attempted to highlight the problems associated with the CJ&POA 1994 as well as exploring the lifestyle of New Age Travellers in a positive light.

Whilst this may have had a marginal impact on how local authorities deal with Travellers, the public's opinion of the integrity of the police is felt by many senior officers as fundamental to the process of legitimacy and consent. Bad press, local or national is taken seriously and steps are taken to remedy this. It is worth remembering that there was (with the exception of a much-delayed Channel 4 'documentary') little coverage of the Battle of the Beanfield. In a similar way there has been a noticeable absence of news coverage relating to more recent 'Reclaim the Streets' parties and allied campaigns of contemporary environmental protest so closely associated with the travelling community; the press can express ideology by saying nothing.

New forms of the Travelling Community such as the Dongas Tribe have become expert in the use of the media to convey messages of environmental concern. If this is true, that 'the centre of gravity' of social control has moved away from the state to the international media, reflecting the conditions postmodernity then the experience of the Dongas Tribe in developing methods of creating media interest becomes significant. Not only is there the shift of the New Age Traveller stereotype but a repositioning of the dialectic. This shift is from the survival of Travellers to the survival of the planet.

Contemporary protest, originating from the solidarity of Greenham, but rediscovered at Twyford Down in 1992 has survived the media distortions and provides hope and inspiration for the continued survival of at least one aspect of the contemporary travelling community.

## **The extent of control**

The extent of social control can be conceptualised spatially, i.e. in terms of the geography of control. This geographical aspect of control is important because New Age Travellers are essentially a British phenomenon some of whom have emigrated as a result of land pressures specific to this country. The social control of New Age Travellers is therefore situated within the politics of space. The problem is that there is no place for Travellers to go. From a sedentarist point of view the argument generally focuses on the lack of appropriate land in this highly populated country. It is not simply about the lack of space; the main problem is that there is no place to be, without breaking the law. Public concern is almost exclusively centred on where Travellers should not be, with little attention given to alternatives. This in turn is reflected in police action.

These issues raise broader questions of land ownership. In England and Wales land is necessary for survival and yet all land is problematic to Travellers even if it belongs to them. Attempts by Travellers to buy land have invariably resulted in denial for planning permission and or subsequent prosecution for contravening planning law. Since the 1822 Turnpike Roads Act, 1876 Commons Act, the 1894 Local Government Act, the enclosure of land, control of commons and village greens has started a process which has resulted in extinguishing customary rights to camp on land. This has included recent conversions of traditional lay-bys into inaccessible areas by dumping rubble or by 'landscaping' these areas. "Surveys suggest that 90 per cent of such traditional site have thus been denied to Travellers." (FFT 1996:16).



Whilst result of this apparently insoluble problem has been that many Travellers have attempted to live a 'settled way of life', emigrated or have kept an extremely low profile. The Dongas for example have continued to reject the notion that the land belongs to people at all. Their method of travelling, playing music and planting trees is an attempt to raise the awareness of people to the problem of land ownership.

### **The purposes of social control**

Hudson (1997) suggests that:

The objective of the new strategies of control is identification of the different and the dangerous in order to exclude: from the apartment building, from the estate from the shopping mall: from the country (1997:466).

The process of the social control of New Age Travellers cannot be explained with reference to a single purpose. Its multiplicity of form suggests a "combination of generalised social disciplinary processes with a pervasive bureaucratic control" (Bergalli and Sumner 1997: 118). It is a well-rehearsed argument that the development of the media discourse fulfilled the need for newspapers to sensationalise incidents of apparent deviancy and hence sell more newspapers. Equally obvious from a functionalist perspective, the development of 'stories of deviance' can be seen as providing feelings of group-security for those able to view the marginal phenomenon from the within the comfort of mainstream identity.

On a political level the selection of an easy target of derision by the Conservative Party (one which was vulnerable and with little or no political voice), provided the Party with an additional project to insert into its 1992 manifesto. During the passage of the

CJ&POA the focus on Travellers and related 'folk devils' allowed changes in legislation that would save central government money as well as addressing the need to get tough on law and order issues.

The purpose of the Act was not however, based exclusively on party lines. Additional public order powers are attractive to the police who can apply them to a wider group. Some commentators, for example Angus Murdoch (personal conversation) have suggested that it is precisely this potential, to extend the powers of the police in an attempt to prepare for the consequences of further social exclusion (as a result of the wider Thatcher project) that was the purpose behind the Act. This explanation however, is predicated on the view that governments have the ability to develop long-term strategic plans, which seems at odds with the notion that contemporary nation states now struggle with the of global forces beyond their control.

Paradoxically initial support by the police for the extension of powers was accompanied by a view that further criminalisation of this group would not be in the interests of those charged with the responsibility of exercising control. The purpose of control from the point of view of the police appeared to be driven mainly by economic factors, exacerbated occasionally by local 'public opinion' normally in the form of landowners.

On a wider political level the social control of Travellers can be seen to have sinister intentions, i.e. the removal of 'the problem'. This overt purpose should not be overlooked simply because it lies on the surface of the debate. The culture of nomadic people in Western Europe is no stranger to the organised oppression. Whilst, within this

country at least, this does not seem to be on the agenda of any but a few extreme groups, attempts to assimilate or exterminate Gypsies have been repeated in Europe since their arrival.

### **Effectiveness**

Focusing on the legislative process, particularly the CJ&POA 1994, there is no doubt that there were unintended consequences, the most significant of these being the extra-parliamentary opposition from a broad coalition of otherwise disparate groups. The networks that developed between the groups involved in new forms of protest have strengthened their position. Lessons learned from the confrontation at the extension of the M3 at Twyford Down were used in protesting before and after the Bill became law. The Act has also had the effect of increasing public support as many people saw it as draconian and unfair.

Again, whilst 'planning legislation' and the new powers of the 1994 Act have been effective forcing Travellers off the road or out of the country, many Travellers have become expert in the various details of part V of the Act, in planning legislation and in court procedure. There has also developed an extensive legal network of support for Travellers, for example at the Cardiff University Department of Law and through Friends and Families of Travellers.

The commercialisation of the festival scene along with the virtual elimination of the free festival scene between 1985 and 1995 had a major financial impact on many Travellers who were effectively deprived of an 'alternative income'. However, this resulted in the

rapid growth of the alternative camp scene; groups such as *Rainbow 2000*, *Rainbow Circle*, *Oak Dragon* and later the *Green Gathering* which are not controlled by larger commercial interests such as the aptly named *Mean Fiddler* (Phoenix and Reading) or Michael Eavis (Glastonbury). In the larger commercial festivals, opportunities for informal trade are limited and highly regulated.

The tightening up of welfare benefit rules has resulted in many Travellers seeking other means of income (although it is fair to say many do still continue to claim benefits).

With the support of other informal sources of income, such as busking or the manufacture of simple goods combined with extremely low ‘overheads’, they can survive more effectively on the road than in the environment of the council estate or a privately rented bed-sit.

The incorporation of some of the cultural elements of the Travelling scene has also met with partial success. The incorporation of ‘Traveller’ fashion into the mainstream which took place in the early 90’s resulted in wearing of dreadlocks, hand knitted woollen jumpers, DM’s or paraboos, becoming the prerogative of many young people attracted to the commercial festival scene. However, Travellers were never simply a youth culture to be incorporated in to the mainstream like the punk movement, New Age Travellers include grandparents and parents as well as children born into the lifestyle.

### **Alternatives**

It is difficult to discuss alternatives without falling in to the trap of suggesting more ‘acceptable’ or gentle forms of control and thus, inadvertently accepting the premise

that here is a group that lies on the margins of society that needs to be somehow incorporated. It would be equally difficult to take a position that ignores the very real conflicts that exist between Travellers and mainstream society, between nomads and the settled community, between old hippies and 'straight' society. There is a balance to be struck between stability and protection and individual liberty. The course of events however, in the decade between 1985 and 1995, is not defended in terms of this balance. Much of this conflict was embedded, as we have seen in sedentarism. The debate needs to move on from 'alternatives to extermination', repression and exclusion if we have learned anything from the historical examples of Hungary and Spain and the satellite states of the former Soviet Union. As McVeigh (1997:19) has noted "anti nomad prejudice and discrimination has been (and remains) a prelude to genocide". Given the extreme prejudice experienced by Travellers in the past, for example the *Porraimos*, methods of blatant coercion and even extermination remain, at the present time at least, unlikely. The extermination of 'New Age Travellers' by latter day *Einsatzkommando* death squads is an exaggerated scenario but the aim was the same, that of an eradication of the problem.

The social reaction to New Age Travellers whilst best described as a moral panic was not a simple one. The definition of the target was, from the start, problematic and vague and continued to increase in complexity as the 'DIY culture' developed. The reaction contained, amongst other ingredients, a resurfacing of sedentarism. To quote McVeigh again

The aim of public policy should not be to get rid of nomads, nor indeed to tolerate them. Rather we should accept that it is a good thing to

economically, politically and spiritually - to live in societies, locally and globally, which include nomads and sedentaries (1997:19).

How this laudable aim is translated in to practice and how society should regulate diversity is difficult to assess. Certainly, as the *Friends and Families of Travellers* have recommend, a fundamental revision of policies towards Travellers at both national and local government level would be a start. FFT have a list of recommendations which include: the revision of legislation, site provision, finance through the Housing Corporation, changes in planning policy, and the establishment of an independent agency. It seems unlikely however, in the context of a political shift to the 'middle-ground' that this will be an urgent consideration of the present or indeed future governments. By definition the middle ground does not necessarily represent the interests of the margins. Value choices will need to be built on tolerance and the valuing of difference as well as recognising the deep-seated prejudices.

### **Final thoughts**

Trinities, second only perhaps to the modern western world's love affair with dualities, have always had their appeal, from the Holy Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is perhaps, cognizant of this love of threes, or perhaps a subconscious knowledge that three as the minimum number needed for triangulation, that I set an analysis of the social control of New Age Travellers within three ideas. These for me would be would be sedentarism, the politics of land use, and the context of postmodernity.

Rupert Brooke inadvertently captured a link in the phrase “gave once her flowers to love her paths to roam” between that hippie icon and the sense of freedom associated with the travelling community. The ‘hippie trail’ to New Age Travellers is undeniable, having an unbroken genealogy since the late 1960’s. However, I place the nomadic tradition as equally, if not more important to an understanding of the social control of New Age Travellers, than their counter-cultural provenance. I also believe that the relationship between New Age Travellers and the development of contemporary protest, particularly in relation to movements such as *Earth First!* and *Reclaim the Streets*, has more resonance with a tradition that links sedentarism to vagabondage, paid work and land law, than with the continuation of hippie counter-cultural ideologies. That is not to say that these counter-cultural connections are not important. Roszak’s (1971) scepticism of progress through technology is a theme that binds hippie ideology firmly to many aspects of the DIY culture. I acknowledge that McKay’s (1996) chronology of the connections between contemporary groups and the counter-culture, for example, provides a definitive cultural and political analysis of the scene.

The relationships between sedentarism and land use however, explain the context of the two waves of moral panic that took place in 1985 and later in 1992. Post-modernist ideas and the conditions of postmodernity help explain not only the development of the contemporary travelling scene but also the reaction against the attempts at control as well as the limitations of statist models of intervention and aids the interpretation the press narrative.

What is needed is a model to understand the way in which the competing processes within the dialectic of control can be conceptualised. Figure one illustrates some of the important relationships clustered around the 'policing' of New Age Travellers which are necessary to understand this process however, it does not fully integrate what Clarke (1998) has termed the 'cultural turn' within an understanding of 'the social', that is

The spaces ignored by the classic dualisms of the social sciences: the gaps in the structuralist individualist debates and the gaps in structure agency formulations (1998: 3).

What we have now is another trinity. In this case, structure and agency mediated by culture. Clarke however, warns of the difficulty of capturing that polysemic, 'spongey' word within a 'simple solidification'.

Certainly the counter-cultural reading is helpful in providing another dimension to the process by bringing into the debate hegemonic notions such as 'cultural incorporation' as a mechanism of control. However, recognising the importance of social action as a product mediated through culture goes further than this. From a cultural dimension we can understand more fully a postmodernist perspective of a struggle of competing vocabularies. The process of control has developed into a battle of hermeneutics between discourses of law and order and those of environmental concern and civil liberty. As mentioned earlier anthropocentric perspectives are being challenged by ecocentric ones with the cultural differences acting as lenses of interpretation. As Marion Shoard (1997) observed in the introduction to the second edition of *This land is our land*

to understand the emerging land war in Britain we need to grasp a set of realities quite foreign to those of us who have been brought up on the



preoccupation's of post war Britain....we also need to understand the motives and arguments of those without land who are none the less making a claim to a stake in it.(1997: xix).

Hester and Eglin (1992) have pointed to Chambliss's (1976, 1964) work on the development of the vagrancy laws as a 'classic' structural conflict analysis of the origins of criminal law. The importance of Chambliss's work in theorising the relationships outlined above is that it clarifies the link between vagrancy and criminal law and exposes the interests of those who own land with law making. Law making, conceptualised like this, underlines the point that generally criminal law is made to protect the concept of property ownership even if it may seem to be about such things as vagrancy or violence against the person. As Neary has noted with reference to Brownmiller (1986) "in the criminal law, sanctions against crimes of violence are motivated by the imperative to protect the law of property" (Neary 1997: 17).

Shoard (1997) has argued, contrary to Mingay (1994), that landowners still hold positions of great influence in society. Their influence through the House of Lords and through the combined lobbying powers of the NFU and the Country Landowners Association are not to be underestimated. This partly explains why apparently draconian laws, in this case the 1994 CJ&POA, appear to have such support. What it does not explain however, is the apparent support that the trespassory laws received from the general public. It is here that we need to look at the deep-seated sedentarist values not only held by the ruling elite but by a much broader constituency. The scapegoat theory works well here (McVeigh 1997). However, to assume that these values have remained at a kind of 'constant level' would also be a mistake. There have been some interesting

parallels in history to the situation that we see in the context of the development of the DIY culture. To borrow another quote from Shoard:

By the sixteenth century, people were becoming mobile. Masterless men, free to think what they chose, grew more and more numerous. There was an itinerant trading population - peddlers, carters and craftsmen. There were the squatters on the commons wastes and forests (1997:35).

Shoard locates the Levellers, Diggers, Seekers and Ranters in the hegemonic vacuum caused by the temporary liberalisation of the publishing laws between 1640 to 1660.

This has interesting parallels with increases in cultural reflexivity and the impact of new technology in the sphere of communication. The development of communications systems in the DIY culture may provide a similar 'gap of censorship'; not as a result of relaxed laws of censorship, but as a result of the (as yet) uncensorable cyberspace of the internet (see Wall 1997, Mann and Sutton 1998). Another example would be the more widely accessible use of mobile fax, phones and pagers which were used to such effect in actions such as Solsbury Hill.

The social element of social control then can be located in an understanding of how the 'problem' of New Age Travellers is socially constructed. This construction centres on the hegemonic struggle between 'naturalising' discourses, which maintain and reproduce concepts of land ownership in which sedentarist prejudice can flourish and the discourses that oppose it. Originally these alternative discourses, a vestige of hippie counter-culture, provided only weak opposition (flower power!). Later, combined with a growing awareness of environmental issues, the issue of land broadened from the simple need to 'park up' to an 'in-ya-face' direct, uncompromising challenge to the management and apparent legitimacy of land ownership based on a growing recognition

of environmental destruction. The 'alternative' discourses, became louder and received a degree of public support to ameliorate the public censure. Add to this an environment of loosening and 'contracting' state agencies of control, constrained by 'managerialist' myopia and the growing uncertainties and incredulities of a fragmented, disembedded world, and suddenly the control dialectic appears to shift in favour of those who are its object.

Social conflict and therefore social control in some shape or form will no doubt last as long as human beings remain on the planet. This particular dialectic however, contains a degree of irony. Modernity, personified by the rise of the nation state, provided the greatest challenge to nomads by replacing frontiers with borders, enclosing land, and legitimising land ownership. Faith in the meta-narrative of 'scientific rationality' (along with all of its claims for humanitarian progress, through the development of medicine and welfarism) defines modernity: it climaxed in the genocide of Gypsies in Europe. The characteristics of postmodernity however, may lead to the survival and revival of nomadic traditions. The blurring of the boundaries between nomad and green activist that resulted in the 1990's attempt to 'make life difficult' for these 'mediaeval brigands' has, to some degree, enabled New Age Travellers to survive.

To conclude, the story of the social control of New Age Travellers in the decade 1985 to 1995 was about a moral panic characterised by the usual focus on 'youth' as a perennial problem but more importantly and differently, concerns clustered around nomadism. It was this set of concerns that provided the nucleus from which the moral panic could cluster and it was this set of concerns that provided a unifying voice in an

otherwise increasingly relative world of competing vocabularies. Sedentarism demonstrated that some prejudices appear to defy the idea of post-modern relativism. The unfolding of events between 1985 -1995 however, shifted the focus from 'nomadic hippies' to 'protesters' many of whom were not nomadic but nevertheless became entangled in a process of social control. This 'environmental turn' exposed both the nature of sedentarism from the point of land ownership, questioning the right to own land and the damage being undertaken by its titular custodians, as well bringing to the attention of the public the longer term consequences of environmental insensitivity.

In the long term, and on a global scale, if we are to look for solutions that benefit both nomadic people and the settled community then these solutions may be formulated in a discourse that is essentially 'environmental'. As it becomes clear, from an environmental perspective, that changes in dominant ideologies are necessary for human survival, then the pioneers of contemporary environmental protest and alternative lifestyle may be recast as exemplars. Alternatively the skills learned by contemporary nomads may need to be played out in a *Mad Max* post-apocalyptic world. It may however, be that the trajectory of the industrial project of modernity leads inexorably to environmental global catastrophe beyond the 'social' and draws a line under *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* for good. With that all-human social conflict, including the conflict between sedentaries and nomads will be resolved.

## APPENDIX I

### LIST OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH POLICE AND TRAVELLERS CARRIED OUT BETWEEN 1994-1997

#### POLICE

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Force</u>	<u>Date</u>
Chief Inspector (Operations)	Warwickshire	January 1994
County Press Officer	Wiltshire	February 1994
Deputy Chief Constable	Hampshire	June 1996
Chief Inspector	Derbyshire	December 1996
Sergeant	Wiltshire	January 1997
Superintendent	Warwickshire	April 1997
Detective Sergeant	Warwickshire	June 1997

## TRAVELLERS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Site</u>
Alan	November 1993	Nottingham
Steve	May 1997	FFT
Brian	June 1997	King's Hill
Claire	June 1997	King's Hill
Colin	June 1997	Somerset
Shamus	June 1997	King's Hill
Stella	October 1997	King's Hill
Matt and Inge	October 1997	Hereford
Trystan	October 1997	King's Hill
Hedge	November 1997	King's Hill
Avril	November 1997	King's Hill
Lisa	November 1997	King's Hill
Sham	December 1997	Paradise Quarry
Lisa	December 1997	Paradise Quarry
Alex	December 1997	Anglesey
Josh	December 1997	Pixie's Wood
Kel	December 1997	Pixie's Wood
Steff	December 1997	Pixie's Wood

## APPENDIX II

Account of the 'Battle of the Beanfield': based on an interview recorded summer 1996  
between the author and a Deputy Chief Constable

*Richard:* Can you say how it happened; what were the developments? What do you think were the things that came together to make the 'Beanfield' confrontation happen?

*Ian:* Well, I think firstly you have the Wiltshire Constabulary which are saying we're not going back to having that free festival anymore. What should have been a week festival has now aspired to a month's festival, which went into six weeks there were significant difficulties in policing that event. We had some deaths in the tent that caught fire. Drug use was open, young children in that environment and if you take what the current legislation is saying about exposing children to moral danger that cannot be the consistent thing for us to live with. The sanitation, water all of these things weren't consistent and Wiltshire took the view that there was no mid point we can get to on this. There will not be a festival. So in comes an Exclusion Zone around the 'Stones' for the three weeks people want after the summer solstice. What happened then is around that Exclusion Zone especially in the north of Hampshire, you have what I would call people living on the perimeter of that site, some in 'green lanes', some

moving occasionally, some actually getting consent from land owner, “ Yes that’s OK. You stay there.”

Ian: You then get the landowner of Savernake Forest “Yes, you can come up here you can stay on this forestland.” He is then put under pressure because historically there is some kind of Forestry Commission right which says you can now not give that consent only we can give that consent and indeed he is involved slightly, he is philosophically akin to the travelling ethic as it were.

At that time I was an Inspector in this force and I was told I had to go to Bulford camp at six o’clock in the morning (its a military camp in Wiltshire). And in Hampshire, at that time there were three highly trained Inspectors of whom I was one who were trained to deal with public disorders.

So if you take shields, riot situations if you like, we were the officers highly trained in our unit to deal with that kind of event. I was trained years in advance for that. Our training was not just focused on Travellers it was focused on inner city. It came from...riots which occurred in inner cities, in the metropolitan areas of Liverpool in a number of years. That’s why we were originally trained and that’s how we were equipped. So we’ve got three Inspectors and I’d say about 80 police officers from Hampshire who were told go to Bulford camp where you will meet with other Commanders where you will get briefed in relation with this policing operation because it was perceived you’ve got all these Travellers in the Savernack Forest and you’ve got



an 'Exclusion Zone' and there is obviously going to be some kind of attempt to get to Stonehenge.

Now, with all the benefit of hindsight the policing operation had not been thought through very well because when we arrived, we were told to get to get to Bulford for a six o'clock briefing in the morning. It became immediately apparent that the Traveller community of Savernack had decided to up-camp early and were going to get onto the road early. So we actually never had the briefing. What we were given were huge documents. "Read these and go to Countess roundabout" (which is a roundabout underneath the A303, which actually is just slightly inside of Hampshire). So I quickly read this plan and the plan went something like this:

We had got all these lorries full of gravel; if there is an attempt then we will tip this gravel; people will be unable to proceed; we will then try and prevent them going backwards. We then (because it will be a clear contravention of the actual injunction) move amongst them and see what offence has been committed.

That kind of plan logistically causes a lot of problems if you think it through. What about their injuries? How do ambulance crews get to the scene for example there was one vehicle, which for reasons best known to the Travellers they set on fire. But if you got 120 in a line that's restricted; you've then got a fire situation; where do all the people go; the children, the adults, all of them? There are some things about it that hadn't been thought through. It had been more about I would call it 'Fortress Stonehenge' rather than "Here is a Travelling environment what can we do"?

I went with the three units to Countess Roundabout and we were then told this convoy is on the move and its heading in you're direction. Now, there's a minor road, which runs from Countess Roundabout towards Tadley so we deployed along this road and ahead of us we had these great big lorries of gravel. I remember saying to the Superintendent for Wiltshire who we were reporting to at the time. I said "You know, you really don't have to tip this gravel because they're not going to get by those lorries anyway. If you tip this gravel then when we deploy we've got to get over these huge banks of gravel to get to the other side. Whatever we do will then detach us from our own vehicles and all the support and it becomes... it's not a sterile area. It's a very confusing area".

He assured us: "I won't tip. Don't worry I won't tip".

Well, the moment (this is a long straight road and you can see a mile along the road)

The moment the first vehicle came round he said "Tip the gravel tip the gravel"

So up went 20 yards of gravel and there was another junction so the first vehicle saw all this gravel being tipped and turned left as did everyone else so if you can imagine there was a big triangle. So they start going up across the hypotenuse and we go back to the roundabout and start to come up in the other direction. They then turn right to come back up to the Countess roundabout and are mixed up with members of the public lots of people there, on what was the A 303! I mean a major trunk road; lots of other vehicles. Of course they come down and there met by police vehicles then not gravel just police vehicles and everything comes to a stop. So the police officers get out and go to the people in that coach and immediately a violent confrontation starts. The next coach sees this, comes out of the traffic and goes straight through a very small fence

into the beanfield and then in behind drive all the other coaches. So what you end up with is coaches, Travellers in the beanfield, members of the public in their vehicles on the A 303. It was affected more by chance, not design. It actually developed in that way and I don't think there was, well there couldn't have been any plan to put Travellers into the Beanfield. I mean, I'd like to think we were that organised but the reality is that we're not...and so in went the Travellers. Now the Travellers when they were in the field actually are not, there wasn't immediately confrontation, and this is what I mean about different people.

Some parked down in the valley and these were families with small children and there was some confusion as to what's going to happen next. There was this harder element which stayed very near to the fence and I can remember this big wrecker that was very near to the fence and of course we had all the members of the public that were all mixed up on the A303. And you've got this incident going on with the police officers and the one bus, which hit each other. And of course people were getting arrested in that coach where the accident people are getting arrested and that was an Avon and Somerset unit. It was their bus that had been hit. We went on past there; we deployed our officers and started to get the members of the public out seeing the confrontation around the coach. There is the hard element inside who then get very angry, come to the fence then we start getting things thrown. So we then deployed shields, long shields and along where the public vehicles were. You have the public vehicles and again getting the public vehicles through and there's a stop on any other vehicles going along the A303.

Now that confrontation between ourselves and those in the field took a number of different turns during the day. To start with it was mild. There then was a period of quite hard activity and at one stage, because we were having so much thrown at us, and it was a range of items it included petrol, diesel but with nothing to actually ignite it. So it was more

“This is what...we could do more than this is. This is what we’re going to do”

We had things like home made spears, stones because it was a recently ploughed field. So there were stones (the area up here lends itself to flints) and quite a barrage of abuse. Vehicles were beginning to get driven round and driven towards the fence as if to say we could cut through any time we want to and certainly because we were the only three units there and nobody else was in this road.

What was, I think, the real key problem was this: If there had been someone in authority at that moment, at that time, willing to say to the Travellers “Let’s stop this now let’s sit down and talk it through” I think it would of got sorted out. But when we got someone in authority there and it was this Superintendent I’d seen at Bulford and I think at one stage an Assistant or Deputy Chief Constable. It was very much along the lines of “There have been acts of criminal damage caused at the beanfield and to the fence and we want to apprehend the people who did that”. Well that was a bit of an unrealistic prospect, a huge amount of coaches had gone in the field. They’d gone in the field not to cause criminal damage but because, in the main, they were confused, didn’t know what to do and were, I suspect, frightened; because you know police officers in uniform are frightening. Police officers in the kind of equipment we were wearing on the day are frightening and so, I mean, so there is that reality to it and that’s not a

debate about the rights or wrongs. I actually think that we got into that position more by coincidence and chance rather than by this is a design this is what we intend to do. At that stage my unit in particular was coming under an awful lot of pressure and I took...I think two of our officers got injured and I knew I couldn't sustain the position of standing here with people only by the wall masked behind our shields. I knew that things had got really bad. So I decided to go into the field. Now actually that was a bad decision. On reflection that was not the wisest thing to do but I had in my mind if I can just put some distance, if only to frighten people, to make them go back to and stay by the coach rather than let them go on throwing things at us, then I think that I'd resolved the situation. So I took the unit into the field and we did go into the field.

We'd only got in about 20 yards when the vehicles began to be driven. Now the reality is that police officers stood up were no match for people driving coaches but there was, at that stage, almost hand to hand combat taking place. I mean an open field and all the rest of it, and we got into the field. All the tactics you were actually taught about street deployment of officers go out the window because when you actually...all of our training had been "this is how you would approach a street or riot situation". "This is how you deploy people". "These are the angles". Its nothing, so you've got no definition other than a vast field and immediately I really actually lost control of my officers. They couldn't sensibly deploy. They were running around avoiding coaches and everything. So I said "Right, back!" and back we went over the fence, much to the cheers of the Travellers, as you can imagine, but that experience was sufficient for me to know that deploying police officers in a field was high risk. It wasn't going to be the best option.

Now after about four hours - it was that long, they'd keep going up and down and they'd get fed up and have a cup of tea and then come back and do a bit more - there was a meeting of the Inspectors the Chief Inspectors the Superintendents and the Deputy Chief Constable and it took place at the little hotel down the bottom of the hill near Countess Roundabout. And when I got there I said to the Deputy:

"Look I've been into the field if you go into the field there is going to be a real serious problem because some of these Travellers can drive. We won't be able to control it there no way in which we deployed on foot will be able to handle that situation".

and I said:

"It's very difficult to keep control of you're unit if you can deploy in the traditional sense" and his response was along the lines of:

"Well that isn't what I'd do to anyway. We won't do that I can assure you we won't deploy because we'd rather consult and resolve it and it's probably going to be something we're going to do tomorrow".

So I actually thought somebody was going to have a proper date. Went back to my unit and we were then stood down. We'd got from a position of walking down a hill and just taking off fire-proof overalls now we'd been in them all day so you can imagine we were wet through. We took them off and within about an hour of that meeting we were told every one was going through, and I think you've seen the pictures.

If you just look at what the Travellers did at that time because I think it's very important. The first part they went in it wasn't the bean field. It was actually grass.

They drove from the grass up into the bean field and up a hill and many of them. The

vehicles got bogged down but there weren't any confrontations. They were trying to drive away. They were trying to get away from all these hundreds of officers going into the fields and I remember a helicopter being over top was in there saying "get out of your vehicle, walk towards the Police Officers" and most of them did. I went into the bean field and people just walked and said:

"We've left our vehicle over there"

Dogs, animals, suddenly all these people were walking back to what was the A303. In the field itself there was complete loss of control. You have some vehicles, which were set on fire down in the corner, and I don't know how they were set on fire. I don't know if they were torched by the owners. I don't know if they were set fire that wasn't where I was. But as I went back down towards the field, because the beanfield, you didn't have to go across the field to get into the beanfield. We went through the hotel and then you're in the beanfield; and the main activity of this driving round was on the grass area more than it was on the lower end of the bean field. But certainly you had these vehicles going round and round. You've seen as well as I did that you had the vehicles that eventually came to a halt, and you had officers going in with truncheons and you saw people being truncheoned and all in all at the end of the day we ended up with 500 people stood along the A303 being taken all over the place to various locations. And because of the methods used, because of the violence used, which was perceived rightly as being very much police orientated, the public reaction to that on the whole, the police will go out looking for extreme violence. Yes, they wanted to go to Stonehenge, but perhaps if they were dealt with in a different way they wouldn't have been persuaded to be put in that position.

*Richard:* Do you think there was any relationship between the tactics or the development of the tactics leading to the bean field and the previous inter-force co-operation around the miners' strike, because that's what commentators believe.

*Ian:* I said about the training. Many of the Officers that were with me had also been in the 'north'. But the reality is, on that day, we didn't often deploy shields. In the main we were deploying cordons and this sort of thing. With the miners I think the real issue was we had not thought through how do you actually deal with mobile situations with people. Some people who are prepared to drive coaches at police officers, how do you actually deal with that. We dealt with that on the day at the Beanfield in a tactically naive way. We could have had people killed. You never deploy police officers in situations where they can get killed. It was only by the grace of god that no one was hurt. I mean some people who were hurt, were hurt by police officers who, you know, were giving them a bash with their truncheons and that can't be right either. If you believe in a police force operating in a democracy they must operate within the law, otherwise you do not have policing by consent. You have a different form of policing..



# APPENDIX III

## THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The University Of Birmingham Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Edgbaston,  
Birmingham B152TT. Research Supervisor: Dr Mike Nellis. Telephone 021 414 5726.

### Attitudes to New Age Travellers

Male ☒ 1

How long have you lived in this area?(within 20 miles)

Female

2 ☐

☐ 1

Under a year

☐ 1

1

1-4 years

☒ 2

2

over 4 years

☐ 3

3

☐ 2

Do you read a local newspaper at least once a week?

Yes ☐ 1

No ☒ 2

2

☐ 2

What is the name of your local newspaper?

Do you read a daily national newspaper at least once a week? Yes ☒ 1

No ☐ 2

2

☐ 1

If so which of these do you read?

The Times

☐ 1

1

The Daily Telegraph

☐ 2

2

The Express ☐ 3

The Mail

☐ 4

4

Today ☐ 5

The Sun

☒ 6

6

The Mirror ☐ 7

The Star

☐ 8

8

The Independent ☐ 9

The Guardian

☐ 10

10

Other / more than one ☐ 11

11

☐ 6

What do you prefer watching on Television?

Nothing ☐

Drama ☐ Documentary ☐ Light entertainment ☒ News ☐

Do you watch Television..Sometimes ☐ 1

Every night ☒ 2

Never ☐ 3

3

☐ 2

Do you listen to the Radio.....

Never

☐ 1

1

Sometimes

☒ 2

2

Every night

☐ 3

3

☐ 2

To which of these age groups do you belong?

19 or younger

☒ 1

1

20-29

☐ 2

2

30-39

☐ 3

3

40-49

☐ 4

4

50-59

☐ 5

5

60 or over

☐ 6

6

☐

Is your income per year?

under £11,000

☐ 1

1

£11,000-15,999 ☐ 2

over £26,000

☐ 4

4

☐

£16,000-25,999 ☐ 3

Have you heard of the term New age Traveller? Yes ☒ 1 No ☐ 2 ☐ 1

If you have can you remember when you first heard the term?

Under a year ago ☐ 1

1-4 years ago ☒ 2

over 4 years ago ☐ 3 ☐ 2

What was the source of your first information about the New Age Traveller?

Local Newspapers ☐ 1

Direct personal experience ☐ 2 National Newspapers ☐ 3

Conversations with friends/colleagues ☐ 4 Television ☒ 5

Radio ☐ 6

Other / more than 1 ☐ 7 ☐ 5

Please tick the box next to the following statements that reflects your view most accurately  
You may not agree entirely with the statement but please select the statement  
closest to your view. Tick only one box per section. In the following try to give an  
answer for New Age Travellers generally.

New Age travellers dress..... differently from most people ☒ 1

more originally than most people ☐ 2

more 'scruffily' than most people ☐ 3

More brightly than most people ☐ 4 ☐ 1

New Age Travellers are..... More honest than most people ☐ 1

Less honest than most people ☐ 2 About the same in terms of honesty ☒ 3 ☐ 3

New Age Travellers are..... more religious than most people ☒ 1

about the same ☐ 2 less religious than most people ☐ 3 ☐ 1

New Age Travellers..... care more about the environment ☒ 1

care less about the environment ☐ 2 care about the environment as much as anyone else. ☐ 3 ☐ 1

New Age Travellers..... are mostly self employed ☐ 1

can't find work ☐ 2 don't want to work ☐ 3

a mixture of all three ☒ 4

a mixture of 2+3 ☐ 5 ☐ 1

Have you personally met New Age Travellers

Yes ☐ 1

No ☐ 0 ☒

If so has this been a local meeting(within 20miles)

Yes ☐ 1

No ☐ 0 ☒

In your opinion do most New Age Travellers deal in drugs?

Yes ☐ 1

Don't Know

No ☐ 0 ☒

Do you know of any occasions where New Age Travellers have been a problem to you personally. Yes ☐ 1 No ☒ 0 If yes, was the problem to do with any of the following. Tick more than one box if necessary.

- |                           |                          |    |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Litter                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1  |
| Damage to property        | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2  |
| Sheep worrying or similar | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3  |
| Drug dealing              | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4  |
| Noise                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5  |
| Theft                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6  |
| Violence                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7  |
| Bad language              | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8  |
| Traffic problems          | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9  |
| Hygiene                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 |
| Other                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11 |

☒

Do you know of any occasions where New Age Travellers have been a problem to an friend of yours or someone whom you know personally. Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, was the problem to do with any of the following. Tick more than one box if necessary.

- |                           |                          |    |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Litter                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1  |
| Damage to property        | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2  |
| Sheep worrying or similar | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3  |
| Drug dealing              | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4  |
| Noise                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5  |
| Theft                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6  |
| Violence                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7  |
| Bad language              | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8  |
| Traffic problems          | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9  |
| Hygiene                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 |
| Other                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11 |

☒

Would you say that your attitude to New Age Travellers was

hostile	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
suspicious	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2
neutral/indifferent	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
tolerant	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

Do you think that the media treat New Age Travellers

very positively ☐ 1

positively ☐ 2

critically ☐ 3

Very critically ☒ 4

Do you think that the way Police deal with Travellers in your area ( county) is

too fair ☐ 1

fair most of the time ☒ 2

unfair most of the time ☐ 3

unfair all the time ☐ 4

no opinion ☐ 5

Which of the following measures would you support. Tick more than one box if you agree with more than one measure.

Making it easier for New Age Travellers to get planning permission for temporary sites ☐

Making it easier for New Age Travellers to get planning permission for permanent sites ☒

Stop paying any benefits to Travellers ☐

Stop paying selected benefits to Travellers ☐

Banning Travellers from this County ☐

Banning Travellers from this Country ☐

Increase Police control of Travellers ☐

Decrease Police control of Travellers ☐

If you would like to put your name on this document please do so here. This form will be kept anonymous Name .....

Thank you very much for taking the time and trouble to fill in this questionnaire. If you would be prepared to give more of your time in a slightly more detailed interview, please fill in the following.

Address

Phone daytime  
Phone evening

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