

## TONYPANDY 1910: DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNITY\*

"Tonypandy", Grant said . . . , "is a place in the South of Wales . . .

If you go to South Wales you will hear that, in 1910, the Government used troops to shoot down Welsh miners who were striking for their rights. You'll probably hear that Winston Churchill, who was Home Secretary at the time, was responsible. South Wales, you will be told, will never forget Tonypandy!"

Carradine had dropped his flippant air.

"And it wasn't a bit like that?"

"The actual facts are these. The rougher section of the Rhondda valley crowd had got quite out of hand. Shops were being looted and property destroyed. The Chief Constable of Glamorgan sent a request to the Home Office for troops to protect the lieges . . . But Churchill was so horrified at the possibility of the troops coming face to face with a crowd of rioters and having to fire on them, that he stopped the movement of the troops and sent instead a body of plain, solid Metropolitan Police, armed with nothing but their rolled-up mackintoshes. The troops were kept in reserve, and all contact with the rioters was made by unarmed London police. The only bloodshed in the whole affair was a bloody nose or two . . . That was Tonypandy. That is the shooting-down by troops that Wales will never forget . . .

It is a completely untrue story grown to legend while the men who knew it to be untrue looked on and said nothing".

"Yes. That's very interesting; very. History as it is made".

"Yes. History".

"Give me research. After all, the truth of anything at all doesn't lie in someone's account of it. It lies in all the small facts of the time. An advertisement in a paper. The sale of a house. The price of a ring".<sup>1</sup>

THE TWO FICTIONAL CHARACTERS WHO RUMINATED, INACCURATELY ON most specific points but with some perception in general, on the meaning of Tonypandy, did so in the year that Winston Churchill became Prime Minister for the second time. By 1951 the purpose of the historical Tonypandy was that it could be waved as a flag of proletarian resistance or dismissed as a minor scuffle. The very name had come to symbolize subsequent militancy in the south Wales coalfield, to provide an easy reference sign for poets, to stand as dramatic focus for epic novels.<sup>2</sup> Tonypandy had entered into history too soon to escape the burden of its usable myth. There are understandable reasons, for it seemed to stand at the centre of so many other events: it indicted a Churchill whose liberalism, as Home Secretary in 1910, could be seen as a smoke-screen for the domestic bellicosity he demonstrated in

\* I should like to thank Professor Eric Hobsbawm for his extensive comments on an earlier draft of this article and, for points of specific information, Peter Stead, Gwyn Jenkins and Derek Clayton.

<sup>1</sup> Josephine Tey, *The Daughter of Time* (London, 1976), pp. 94-5. This was originally published in 1951.

<sup>2</sup> See David Smith, "Myth and Meaning in the Literature of the South Wales Coalfield: The 1930s", *Anglo-Welsh Rev.*, xxv (1976), pp. 21-42.

1926; it heralded the great wave of industrial unrest in pre-1914 Britain; its ten-month strike, though ending in defeat, paved the way for an airing of the issues that resulted in the national strike of 1912 with its minimum-wage provisions; around this local struggle gathered militant leaders and various brands of socialist ideology which, winning wider acceptance, threatened both the entrenched dominance of Lib-Labism and the long haul of parliamentary reformism. There was sufficient validity in these, and other, factual conglomerates to allow Tonymandy to be representative for historians, too, of economic trends or frames of mind which this place and time appeared to sum up.<sup>3</sup>

However, what attracted attention at the time was not this reverberating significance but the violent outburst on Tuesday, 8 November 1910, when the town's commercial high street was wrecked. This was the event which, at a time of high industrial tension elsewhere in the coalfield,<sup>4</sup> marked Tonymandy out and brought the troops in.

The question of whether or not Churchill was responsible for the use of troops and even whether troops ever saw the place at all,<sup>5</sup> has bedevilled the historiography of the riot. Churchill's biographers have been too intent on translating his reluctance to become "Tonymandy" Churchill — as another Liberal Home Secretary had become "Featherstone" Asquith, after troops had shot two men at the Yorkshire Disturbances of 1893 — into an absolute unwillingness to use the military.<sup>6</sup> It is indeed the case that the troops requested by the local magistracy and sent by G.O.C. Southern Command after disturbances on 7th November were halted by Churchill in confirmation of Haldane's earlier decision as War Secretary (before they reached the area) but they were on their way again the following day. There were troops on patrol in Tonymandy, and neighbouring valleys, from the early hours of 9th November. The Riot Act was not read in mid-Rhondda nor were any shots fired. On the other hand the troops were in attendance, in diminishing numbers, until the defeat of the strike in October 1911 and, more importantly, played a vital role in support of the large numbers of police, especially the well-trained Metropolitans, sent by the government after the initial vacillation over the troops. Together they constituted a formidable force: in the vicinity were two squadrons of hussars and two infantry companies (with three further companies

<sup>3</sup> For the role of Tonymandy in, respectively, the economic and political development of south Wales, see L. J. Williams, "The Road to Tonymandy", *Llafur*, i (1973), pp. 3-14; K. O. Morgan, "The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour: The Welsh Experience, 1885-1929", *Welsh Hist. Rev.*, vi (1973), pp. 288-312.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Barclay, "'Slaves of the Lamp': The Aberdare Miners' Strike, 1910", *Llafur*, ii (1978), pp. 24-42.

<sup>5</sup> The confusion has lingered on. See *The Times*, 21 Sept., 3, 10 Oct. 1978; *The Guardian*, 15 Oct. 1978.

<sup>6</sup> Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: Young Statesman, 1901-1914*, 5 vols. (London, 1966-76), ii, pp. 373-8, 386; Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill* (London, 1974), pp. 136-7.

within a thirty-mile radius) as well as eventually over a thousand police, of whom a hundred and twenty were mounted. Infantry, using fixed bayonets, did assist the police in subsequent clashes but the only fatality that arose directly from confrontation between police and strikers was that of Samuel Rays, a miner, whose skull was fractured "by some blunt instrument" on 8th November. The circumspect manner in which the military conducted themselves, along with Churchill's desire not to offend a predominantly Liberal electorate whose annual miners' gathering in 1908 he had personally attended, has obscured the fact that, in essence, the troops ensured that the miners' demands would be utterly rejected.<sup>7</sup>

It was the general scope of these grievances that gave the mid-Rhondda struggle its centrality and has led to the riots being seen as a mere appendage of the strike itself: an unfortunate psychological aberration or an understandable mistake but tied, umbilically, to the Cambrian Combine strike. Now, whereas the strike was a catalytic agent for the riots, the latter had other and deeper causes, which were expressive of a social crisis, heightened in mid-Rhondda but permeated throughout a south Wales whose history, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, differed in a number of respects from that of the rest of Britain. Either compartmentalizing that history on the assumption that its most crucial aspect is its effect on the past traditions of Wales or taking it, where there are common areas, as an appendage to the social history of England is to distort the chronological rhythm of the actual society which requires a Welsh history in which the noun's subtlety will automatically restore the epithet's genuine complexity. At the root of a great deal of twentieth-century Wales's intellectual contortion is a failure, almost self-willed, to investigate the social processes that led to the making of a "modern" Wales.<sup>8</sup> Whatever indices of growth are taken — house-building, population increase, immigration, export commodities, production, individual wealth — south Wales proves to be on an upward, albeit fluctuating, curve and one that responds to an "Atlantic" rhythm of growth rather than to the domestic British economy. It became, in fact, like Bristol and Glasgow before it, not so much a colonized fringe as one of those metropolitan nubs of empire from which British domination radiated. The Atlantic was its lake. For over two decades, more than one-third of all exported

<sup>7</sup> *Colliery Strike Disturbances in South Wales: Correspondence and Report, November 1910*, Parliamentary Papers (hereafter P.P.), 1911 [5568], lxiv, pp. 7-10; K. O. Fox, "The Tonypandy Riots", *Army Quart. and Defence Jl.*, civ (1973), pp. 72-8; J. M. McEwen, "Tonypandy: Churchill's Albatross", *Queens Quart.*, lxxviii (1971), pp. 83-94.

<sup>8</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870-1914* (London, 1977), is a salutary, though less comforting, corrective to the sociological pattern-making of M. G. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London, 1975).

British coal came from a south Wales whose coalfield was a major supplier of industrializing France and Italy, of colonial Egypt, of developing Brazil and Argentina. In its south-west section 90 per cent of all British anthracite was mined, with over 55 per cent shipped out, mostly to new markets in Scandinavia and France.<sup>9</sup> On this rich economic mulch a dynamic middle class, heir to a culture of *Welsh* self-improvement which had marked the political and social drives of nineteenth-century Wales, now gloried in its radical tradition in Non-conformity and liberalism, given due worth, at last, under the imperial umbrella. It regarded Wales, a nation reborn, as an organic community over which a natural leadership held sway.

The contradiction of metropolitan growth was not that an alien rule had been imposed upon the native population but that within the metropolis (even from the "community") a distinct working class was being nurtured. This necessary working class was not a uniform proletariat conscious of its own class interests in an explicit sense. When it did express itself collectively, apart from momentary strife, it was still dependent upon its traditional focusing agencies, notably religion. Religion was *the* cultural mode of the emergent Welsh middle class too; it was the channel both of its social status and its political thrust. By the turn of the nineteenth century it was also, in its larger and more ornate temples, in its cultivated and highly trained clergy, a mirror image of a society, now in the second phase of industrialization, that was increasingly professionalized, corporate and hierarchical. Although massively dependent upon youth, muscle and basic skills in its economy, it praised and rewarded, in its chapels, those who boasted letters after their name or who attained, through age and respectability, the position of elders. At work a combination of deference to this dominant cultural image allied to the more practical need for trade defence led to the boosting of the notion of the skilled, craftsmanlike collier whereas, in fact, the rapid promotion of youths was effectively undercutting the reality of apprenticeship. When, in 1904 and 1905, Evan Roberts, the collier-blacksmith lay-preacher from the geographical divide between rural and industrial Wales, led his Revival on its spectacular whirl through Welsh communities it was grace through

<sup>9</sup> See Brinley Thomas, "The Migration of Labour into the Glamorganshire Coalfield, 1861-1911", and J. Hamish Richards and J. Parry Lewis, "Housebuilding in the South Wales Coalfield, 1851-1913", in W. E. Minchinton (ed.), *Industrial South Wales, 1750-1914* (London, 1969), pp. 37-56, 235-48; G. M. Holmes, "The South Wales Coal Industry, 1850-1914", *Trans. Hon. Soc. Cymmrodorion* (1976), pp. 162-207; W. D. Rubinstein, "Wealth, Élite and the Class Structure of Modern Britain", *Past and Present*, no. 76 (Aug. 1977), pp. 99-126, points out that for south Wales there were two millionaires in the period 1809-58 but five for 1858-1914 (Table 2, p. 105); for Wales and the Atlantic economy, see Brinley Thomas, *Migration and Economic Growth: A Study of Great Britain and the Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, 1954); Brinley Thomas, *Migration and Urban Growth* (London, 1972), pp. 170-81; H. Stanley Jevons, *The British Coal Trade* (London, 1915), pp. 660-93.

individual salvation without benefit of clergy which proved most attractive to a population normally shepherded into social response even in their chapels. In particular it was those sidetracked groups, women and youths, given limited roles in the chapels, at home, in politics, attaining a false maturity through dress, which aped, and therefore respected, those older, who could only assert their total being in the releasing frenzy of a Revival which, for all its enthusiastic commitment, was the start of the death-rattle of Welsh Nonconformity in its hegemonic guise.<sup>10</sup> That totality speaks, when it does appear, of common, usually repressed, assumptions. The Tonypany riots, too, should be seen as evidence of social fracture as much as of industrial dispute. The crisis occurred within the framework of conventional labour relations; the crowd's response, in both strike and riot, was strictly that of an already industrialized society; but they also chose targets symbolic of their discontent with a community which was supposedly their own natural focus of being. Forced, via the strike, to reassess their own status, they ended by commenting on their relationship to a community defined for them in a graphic coda of selective destruction that was incomprehensible to those whose *idea* of the community was now threatened by this ugly, intrusive reality. Churchill himself, writing to King George V on 10 November 1910, retailed the popular (police-inspired) explanation of the "insensate action of the rioters in wrecking shops in the town of Tonypany, against which they had not the slightest cause for animosity, when they had been foiled in their attacks upon the colliery".<sup>11</sup> This brand of "history as it is made", delivered complete with simple motives and moral judgements, cannot survive the revealing detail that comes from research into "the small facts of the time".<sup>12</sup>

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The origins of the dispute lay in the refusal of men in the Ely pit to work a new seam at the price per ton offered by management.<sup>13</sup> The

<sup>10</sup> There is still no complete account of the Revival. My own characterization is based on Henri Bois, *Le réveil en Pays de Galles* (Toulouse, 1907); J. Rogues de Fursac, *Un mouvement mystique contemporain: le réveil religieux en Pays de Galles* (Paris, 1907); David Jenkins, *The Agricultural Community of South-West Wales at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff, 1971), ch. 9. A general review is offered by Basil Hall, "The Welsh Revival of 1904-05: A Critique", in G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (eds.), *Popular Belief and Practice* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 291-301.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Churchill, *op.cit.*, ii, p. 375.

<sup>12</sup> For different, but confirmatory, perspectives on the semiology of riot, see William M. Reddy, "The Textile Trade and the Language of the Crowd at Rouen, 1752-1871", *Past and Present*, no. 74 (Feb. 1977), pp. 62-89; Richard J. Evans, "'Red Wednesday' in Hamburg: Social Democrats, Police and Lumpenproletariat in the Suffrage Disturbances of 17 January 1906", *Social Hist.*, iv (1979), pp. 1-31.

<sup>13</sup> Detail on "abnormal places", the minimum-wage issue and falling productivity can be found in Williams, "The Road to Tonypany"; Rhodri Walters, "Labour

(cont. on p. 163)

seam, experimentally worked for over a year, contained a lot of stone which, the men alleged, meant that they would be unable to earn a living wage if management did not increase the allowances for "dead", or unproductive, work. Failure to agree led to the dismissal of not only the eighty men directly affected but also the locking out of all eight hundred men in the Ely pit from 1 September 1910. The Ely pit was a part of the Cambrian Combine which D. A. Thomas had put together on the basis of the Cambrian Collieries in Clydach Vale inherited from his father.<sup>14</sup> In 1906 he took control of the Glamorgan Coal Company Limited in Llwynypia (with three pits) and in 1908 of the Naval Colliery Company Limited (with four pits, including the Ely) in Penygraig and Tonypany. By 1910 he had the Britannic Merthyr Coal Company, in Gilfach Goch over the mountain from the central township of Tonypany and, altogether, the employ of some twelve thousand men in the mid-Rhondda area.<sup>15</sup> From 5th September the men in the other Naval Colliery pits struck unofficially and, on 1st November, after a coalfield-wide ballot that promised financial aid only, the rest of the Cambrian men, against the wishes both of the executive council of the South Wales Miners' Federation and the local Rhondda miners' agents, also came out in support of the Ely men.<sup>16</sup> The conduct of the dispute was to stay firmly in the hands of the Cambrian Combine Committee, made up of representatives from all the separate pit lodges.<sup>17</sup>

From the first few days the mood of the strikers was clear: the stoppage, if it were to be effective, would require a swift resolution that would be dependent on the non-importation of "blackleg" labour and the prevention of colliery officials from attending to the pumping and ventilating machinery on the surface which would keep the pits free from flooding. Extra police, from outside the district, had been drafted into the area (142 of them) under the personal command of the chief constable, Captain Lionel Lindsay. They were concentrated at the Glamorgan Colliery, Llwynypia, a quarter of a mile north of Tony-

(note 13 cont.)

Productivity in the South Wales Steam-Coal Industry, 1870-1914", *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xxviii (1975), pp. 280-303; accounts of the Cambrian Combine strike are in Ness Edwards, *History of the South Wales Miners' Federation* (London, 1938), pp. 33-49; R. Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners, 1898-1914* (London, 1967), pp. 174-273.

<sup>14</sup> On D. A. Thomas (1856-1918), Liberal M.P., coal-owner and future Lord Rhondda, see K. O. Morgan, "D. A. Thomas: The Industrialist as Politician", in Stewart Williams (ed.), *Glamorgan Historian*, 11 vols. (Cowbridge, 1963-75), iii, pp. 33-51.

<sup>15</sup> E. D. Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys* (London, 1959), pp. 89-91; Jevons, *op. cit.*, pp. 320-2. The numbers employed at the collieries were Cambrian (4,054), Glamorgan (4,142), Naval (2,144), Britannic Merthyr (790): *Rhondda Leader*, 5 Nov. 1910.

<sup>16</sup> Arnot, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-3.

<sup>17</sup> The history of the joint committee is sketched in *The Rhondda Socialist Newspaper: Being the Bomb of the Rhondda Workers*, no. 1 (19 Aug. 1911).

pandy Square, so that when early on Monday, 7th November, bands of men proceeded from colliery to colliery, preventing all officials, engine-men and stokers from working, they met with little opposition from the otherwise thinly dispersed police. Fires were raked, boilers and ventilating fans stopped. At the Cambrian Colliery in Clydach Vale, a precipitous defile running up from the valley bottom at Tonypandy Square, officials were stoned out of the new electric powerhouse. Mounted police were subjected to foot rushes and pelting with various missiles as the crowd, holding blacklegs in white shirts with cards proclaiming "Take a Warning" pinned to them, marched through high winds and drenching rain. At the end of the afternoon only the Glamorgan Colliery remained inviolate: here waited the police and between fifty and sixty officials and craftsmen under the guidance of the general manager of the Cambrian Combine, Leonard Llewellyn.<sup>18</sup> There were underground over three hundred horses brought in during the previous week from other pits. The pits to which the horses had been deliberately transferred were especially liable to flooding and the animals were to be the focus of much public and royal concern. To deal with the danger an electrically operated pumping plant, supplied by a large generator, had been installed in the yard. From 9.00 p.m. the strikers mounted a huge demonstration outside the colliery yard which, around 10.30 p.m., turned more serious and finally erupted in a series of fierce clashes with the police that only petered out around 1.00 a.m.<sup>19</sup>

The following day, Tuesday, Lindsay's request for troops was blocked by Churchill, at least to the extent of halting them in Swindon and only sending seventy mounted police and two hundred Metropolitans. The men who had assembled on the Athletic Ground, Tonypandy, after being paid off by the combine, received this news, relayed by Daniel Lleufer Thomas,<sup>20</sup> the stipendiary magistrate, in silence and, shortly after, marched in force to the Glamorgan Colliery where, about 5.00 p.m., a crowd remained behind to demonstrate. They were estimated at between seven and nine thousand strong. Stoning of the

<sup>18</sup> Leonard Llewellyn (born 1874) was from a coal-owning family in the neighbouring Cynon valley. He had studied "industrial methods" in Europe, Asia and America: Arthur Mee (ed.), *Who's Who in Wales* (Cardiff, 1921), p. 290.

<sup>19</sup> This summary has been assembled from *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910; *Western Mail*, 8 Nov. 1910; *South Wales Daily News*, 8 Nov. 1910. Subsequent newspaper references are to the nine volumes of newspaper cuttings that relate to the Cambrian Combine strike in the Glamorgan Record Office (hereafter Glam. R.O.), D/D N.C.B.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Lleufer Thomas (born 1863) was the epitome of that socially-aware class of functionaries which nineteenth-century Wales bred to service its new society. He was secretary to the Welsh Land Commission of 1893, stipendiary magistrate for Pontypridd and Rhondda from 1909, president of the School of Social Service and of the W.E.A. in Wales, and a leading member of the 1917 Commission into Industrial Unrest. See the entry by David Williams in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (London, 1959), pp. 939-40.



powerhouse led to a number of baton-charges by the 120-strong police (18 of whom were mounted). Intense close-quarter fighting followed.<sup>21</sup> So much, in brief outline, is not in question but what now led to the riot is *the* point at issue, since there has been general acceptance, even by historians who have pointed to his bias as a pro-coal-owner reporter, of the account of David Evans in his contemporary volume<sup>22</sup> which attributes clear, if unworthy, motives to the strikers in their destruction of shops in Tonypany. Evans, in lurid prose, describes the repulse of the demonstrators by a gallant band of police, the consequent dispersal of the crowd, and how, frustrated and angry, they wreaked unjustified revenge upon the unprotected shopkeepers. This is the umbilical cord between the strike and its handicapped child, the riot.

Evans mixes description with imagination at will or convenience. His presumption that the strikers were intent on possessing the colliery physically, as opposed to stopping its working, is without direct evidence and in contradiction of their earlier resolutions and activities. On the contrary it was police-rushing of the crowd which led on 7th November to invasion of the premises, from which the demonstrators, having driven the police back, then retreated voluntarily. The same pattern of events caused the serious fighting that began on the following night around 6.00 p.m. A close reading of contemporary accounts, and later testimony from a policeman involved in the fracas, demolish the view that the crowd, though dispersed, was actually driven back the quarter of a mile from the Glamorgan Colliery to the crossroads, or square, at Tonypany. It was the police who regrouped and returned to their base. Between about 8.00 and 10.00 p.m. there was no effective policing of the town. The magistrate's request for the troops was sent at 7.45 p.m., before systematic attacks on the shops began. The inescapable conclusion is that it had been decided as early as the weekend, both for strategic and provocative purposes, to make the Glamorgan Colliery, near to Llewellyn's own house and bisected by the railway line, the citadel of the coal-owners' assertion, not so much of property itself, as of the rights of property-ownership.<sup>24</sup>

The aggressive assertion of these rights by the police was the

<sup>21</sup> *Western Mail*, 9 Nov. 1910; *South Wales Daily News*, 9 Nov. 1910; *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910.

<sup>22</sup> David Evans, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield, 1910-1911* (Cardiff, 1911; repr. Cardiff, 1963). Evans was the industrial correspondent of the *Western Mail* and the future biographer of D. A. Thomas.

<sup>23</sup> There is the exception of Bob Holton, *British Syndicalism, 1900-1914* (London, 1976), who states "it is clear that the looting of shops was more than the random violence of the rampaging mob" (p. 82), though he follows Evans in the view that "Strikers, beaten back from the colliery by police, expressed their bitterness and frustration by looting shops" (p. 81).

<sup>24</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-9; *Rhondda Leader*, 5, 12 Nov. 1910; *Western Mail*, 8, 9 Nov. 1910; *South Wales Daily News*, 9 Nov. 1910; transcript of an interview with ex-P.C. W. Knipe, 1973; Oral History Collection, South Wales Miners' Lib., Swansea (hereafter S.W.M.L.).



immediate spur to the riot of 8th November, though the crowd was more angry than either fearful or frustrated. The attack, now, on other property-owners flowed down well-worn grooves. There were, in a sense, two riots. While the police were preparing to charge the crowd just after 7.00 p.m. two things, amid a confused welter of events, seem to have happened. The first is that fighting ceased outside the colliery at about 7.00 p.m. and "thousands of strikers", scattering with their "staves", rushed through Tonypany to the station because "the rumour had got abroad that cavalry would arrive" at about 8.00 p.m. In this burst down the narrow, winding main street shop-windows were smashed in and some goods taken.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps those who discovered no troops had arrived moved back through the half a mile from station to square where they found the victims of the last, and toughest, bout with the police milling about with the rest of the crowd who had been unable to proceed in a peaceful march up to the colliery. By 7.30 p.m. a number of shopkeepers had put up makeshift shutters. These were simply torn down as, after 8.00 p.m., more intensive smashing of shop premises went on, in the wake of the struggle with the police, and continued virtually unabated until after 10.00 p.m.<sup>26</sup>

When the riots were over analyses came thick and fast. What caused most disquiet was the apparently wanton attack on shopkeepers. It was this destruction of the social fabric of a new community that had to be explained away so that, in Lleufer Thomas's phrase, "the good name of South Wales" should not be further besmirched.<sup>27</sup> An obvious explanation, one in considerable favour with General Macready and other moderating influences, was that "the doctrine of extreme socialism preached by a small but energetic section . . . [was] . . . entirely responsible for the premeditated attempts to destroy property".<sup>28</sup> However, the miners' local leaders, though out of sympathy with their conciliatory officials, were not, primarily, those "syndicalists" who came to prominence after 1912 and they went out of their way, in private and in public, both to dissuade the men from damaging property and to condemn the destruction of the shops.<sup>29</sup> Their unexceptionable

<sup>25</sup> *Western Mail*, 9 Nov. 1910. According to David Evans, of course, such events could not have taken place until after the crowd had been "repulsed".

<sup>26</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910; *Western Mail*, 9 Nov. 1910.

<sup>27</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910.

<sup>28</sup> *Colliery Strike Disturbances in South Wales, 1910*, p. 49.

<sup>29</sup> The leading "syndicalists" in Rhondda were Noah Ablett and Noah Rees, both of whom had been at Ruskin College, Oxford, before helping to establish the Marxist Central Labour College in 1909. They motivated the writing of *The Miners' Next Step* in 1912. However, Ablett was not directly involved in the Cambrian Combine while Rees and W. H. Mainwaring (both influenced by Ablett at the time), though active members and officials of the Cambrian Colliery lodge and the joint committee, did not dominate the conduct of the strike, whose principal leaders were Will John, John Hopla and Tom Smith. John was secretary of the Glamorgan Colliery and of the Mid-Rhondda Trades and Labour Council as well as being chairman of the joint Cambrian Combine committee. He was a prominent Welsh-speaking Baptist. After

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sentiments were endorsed, in varying degrees, by the troupe of British socialists, of all persuasions, who trekked to the Rhondda after that Tuesday night. The riot, whether justifiable or not as a retaliatory weapon, was not, they felt, a part either of union progress or socialist advance. They emphasized the necessity for future political organization and joined in the chorus of miners' agents and sympathetic M.P.s who denied that there was any widespread damage at all. From all responsible quarters, with concerned clergymen, editors and even local tradesmen agreeing, came the concerted view that the shops had been smashed by "a gang of about 150, chiefly youths and men let loose from the public houses" or was "the work of . . . not one hundred . . . many . . . were strangers" and, combining both, "half-drunken, irresponsible persons . . . from outside the . . . district . . . the mad outbreak of 150".<sup>30</sup> This verbal diminution of a crowd of thousands as well as the shuffling aside of the violent events of the nights of 7th and 8th November outside the colliery itself is inextricably related to what was the apparently unacceptable thought that a very large number of people had been actively involved in the destruction of Tonypany's commercial life. Instead a tirade of arraignment was directed against the outcast groups of youths, drunks and strangers. Youths there certainly were (around 14 per cent of the entire mining work-force in the coalfield was under sixteen years of age) but those same youths who stoned the Glamorgan Colliery were also rescued from the clutches of the police by "young men of apparently from twenty to thirty years of age".<sup>31</sup> Men in drink there were, too, though the fact that the magistrate had closed the pubs early (at dusk) might have kept some from being drunk, while the bulk of the crowd had been at a mass meeting in the afternoon or on the streets for hours. The accusation against "strangers", like that against youths, seems common to the aftermath

(note 29 cont.)

imprisonment in 1911 he was elected miners' agent and then Labour M.P. for Rhondda West in 1922. Hopla, chairman of the Glamorgan Colliery lodge and also imprisoned, was elected to the executive of the South Wales Miners' Federation in 1911. Tom Smith, checkweigher of the Naval Colliery lodge, too, became an executive council member as did, in turn, Rees, Ablett and Mainwaring (M.P. for Rhondda East, 1933-59). All these men, with the exception of Ablett, were, or became, closely associated with representative politics at local and parliamentary level. See *South Wales Daily News*, 24 Apr. 1911; for Ablett and John, see Joyce Bellamy and John Saville (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, 5 vols. (London, 1972-9), i, p. 195, and ii, pp. 1-3. More background information that illuminates the complex nature of "Welsh syndicalism" is in Richard Lewis, "South Wales Miners and the Ruskin College Strike of 1909", *Llafur*, ii (1976), pp. 57-72; David Egan, "The Unofficial Reform Committee and *The Miners' Next Step*", *Llafur*, ii (1978), pp. 64-80.

<sup>30</sup> Cambrian Colliery lodge minutes, 21 Nov. 1910: S.W.M.L.; *Rhondda Leader*, 26 Nov. 1910; *Justice*, 18 Nov. 1910; *The "Plebs" Mag.*, Dec. 1910; *Western Mail*, 14 Nov. 1910; *Labour Leader*, 18 Nov. 1910; *South Wales Daily News*, 17 Nov. 1910. The minutes are of the colliery and not the Cambrian Combine Committee whose deliberations, along with those of the other individual collieries concerned, have not been traced.

<sup>31</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910.

of most riots as a way of pinning guilt to those with no real stake in what is considered the day-to-day reality of the local life, but the strangers can have been few at most, while of the meagre number of seventeen who were tried in 1911 for their part in the riots all were from mid-Rhondda and five were women.<sup>32</sup>

Women had been involved from the start. On 7th November they were out in the streets in Penygraig, Llwynypia and Clydach Vale as early as the men and led the cheering as action was taken against non-unionists and, later, the police.<sup>33</sup> That night, outside the Glamorgan Colliery, women by gathering up loose stones in aprons and buckets acted as ammunition carriers for the men whom they urged on.<sup>34</sup> Lleufer Thomas had pressed that women and children keep indoors when he relayed the Home Secretary's message to the strikers on the afternoon of 8th November, but they were certainly out in numbers again that night.<sup>35</sup> The crowd acted, too, with a measure of control and of local knowledge remarkable for so many drunken strangers. The action could be depicted as premeditated, if inspired by ideologies, or as frenzied, if sparked off by anger or drink. That it had a patterned logic of its own was insupportable, to be brushed aside even in a reporter's "objective" description: "it is curious to note how, in several cases, a row of half a dozen shops, though all around them had been damaged, had escaped. This must not be attributed to any discrimination on the part of the rioters . . .".<sup>36</sup>

They began by knocking in the shop-window of T. Pascoe Jenkins, J.P., the senior magistrate of the Rhondda valley and a resident of thirty-years standing;<sup>37</sup> amid scenes of widespread wreckage they scrupulously avoided one iota of damage to a particular chemist's shop, despite the fact that all other chemists were prime targets: this was the shop of the locally born Willie Llewellyn, former rugby international footballer who had played a large part in the success of Welsh rugby teams. He had opened his shop immediately after helping to defeat the otherwise invincible All Blacks of New Zealand in 1905. Other grievances were so direct that J. Owen Jones, a Tonypandy draper whose shop was gutted, inserted a notice dated 10th November in the local paper in which he offered £50 reward to the Cambrian Combine Committee to be given to any named charity "if a certain statement attributed to me can be proven".<sup>38</sup> An eyewitness who was a boy in 1910 described how he and a friend observed the start of the riot from a side-road above the square:

<sup>32</sup> *Western Mail*, 13 June 1911.

<sup>33</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910.

<sup>34</sup> *Western Mail*, 8 Nov. 1910; *Globe*, 8 Nov. 1910.

<sup>35</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910.

<sup>36</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 10 Nov. 1910.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 Nov. 1910; *Western Mail*, 9 Nov. 1910.

<sup>38</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910. For the social significance of Welsh rugby, see David Smith and Gareth Williams, *Fields of Praise* (Cardiff, 1980).

they started smashing the windows . . . they smashed this shop here, J. O. Jones, a millinery shop that was on the other corner . . . We saw that being smashed and then next door to the millinery J. O. Jones, there was a shop and they smashed the window there . . . on the other side here, there was Richards the Chemist . . . they smashed that. And they smashed the windows of these three small shops here, one was a greengrocer, the other one was fancy goods and the other one was a barber's shop, and I knew the name of the barber quite well, it was Salter, because we used to think it swanky to go to Salter's to have a hair-cut, you see. They smashed Richards the Chemist, then there was the boot shop next door to it . . . and next to that was Watkins the flannel merchant . . . they smashed that and they stole the shoes out of the boots, flannel out of Watkins and greengrocery, well they only picked up there. Well next to that there was a few steps up and there was a dentist and one or two private houses. Well, they didn't smash. We didn't see anything that happened below the bridge because . . . we were afraid to go down there in front of the crowd . . . Oh, there was a huge crowd.<sup>39</sup>

The crowd was not organized but it knew what to do in the euphoria of release that followed the catalytic police action. It shared both special grievances and communal assumptions about the direction and legitimacy of its action. For the editor of the Rhondda's newspaper the riots, instigated and carried out by thoughtless youths and women from further afield, "the mania for loot strong upon them", meant that "a national obloquy has come upon Wales through the roughness of the times". "Tonypandy", he wailed, "is no longer an unknown township . . . The pity of it all is that Tonypandy has to bear the brunt of the defamation and for years the ill repute will stick to it".<sup>40</sup> No such qualm disturbed the majority of the local population, who were more in tune with the brash topsy-turviness of their real world of false appearances. The music-hall, so well patronized by coalfield society, was doing its unconscious best to offer ironic reflection. That Tuesday night the management of the Hippodrome closed the theatre because of the trouble, though not before customers were given tickets for later readmission to see the comedy pantomime, *Wrecked*. At the Theatre Royal close by, "despite the tumult raging within almost a stone's throw", remarked a singularly oblique critic, the packed audience watched *The Still Alarm*, an American drama in which there was a "Special Engine House Scene introducing the beautifully trained horses". In a place addicted to the escapism of theatricality, the art of gesture could invade the streets, whether in the contemptuous spillage of foodstuffs and apparel on to the roads in place of theft, or by dressing up ("colliers paraded the streets wearing box hats and new overcoats"), or in the joy of disrespectful, self-glorying parody "rendered heartily" by young men and women in the streets of Tonypandy a week or so after the riots to a well-known tune:

<sup>39</sup> Transcript of interview with Bryn Lewis, 1973: S.W.M.L.

<sup>40</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 19 Nov. 1910.

Every nice girl loves a collier  
 In the Rhondda valley war  
 Every nice girl loves a striker  
 And you know what strikers are  
 In Tonypandy they're very handy  
 With their sticks and their stones and boot  
 Walking down the street with Jane  
 Breaking every window pane  
 That's loot! Pom pom. That's loot!<sup>41</sup>

The jubilant defiance which turned the riots into a festival of disorder had its roots in the nature of mid-Rhondda. Its development dates from the latter end of the nineteenth century when, in rapid succession, pits were sunk by the Naval Colliery Company and opened for production — the Pandy pit in 1879, the Ely and Nantgwyn in 1892, and the Anthony in 1910. The number of men at work rose from 800 in 1896 to 2,460 by 1908. At the other end of the raw village of Tonypandy, with its straggle of wooden huts, stone cottages and a few shops, the Glamorgan Colliery Company were opening up pits No. 4 and No. 5 in 1873 at Llwynypia, with No. 6 to follow in 1876, while in Clydach Vale, branching off from the main valley bottom, Samuel Thomas, father of D. A. Thomas, had two pits working in the year of his death, 1879, and there were three by 1900.<sup>42</sup> The amalgamation of the pits in mid-Rhondda into the Cambrian Combine gave the group over 50 per cent of the total coal production in Rhondda by the outbreak of the First World War and made it, with its subsidiary shipping and patent-fuel interests in Britain, France and Scandinavia, one of the two "most complete self-contained organisations in the coal trade of the world".<sup>43</sup> In 1875 the main Tonypandy road running alongside the river, not yet an oil-silk black, was mostly bordered on its western side by small stone cottages, but as the area boomed after 1890 the street, given its position below the slopes that loomed over it, became the only likely area for a commercial high street in a ribbon development.<sup>44</sup> Undulating terraces of houses were now strung out on the steep hillsides above the main road of De Winton and Dunraven Streets where was built by 1900 an imposing grey-stone police station set slightly off the road and flanked by a double flight of steps like a sawn-off French château. Other required amenities followed — the Tonypandy and Trealaw Free Library established in 1899 by local businessmen, and the red-brick Judge's Hall which could hold fifteen hundred people and contained both library and billiard hall. It was opened in 1909 by H.R.H. Princess Louise who, since it was situated conveniently near the railway station, could have avoided the mean

<sup>41</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 10, 24 Nov. 1910.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys*, pp. 81-3.

<sup>43</sup> *Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest ... Report of the Commissioners for Wales including Monmouthshire*, P.P., 1917 [8668], xv, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Harold Carter, *The Towns of Wales* (Cardiff, 1966), pp. 326-31.

drabness of the town itself, though this was now alleviated by the Empire Theatre of Varieties, itself opened in 1909. The following year the enterprising Will Stone's electric biograph was enlivening the Theatre Royal (erected in 1892), while at the Hippodrome the electric bioscope was projecting its flickering images twice nightly. Boxing booths, portable theatres, and travelling fairs on a field behind the square, all added to the raucous glitter of a spectating world which was undermining the more sober pursuits of Nonconformist *Weltanschauung*.<sup>45</sup> For the more energetically inclined (brass bands, choral-singing and rugby apart), and for paying customers only, J. Owen Jones, draper, launched out in early 1910 when he formally opened, just above Tonypandy Square, the Pavillion, which housed the "Express roller-skating rink". Later that year Big Bill Haywood, the American syndicalist, would thunder at the mid-Rhondda miners from the stage of the Theatre Royal; police would be housed in J. Owen Jones's skating-rink and Lleufer Thomas would, after a nervous request, issue a notice to the effect that the draper had no choice in the matter (in December gales the tin roof blew off and the police shifted to the Hippodrome); and in 1912 an intricate debate, at a highly sophisticated level, would proceed on the virtues of nationalization versus workers' control before a full house in Judge's Hall.<sup>46</sup>

Between 1901 and 1911 the total population of Rhondda increased by 34.3 per cent from 113,735 to 152,781 (thrice the average increase for England and Wales). The 1911 figure was undoubtedly lower than it would have been in 1910, since the Cambrian strike had witnessed a temporary exodus from the mid-Rhondda district, whose estimated population in 1910 was 38,819 (there were 7,116 inhabited houses in the area in 1910). Housing needs had been met by private speculative building (in 1909 the number of houses in mid-Rhondda was 6,868) which did not, despite basic patterning and haste, adequately house a population whose birth rate was outstripping the death rate, whose colliers married in their early twenties at the peak of their earning capacity, and where many lived in single rooms or cellar dwellings. Houses were often too expensive or too large for some families; the Urban District Authority, in being since 1894, had not made any housing provision themselves. At a conservative estimate the number of inhabitants per house was *circa* 5.8 in the first decade of the twentieth century. Houses would vary from four-roomed cottages to more substantial three-up and three-down terraces. The pits had spawned a rash of houses, shops, chapels and pubs, whose only saving

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys*, pp. 224-7; *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (London, 1914).

<sup>46</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 15 Jan., 26 Nov., 24 Dec. 1910; "Socialism and Syndicalism: The Welsh Miners' Debate", ed. K. O. Morgan, *Bull. Soc. Study of Labour Hist.*, no. 30 (1975), pp. 22-37.

architectural grace was that they had to conform, in local materials of slate and pennant sandstone, with red and yellow brick for the recent construction, to the limiting physical configuration of a twisting valley whose bed was hemmed in by clumps of steep hillsides on which the orgy of house-building had to proceed.<sup>47</sup> Effluence poured into the river from works and houses, so that in the summer the high, rich smell of decayed matter and slaughtered meat was pungent indeed.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless the prevailing grimness of the environment was countered, in turn, by the very social capital which had brought it into forced being. Here a whirligig of sounds, smells and sights caught up a population barely a generation (and often not that) away from the land. Packaged foods and ready-made goods were consumer luxuries that made shops seductive enticers to debt as well as welcome centres of social intercourse.<sup>49</sup>

Every Aladdin's cave had its statutory Uncle Ebenezer: from May 1909 the mid-Rhondda grocers decided, secretly and by a mutual indemnification pact, to operate a "black list" system of credit for known customers. Nor did they prove more generous with their own employees, for they decided in the summer of 1908 to end the common practice of giving Christmas-boxes.<sup>50</sup> These primary concerns over the security of profit margins apart, it was the tradesmen who were initially, and predominantly, concerned to instil a sense of community without whose social mediation their own role as citizens and shopkeepers, in a society pulled together only for profits and work from coal, would be barren. To this end T. P. Jenkins, magistrate, was insisting as early as 1896 that the direct payment of taxes and rates would alone bring the Rhondda's disorderly working class to "full, responsible citizenship".<sup>51</sup> It was the outward signification of a civilized respectability that, as cause for hope, they most valued. The playing of impromptu football in the streets was frowned upon and the police were urged to prosecute.<sup>52</sup> They reacted rather stiffly, through their chamber of trade, to "young people wandering around and desecrating the Sunday" and "thought the playing of gramophones on a Sunday was quite a disgrace to the locality",<sup>53</sup> with which the Free

<sup>47</sup> Reports of the medical officer of health to Rhondda Urban District Council, 1909-11: Rhondda Borough Council Offices; Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys*, pp. 229-33; John B. Hilling, *Cardiff and the Valleys* (London, 1973), pp. 100-2; *Reynolds Newspaper*, 27 Nov. 1910.

<sup>48</sup> Mid-Rhondda Trades and Labour Council minutes, 27 July 1910: National Lib. of Wales (hereafter N.L.W.).

<sup>49</sup> See Rhys Davies's evocative autobiography, *Print of a Hare's Foot* (London, 1969), pp. 8-12.

<sup>50</sup> Mid-Rhondda Grocers' Association minutes, 5 May, 9, 30 June 1909: N.L.W.

<sup>51</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 6 Feb. 1896.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 Feb. 1896.

<sup>53</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 7 May 1910. Meetings of the Mid-Rhondda Chamber of Trade were reported regularly but I have been unable to find any extant minute-books.



Church Council, itself worried about the "prevalence of boxing contests" in Tonypandy, doubtless concurred. Other desired improvements were not quite so restrictive: they were to the fore in having a public drinking-fountain put up in the square, constantly urged better electric lighting in the main street (especially after the riots, when they requested it be kept on all night), suggested in the summer days that "small boys be employed to collect manure from the roads during the day", and provided a deputation to the council to urge "provision of Public Lavatories for both sexes in the district, more especially for ladies".<sup>54</sup>

At the beginning of 1910 these midwives of modernity had cause to congratulate themselves on their past endeavours and future possibilities when the Mid-Rhondda Horse Show Association, formed in 1905 to assist the fire brigade, gave a banquet in honour of its retiring president, Leonard Llewellyn. The toast was "The Trade of the District", to which its proposer said:

that if they looked back upon the history of Tonypandy for the past 18 months, they could honestly say that no other district in the Rhondda could show such great development, and much of that was due to one of the most public-spirited bodies in the country — the Mid-Rhondda Chamber of Trade . . . He hoped that the present movement for Incorporation would be successful, and that they would have the control of the police, reduce their rates, and place Tonypandy in the front of Rhondda townships.

Councillor D. C. Evans, in response, had no doubt that leaders on both sides of the coal industry would prove conciliatory in the current negotiations, while J. Owen Jones, the chairman of the Mid-Rhondda Chamber of Trade, declared, to great applause, that the tradesmen's earlier fears of loss of trade after the formation of the Cambrian Combine had now been exchanged for "hopes of a good time in store". Unfortunately the president of the horse show for 1910, D. A. Thomas, was not present to praise his predecessor so Alderman Richard Lewis, J.P., did it, extolling Leonard Llewellyn as a man who had:

realised the claims and duties of true citizenship. Looking around him he saw the sons of men who had started in business with him at Tonypandy 40 years ago, and the sons were better than their fathers. The future of mid-Rhondda, socially, need not be in danger at all when they had such sons taking their part in the social welfare of the district. After touching upon the past managers of the Glamorgan Colliery, the speaker said that Mr. Llewellyn was a noble successor of that noble line.<sup>55</sup>

Leonard Llewellyn was generous, too, in his hospitality and the availability of his animals, even if the ingrate General Macready, who refused invitations to his officers and himself to dine, did describe him as "a forceful, autocratic man . . . who, by his rough and ready methods, was apt to drive those working for him to a state of despera-

<sup>54</sup> Rhondda U.D.C. minutes, 24 May, 22 July, 9 Sept. 1910, 10 Feb., 10 Mar., 9 June 1911: Rhondda Borough Council Offices.

<sup>55</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 15 Jan. 1910.

tion".<sup>56</sup> The chief constable, Lionel Lindsay, had no such qualms, sharing both dinners and horses with Llewellyn, who managed policemen, collieries and publicity with equal aplomb.<sup>57</sup> Public sympathy had from the start been directed to the plight of the hundreds of horses who were supposedly at risk in November 1910, and of whose safety Llewellyn had hastened to assure government and king after the arrival of the military.<sup>58</sup> Llewellyn had been photographed holding a black cat he had brought up from the mine and in an indictment of these anthropomorphic tendencies the strikers, whose offer to allow the horses to be brought up under their supervision he had refused, now devised a bitter language of their own — whenever Llewellyn's name was mentioned at meetings they set up a chorus of miaows; when they marched to Pontypridd in December to hear charges of intimidation against Gilfach miners they carried a white banner decorated with a lean black cat and inscribed with the legend "Hungry as L..."; while in February 1911, when the first set of charges was brought against John Hopla, checkweigher at the Glamorgan Colliery, they followed a wooden hobby-horse. Those charged, and sentenced or fined, wore their summonses in their caps during the march, while others shepherded a black and white retriever with a card that said "Leonard's pet", or held notices asking "What about the horses?".<sup>59</sup>

Llewellyn answered that question in March 1911 when he and his assistant manager were presented with medals at the annual dinner of the Polo and Riding Society at the Hotel Metropole, London, for their bravery in rescuing the horses from drowning. Llewellyn, referring to the "temporary mental aberration of the men", said that "as a Welshman he very much regretted that such a thing should have happened in Wales". Then in May 1911 the countess of Bective gave out R.S.P.C.A. medals for the same service of "heroism in rescuing pit ponies" and Llewellyn presented his black cat to a London newspaperman.<sup>60</sup> It had been a rough, but hardly downward, journey from the day in January 1910 when he had been hailed as "the pioneer of all the important movements that had tended to the better welfare of the Rhondda in general".

That was the occasion when he was re-elected president, for the year of 1910, of the Mid-Rhondda Chamber of Trade. The speaker was the retiring chairman J. Owen Jones, draper, stockist for cotton, linen and

<sup>56</sup> Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2 vols. (London, 1924), i, p. 140. For a withering look at the excessive prandial tendencies of Rhondda's bourgeoisie, see Sir Wyndham Childs (then a captain under Macready), *Episodes and Reflections* (London, 1930), pp. 79-80.

<sup>57</sup> Diary books of Lionel Lindsay: Glam. R.O. These are not a complete run, though they stretch from 1889 to 1941; the one for 1910 is missing.

<sup>58</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 24 Dec. 1910; *Western Mail*, 15, 17 Dec. 1910.

<sup>60</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 11 Mar. 1911; *South Wales Echo*, 19 May 1911.

woollen goods on Tonypandy Square. Drapers were the great hold-all emporia for everything, other than food and ironmongery, in places like the Rhondda. 1910 was not a good year for them in Tonypandy. J. Owen Jones had announced his winter clearance sale in late January as "big purchases with a small purse". He pleaded and warned in a judicious mix — "owing to the absence of draper's weather during autumn and winter, his stock in all departments" was "exceptionally heavy", while "the serious condition of the cotton market" meant that, "except for a few days in 1904, cotton has not been so dear for thirty five years" so that customers should "secure their wants in this sale". None the less J. Owen Jones, at his summer sale of all-round reductions, had to explain that his price cuts were "much greater than usual, owing to my stock being considerably heavier, the death of His Majesty King Edward VII, and the exceptional weather [that is, prolonged rain] we have had for the greater part of the summer".<sup>61</sup> On 8th November the people of mid-Rhondda finally took the hint.

The persistent rain, on the other hand, may have added to the trade of J. W. Richards, a dispenser of poor relief on the Pontypridd Board of Guardians who carved the meat in the Llwynypia workhouse on Christmas Day 1909, but usually a dispenser of spectacles and medicaments. On the side of his shop on Tonypandy Square was painted a large advertisement: "Kurakold — Richards' Unrivalled Remedy at 1/- and 2/9 a Bottle — A quick and permanent cure for all disorders of Chest and Lungs".

Doctors were few, and attached to the collieries. Chemists were quicker, easier and cheaper. They were, with their bright displays of coloured bottles and chemicals, the equivalent of the nineteenth-century peasant's healers, charmers and travelling quacks. There was in Rhondda every aid to a full bionic life. By post could come "Artificial Legs, Surgical Boots, Deformity Stock — Hands, Arms, Artificial Eyes from 7/6". Less drastic cases could settle for "vegetable pills to purify the blood", "effervescent salts", "Thompson's Electric Life Drops for the cure of Nervous Debility" which "act so quickly on a weak and shattered condition that health is speedily restored", or the *sans pareil* Burdock's pills from Swansea, "one of the oldest and best of Medicines having been more than 60 years before the public for purifying the foulest blood, and removing every disease of the stomach, liver and kidneys. Cures Scurvy and Scrofula, Sores, Eruption of the skin and all diseases arising from an impure state of the blood", while for the young, Worm Lozenges whose "effect upon weak, delicate children (often given up as incurable) is like magic".<sup>62</sup>

Such ardent advertising knew its potential consumers. In 1905, the

<sup>61</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 15 Jan., 16 July 1910.

<sup>62</sup> See *Rhondda Leader*, 1 Jan. 1910, and weekly throughout 1910 and 1911; Cyril Batstone, *Old Rhondda in Photographs* (Barry, 1974).

year the new £25,000 electric powerhouse was installed at the Cambrian Collieries, Clydach Vale, 33 men and boys were blown up in the Cambrian No. 1 pit; two months later not five miles down the valley at Wattstown 119 were killed underground.<sup>63</sup> Clydach Vale and Llwynypia had in 1909 the highest birth rate in a Rhondda where illegitimacy was rocketing above the British average. There were in 1909 throughout the valley only 130 deaths for every 1,000 live births of children under twelve months old, whereas the average for 1899 to 1908 had been 190 per 1,000, but this can have been scant consolation, even given a greater degree of resignation than now conceivable in industrial societies, for the parents of the 724 children from a 1909 total of 5,557. Colliers died of "pulmonary consumption" or "Phthisis" at eleven times the rate of any other occupation. The coroner's table of investigated deaths for the years 1897 to 1900 showed a low rate of death for those succumbing to alcoholism, strain (*sic*), hernias, homicide and injudicious feeding (*sic*) and rose through convulsions, heart disease, burns, drowning and being run over by carts, trains and trams, before revealing that between a third and a half of these deaths were from routine accidents in the pits.<sup>64</sup> Those colliers who greeted Dai Watts Morgan, the second miners' agent for Rhondda, in the summer of 1910 with shouts of "What price are flowers, Mr. Morgan?" had their equivalents on 8th November in those who threw Studley's fruit and vegetable produce all over the road in Tonypandy Square underneath two hand-painted signs that read, in tandem, "Studleys — Fruit Merchant" and "Wreaths to Order".<sup>65</sup>

During the months that led up to the strike the repeated complaint of the men working for the combine was that management was endangering life in their drive for profits to feed their overcapitalized concerns. The chaotic bargaining system of payment for various work done underground (other than hewing), from setting up props to packing waste stone away in a difficult stall, was over-reliant on the verbal contract of collier and foreman, while the latter could find his allowances to the men squeezed by a margin-conscious management. Colliers doing similar work in different seams or pits often had an enormous discrepancy in wages.<sup>66</sup> At the Ely pit, before the dismissal of the men on the Bute seam in September, there had been some disquieting accidents, from the death of five men in a pit-cage crash in August 1909 to the crushing of a collier underneath the fall of an inadequately propped section of coal in 1910. Both cases for compensation brought to the courts were dismissed by the coroner as accidents

<sup>63</sup> Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys*, p. 280.

<sup>64</sup> Reports of the medical officer of health to Rhondda Urban District Council, 1900-9.

<sup>65</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 9 July, 12 Nov. 1910; Batstone, *op. cit.*, plate 88.

<sup>66</sup> This was argued forcibly by H. S. Jevons (resident in south Wales, 1904-14) in *South Wales Daily News*, 12 Nov. 1910.

caused by thoughtless workmen, though the Naval Colliery lodge committee alleged management's deliberate negligence.<sup>67</sup> The committee called for courts of inquiry composed of men "who know the miner's life as it affects him from within" and claimed that south Wales coal-owners "in order to create big dividends at the expense of the most cheapened labour are constantly employing men as colliers who are without knowledge or experience of any aspect or feature of the miner's life and work".<sup>68</sup> D. A. Thomas had that same month stressed the independence that he gave to his managers and, exulting in the jibe that with the creation of the Cambrian Combine he had bought "a few sucked oranges", countered that "he did not mind if there were a few more sucked oranges about. With Mr. Llewellyn to look after them, they were prepared to go on dealing in sucked oranges and Cambrian marmalade".<sup>69</sup>

As the industrial crisis deepened in mid-Rhondda local clergy and tradesmen made representations to both sides in the industry. This alliance was not surprising since, apart from the fact that eleven Welsh clergymen held shares in the Cambrian Combine,<sup>70</sup> the Free Church Council's Welsh Federation had been active in September 1910 in agitating against the government's attempt to repeal the 1677 Sunday Observance Act. This would have opened certain shops legally, but closed down the large number of shops which were opening illegally, to the detriment of the leisure of shop assistants whose hours of work, from sixty to one hundred a week, were way beyond those of colliers, who now had some protection from the 1908 Eight Hours Act. It was argued that shop assistants in south Wales were particularly over-worked through late opening on Saturdays and deliveries on Sunday mornings.<sup>71</sup>

Traders were centrally involved in these industrial troubles. At the end of October 1910 the Ely pit men had been out for two months and distress was already severe in the Penygraig area. The Mid-Rhondda Chamber of Trade publicly congratulated itself on having given £30 to the distress fund; the Penygraig local chamber of trade pledged financial and moral aid to the workmen in their struggle for improved conditions, and simultaneously sent a successful deputation to Glamorgan County Council to plead for a local police station since the one in Tonypany was all of three-quarters of a mile away, allowing advantage to be taken "by young powerful men of the disorderly class". When the final offer, hatched between the South Wales Miners' Federation executive and the owners, was rejected unanimously by the local men

<sup>67</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 26 Mar., 30 July 1910.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 Aug. 1910.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 July 1910. He was addressing the National Association of Colliery Managers in Cardiff.

<sup>70</sup> *Rhondda Socialist Newspaper*, no. 3 (Oct. 1911).

<sup>71</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 10, 17 Sept. 1910; Mid-Rhondda Grocers' Association minutes, 6 Apr. 1910.

in late October it was the plight of the traders that was the first concern of the community's "glue-maker", the local newspaper:

We deplore the result of the vote because an industrial struggle of this magnitude brings in its train, not only complete disorganisation of the trade of the district . . . but also because of the suffering . . . [of] . . . those who are no part to the dispute . . . But apart from mere sentiment, a strike at this period of the year, when trade is looking up and tradesmen are laying in large stores in preparation for a brisk demand, means the withdrawal of a huge sum of money from active circulation in the district, with the consequent paralysis of those trades and industries which depend upon the coal trade for stability.<sup>72</sup>

Matters did not improve when a mass meeting of the strikers greeted Leonard Llewellyn's offer on behalf of the Cambrian Combine directors of £100 a week to the distress fund so long as the strike lasted with cries of "Let him keep it" and "Let his money perish with him".<sup>73</sup> It was the irrecoverable nature of profits lost that worried the commercial élite of mid-Rhondda, and not only the profits from trade. During 1909, spurred on by the Housing Act of that year, the Mid-Rhondda Trades and Labour Council had begun to collect evidence on the housing conditions of their district. A conference was held with other areas in upper Rhondda in early 1910 and representations eventually made to the Urban District Council over crowding, insanitary conditions, subletting, high rents and the practice of some tradespeople in compelling tenants to buy in their shops.<sup>74</sup> These allegations had been made as early as 1905, when local miners' leaders warned of "the drastic action to be taken by the men as a body" if these "evil practices" persisted.<sup>75</sup> The medical officer of health was asked to investigate the complaints, which he assessed in a special report presented in July 1911. This accepted the general complaints of poor living conditions and asserted that the worst situation, so far as sanitation and overcrowding were concerned, was to be found in Clydach Vale, Llwynypia, Tonypany and upper Treallaw. Dr. J. D. Jenkins agreed that "key money", or the highest bidder having preference in obtaining tenancy, was common, as was the arbitrary raising of rent when one set of tenants moved out and another in. Moreover there were:

cases in respect of whom the inspectors are informed that houses are only obtainable on certain conditions, such as an undertaking or promise on the part of the incoming tenant to purchase goods such as furniture or groceries from the owners. Some house-owners, again, object to tenants with many children, while some provision merchants are said to prefer tenants with large families, because every additional child helps to swell the bill for provisions.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 17 Sept., 29 Oct. 1910. The Mid-Rhondda Chamber of Trade was anxious to dispel the rumours circulating to the effect that tradespeople, in the event of a strike, would "stop shop".

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 Nov. 1910.

<sup>74</sup> Mid-Rhondda Trades and Labour Council minutes, 1 Dec. 1909, 9 Feb. 1910, 25 Oct. 1911; Rhondda U.D.C. minutes, 11 Nov., 15, 29 Dec. 1910.

<sup>75</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 9 Dec. 1905.

<sup>76</sup> Special Report of the Health Committee re. the Housing Accommodation of the District, and upon the Housing, Town Planning Act 1909, n.d., in Rhondda U.D.C. minutes.

Consequently the summer of 1911 saw a degree of suffering among tradesmen: one who owned half a dozen houses had lost £40 in rent and his weekly shop takings were down from £90 to £25; another estimated losses at around £800, with a drop of £160 a week, while a "gentleman who is in a big way of business and who owns a very large number of houses and shops estimated his loss at well over £1,000 since his receipts had dropped to about £30 a fortnight".<sup>77</sup> Such monetary concerns were not the major worry of most of the strikers (the exceptions were the Naval Colliery workers), who had received their last wages prior to the week of the riots. They had, to that extent, money in their pockets yet none, of course, to spend on inessentials. That their deprivation was relative rather than absolute hardly diminished their sense of grievance. Out of reach now were those conspicuous goods whose consumption, in a high-wage society, went some way towards excusing that world's more brutal aspects. They ranged from Saturday-night shaves and barbered hair to women's hats and the white muffler scarves that no collier dandy could be without. The shops in Tonypany were not looted for food. They were wrecked by men and women who knew closely the intricate and inseparable local factors that made up the skein of social and economic connections which enwrapped their community. They knew, further, who aspired to control everything through this basic lever. The riots were not planned in advance yet they were not merely the spontaneous response to the kaleidoscopic incidents of those two strife-torn nights, for they were structured both in the sense that the crowd acted together and also in that the damage they wreaked was a deliberate assault on the civil order of a world that had been made for them.

From early on the Tuesday thousands of men had strolled or paraded, in groups large and small, through the packed face-to-face streets that stood in tiers above the river bed, criss-crossed by the sheer hill roads covered with loose stones, that debouched on to the main road below. They discussed the fighting of the Monday night; they sang popular music-hall ditties or strode along behind amateur fife bands to the engaging sound of concertinas. During the morning a tailor's dummy had been commandeered from a shop and was now held aloft in his finery as a mascot. A baker's van which stopped on a call in a back street lost all its bread, perhaps in reprisal for the firm's prominent announcement earlier in the week that it had reduced the size of its farmhouse family loaf to meet the requirements of strikers' families.<sup>78</sup> When the riots broke out that night those who had antici-

<sup>77</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 24 June 1911. Rate books for Rhondda do not survive for the years before 1968. There is considerable corroborating evidence of this multi-house ownership (for example, J. R. Evans, draper, leased twelve houses; Emrys Richards, chemist, leased six) in the lease rentals for 1909, Dunraven Estate Papers 184: N.L.W.

<sup>78</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 9 Nov. 1910.



pated a simple industrial struggle misread the signs. The correspondent of the *Western Mail* wrote in disbelief: "Even drapers' establishments were smashed open and wearing apparel, as well as drapers' goods of all descriptions, was looted unceremoniously".

The crowd which stoned windows after 8.00 p.m. did so to a "stop and start" pattern of whistling, so that "the absence of the police and other important events" were "notified by members of the apparently inoffensive crowd to the aggressors".<sup>79</sup> Dummies and finery, silks and top hats, were thrown on to the road in contempt or worn in mockery. Jars of sweets, cigarettes, pans of ice cream and packets of tobacco were scattered around and raided by children. Sixty-three shops were damaged. Some were completely ransacked — J. W. Richards, chemist; J. Owen Jones, draper and milliner; J. Haydn Jones, gents' outfitter; T. P. Jenkins, draper; M. A. Phillips, gents' clothier; J. R. Evans, draper; and four refreshment houses, including two owned by the Bracchi Bros. whose name became eponymous for all Italian cafés in south Wales. Butchers, grocers, furniture shops and others suffered less or minor damage.<sup>80</sup> T. P. Jenkins, the magistrate whose shop was the first to go, said that the crowd made "wild threats both in Welsh and English and then went on their work of destruction".<sup>81</sup> The windows of the twinned draper shops of Mr. and Mrs. Phillips were knocked in at 7.45 p.m. The crowd returned at 9.15 p.m. and systematically broke all the windows as they tore apart the shop, which they had illuminated by lighting the gas jets. Mrs. Phillips told an outraged reporter for the drapers' profession:

People were seen inside the counter handing goods out. They were afterwards walking on the Square wearing various articles of clothing which had been stolen and asking each other how they looked. They were not a bit ashamed, and they actually had the audacity to see how things fitted them in the shop itself. They were in the shop somewhere about three hours and women were as bad as men . . . Everything was done openly and the din was something horrible.<sup>82</sup>

One outfitters was completely denuded of its extensive stock of mufflers. At 10.00 p.m., and although the recently-arrived Metropolitan police were housed in the skating-rink only one hundred yards away, Haydn Jones's drapery, already "smashed to atoms", was now further reduced as "collars, straw hats, braces and caps were passed from hand to hand openly in the street and exchanges were indulged in between the looters".<sup>83</sup> These were revolutionary acts, albeit without a play to frame them, nor was Lionel James of *The Times*, who arrived

<sup>79</sup> *Western Mail*, 9 Nov. 1910.

<sup>80</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910; *Western Mail*, 9 Nov. 1910; *South Wales Daily News*, 9 Nov. 1910. Subsequently ninety-six claims for damages were assessed: *Rhondda Leader*, 11 Mar. 1911.

<sup>81</sup> *Sunday Times*, 13 Nov. 1910.

<sup>82</sup> *Drapers' Records*, 19 Nov. 1910. Eight drapers suffered extensive damage.

<sup>83</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 12 Nov. 1910.

two weeks after this world-turned-upside-down had reverted to the stability of a war of attrition, so far wrong when he despatched the news that though the place was quiet:

knots of sullen men are parading the streets, and the mouth of every alley way is blocked with idle miners. It is just the same oppressive atmosphere that one experienced in the streets of Odessa and Sevastopol during the unrest in Russia in the winter of 1904. It is extraordinary to find it here in the British Isles.<sup>84</sup>

The riots were not a momentary aberration. Similar incidents, though smaller in scale, are peppered through late 1910 and into 1911. The conventions of social behaviour continued to be flouted, to the dismay of more responsible society. Thus in April 1911 when renegotiated terms were again put to the men (and massively rejected) those who voted by secret ballot walked about with the unused portion of the ballot paper stuck in their coat, "publicising to the world at large how they voted" and rendering "the ballot nothing short of a travesty".<sup>85</sup> There were shifts at ballot-box level, too. Leonard Llewellyn had resigned his seat for Clydach Vale for "business reasons" in September 1910;<sup>86</sup> by 1912 all three local councillors for the ward were Labour representatives; William Abraham, M.P., Rhondda's member since 1885 and the Lib-Lab president of the South Wales Miners' Federation, was re-elected as usual in December 1910, though in a poll whose reduction coincided with his own loss of votes; more significantly he, and the Welsh national anthem he customarily invoked, were both booed at an eve of poll meeting. The four I.L.P. and two S.D.P. branches in the Rhondda had contemplated running a candidate against him and, despite the fact that finances forced their withdrawal, urged all socialists to "abstain from voting and working in this mock election for Mabon [Abraham's bardic name] as a protest against his industrial and political action".<sup>87</sup> From 1911 onwards there was an independent labour organization established and the unofficial reform movement in the South Wales Miners' Federation found itself a solid base in a mid-Rhondda from where in 1912 *The Miners' Next Step* trumpeted recall of M.P.s, reorganization and reform as the platform for wider action. The Mid-Rhondda Trades and Labour Council had pressed for local Labour councillors to give an account of their stewardship twice a year at public meetings, "with the aim of nursing the electors in the importance of having Labour men in our Councils",<sup>88</sup> two years before the articulation of ideologies and plans of action in that famous pamphlet tilted, from a real strength, at the amorphous hegemony of a society whose public face had been more vulgarly marked on the night of the riots.

<sup>84</sup> *The Times*, 23 Nov. 1910.

<sup>85</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 1 Apr. 1911.

<sup>86</sup> Rhondda U.D.C. minutes, 9 Sept. 1910.

<sup>87</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 17 Dec. 1910.

<sup>88</sup> Mid-Rhondda Trades and Labour Council minutes, 23 Feb. 1910.

The riots laid bare the underlying shape of the mid-Rhondda community. Structural alterations would prove a longer process. On the 1911 Rhondda Urban District Council, out of a total of thirty seats, nine were held by Labour men, four by nominees of the coal-owners, four by representatives of the building trade, three by shopkeepers, two by doctors, two by clergy, two by publicans and brewers, and two by independents. At the 1912 elections Labour representation increased to thirteen, but only nine of these were avowed socialists.<sup>89</sup> Those who were brought before the courts for intimidating non-unionists or for theft were imprisoned or fined and treated to the magistrate's line in moral homilies: he told Thomas Richards, fined £1 because he had stolen coal from a truck in the Glamorgan Colliery yard to light a fire for his wife and three children, that strikers had been warned of "the gravity of such offences"; William Morgan, who stole clothes from an outfitters to pawn and was given three weeks in gaol for his pains, was informed that his theft was "an extremely mean one"; and a fifteen-year-old caught pawning goods taken from J. R. Evans, draper, on the night of 8th November was fined £2, bound over for a year and made to attend regularly the Sunday school which had not seen him since the strike began. Will John and John Hopla, who had spearheaded the combine strike, were given twelve-month sentences (later reduced to eight) for their part in the last disturbances of 1911.<sup>90</sup> With blame apportioned as far as leaders could be singled out and the strikers back in work on the price-list they had spurned in October 1910, the management applied salt to smarting wounds. They issued strict orders that the men, out for almost a year, should handle most carefully all horses since the latter's long lay-off would have softened them. A haulier who was dismissed for alleged disobedience, and for hitting a farrier in the course of this, was summonsed for assault. Lleufer Thomas, extending his all-encompassing brief, remarked that "it was absolutely essential that discipline should be maintained at the colliery by the officials". The haulier was gaoled for six weeks.<sup>91</sup> At the Cambrian Colliery offices current rent and back rent, for houses not owned by the company itself, were deducted from pay without the employees' consent.<sup>92</sup> These were the bitter fruits of defeat, while for those policemen who had distinguished themselves in action came the rewards of promotion: three inspectors became superintendents and seven sergeants made inspector. They put something

<sup>89</sup> *Rhondda Socialist Newspaper*, no. 10 (30 Mar. 1912). The Urban District Council had banned the use of public halls for secular meetings in late 1910 to the fury of the socialists, who protested at this restriction. See *Rhondda Leader*, 21 Jan. 1911; Mid-Rhondda Trades and Labour Council minutes, 20 Dec. 1910.

<sup>90</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 31 Dec. 1910, 6 May, 3 June, 11 Nov. 1911; *South Wales Echo*, 10 Mar. 1911.

<sup>91</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 17, 20 Oct. 1911.

<sup>92</sup> *Western Mail*, 24, 27 Oct. 1911.

into the district, too — a paternity case brought by a Clydach Vale waitress, deprived of her wedding-ring and delivered of a male child born on 29 August 1911, and Inspector (formerly Sergeant) James Davies of Mumbles near Swansea, who “stands 6’ 2” in height and has a physique of commanding appearance”, now to be utilized in Tonypandy.<sup>93</sup>

The sum total of these stabilizers had a swift outcome, for just before Christmas 1911 those traders whose advertisements had noticeably diminished in the course of the year now severally announced “Tonypandy’s Great Shopping Week”. For fathers and mothers, they pronounced, “Santa Claus is undoubtedly the shopkeeper and Tonypandy tradesmen are doing their best to attract them” — “young men looking at the windows of Messrs. Jones and Evans, outfitters, Tonypandy, cannot fail to notice something to their taste . . . Their range of mufflers is claimed to be the finest in the Valley”; “The chemists generally seem to have almost forgotten that they ever were chemists and have apparently entered into a league with Santa Claus with the idea of supplying everyone with a present of some description”.<sup>94</sup>

The echoes of 8th November did not however die away easily. In early 1913 the Glamorgan Colliery doctors, who were being pushed unwillingly into a new local medical scheme in the wake of Lloyd George’s National Health Insurance Act, clashed publicly with the local lodge committee, which withdrew repayment of debts incurred since November 1910, because the doctors would not reveal their accounts nor allow a medical committee elected by the men any direct control of their payments.<sup>95</sup> The question of control could no longer be divorced from the issue of ownership or the nature of community. It was the apparent disintegration of the latter, depicted as the loss of moderation through the decline of religion and of “Welshness”, that underlies the more detailed probings and recommendations of the government’s commissioners into industrial strife in 1917:

the Rhondda has an abundance of cinemas and music halls, but not a single theatre. Owing to the absence of municipal centres and centralised institutions, the development of the civic spirit and the sense of social solidarity — what we may in short call the community sense — is seriously retarded.<sup>96</sup>

*The Miners’ Next Step* (1912) with its “No-leadership” proposals had been a conscious attempt to find an organizational framework in

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 Oct. 1911; *Rhondda Leader*, 29 Dec. 1911.

<sup>94</sup> *Rhondda Leader*, 16 Dec. 1911.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 Jan. 1913.

<sup>96</sup> *Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest, 1917*, p. 12. Lleufer Thomas, who headed the commission in Wales, was not concerned only with the effect of “alien” ideologies on “retarded” Rhondda intellectuals — in 1913 he rejected the defence, on aesthetic grounds, of a barber prosecuted for exhibiting “indecent post-cards” because “what would appeal to the artistic mind in Paris would not have the same influence in Tonypandy”: *South Wales Daily News*, 22 Jan. 1913.

which the collectivity of action and sacrifice expressed in 1910 and 1911 would not be either controlled, other than by its own volition, or dissipated. The working class of mid-Rhondda in 1910 did not, could not, own its own self as yet, but it was, as it demonstrated through industrial struggle and social crisis, its own self. And with this self-knowledge new definitions of community could come.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For an analysis and account of the actual "solidarity" and community sense that enveloped south Wales after 1918, see Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1980).