

Setting the Scene

'Rolling up', covers a period just after NATO formed - when the Attlee Government took the country to war in Korea... A year later Churchill regained the premiership... From just after The Second World War till 1954, three-quarters of all house building was by local authorities. It was a golden age of local government power - parks, road verges and municipal gardens restored to pre-war standards; social mores returned - presented a solid foundation from which the war torn populace settled into civilian life.

The present consumer driven economy started in 1955 with the Macmillan government... it was the start, to the television boom, gradually overtaking all other forms of popular entertainment. The writing spans a period when the Conservatives held approximately twice the length in government - over Labour. This was the start to free-world industrial power exerted by the integrated circuit proposed by G W A Dunner... that led to the integration of five components in the same number of years. To give weight to the changes mentioned above - wrought by progress...

I started work as an apprentice artist - in a printing house, learning about a method of reproduction discovered at the turn of the nineteenth century... no sooner was I trained than the craft was superseded by photography - later, film-masking which in turn gave way to electronic scanning, finally, the whole page was capable of being designed including pictures and typematter... It was a forty-five year revolution in pre-printing technology.

I have sketched some of the cultural changes which affected me, particularly the effects the Trades Unions had on my life. The period has seen enormous progress towards women's liberation - to the position where few work places not served. These social changes affected physical and metaphysical sex, children, marriage, flexible working and consumer choice... how could I not be affected...?

The period covers a land where few ventured abroad, some, not out of their town or village. Within these years few have not flown, owned a car, had their kitchen designed or shopped at a supermarket...

The British Government of Harold Wilson continued to employ an incomes policy - to hold back wage claims - stabilize prices and slow down inflation. The unions tried annually, to improve working conditions and wages... when not forthcoming, threatened to work to rule. There was no one strong enough to stand up to the unions and hold-to a wages policy. The Government was prepared to allow some unemployment, to weed out the inefficient, time wasters and industrial agitators. The Labour Party elected the previous year - with a majority of 98. The government knew that the unions would jeopardize all their plans - to reduce government borrowing, but would not resort to legislation to assist them - for fear of popular unrest...!

It was not difficult to see the effects the unions were having - stifling expansion - holding back modernisation. All managers keep up with developments at home and abroad to make their businesses productive and cost effective... it is in the interests of the relevant trade union to be knowledgeable about those new developments - so that they can direct their member's interests. There were those amongst the workforce who could also appreciate this fact, but were too weak to influence the strident few. The Union's Secretaries were obliged to pander to the militant shop floor workers, 'to resist unemployment and increase the hourly rate'. The activists peppered their calls - to their shop floor members, with: 'stand by your rights', 'help your fellow man', 'one man one job', 'don't give way'... never explaining the result of poor worker relations would be long-term - industrial stagnation. This last statement assumes that the activists, usually Communist or left wing Labourites, could actually picture the future they were influencing - of Britain losing work and jobs to overseas businesses - time proved they could not...! Often the activist wanted disruption to further their own ends - usually increase power over their fellow man, punctuate a monotonous job or bring about discord. Those social reformers who had humanitarian goals were not able to accept the downside to their thinking. The unions would never discuss with any government the rules on picketing, automatic strikes and their legal position regarding incitement.

In the General Election six years later, in March 66, Labour again elected into power with a reduced majority of 31. Four years later, in June 70, Labour failed to have an overall majority... allowing the new government of Edward Heath's Conservatives to push through an Industrial Relations Act the following year... a further year saw the country into the European Economic Community. Heath tried to carry the torch of an incomes

policy... falling back on force... the result, a national three-day working week in 1973. Back came Labour and Wilson in March 74, with a majority of three... They abandoned Heath's incomes policy relying instead on a 'social contract'... which led to inflation and the unions agreeing to 'wage restraint'... not for long though...! Mrs Thatcher's election victory of May 1979 gave a majority of 144 ensured substantial power bases to last eleven years... The spiralling national unemployment rate continued into the second year of Margaret Thatcher's Government and the years of recession were only to slowly pass as the decade came to a close.

This period covered our family's induction to primary education. We had no idea, that comprehensive education would be introduced by neither Harrow Council in 1973 nor the effect it would have. The goal, to achieve Grammar School education for our children, was removed by this policy, and we were not prepared to move house - to find an authority that did. Immediately, standards and classroom discipline started to deteriorate. A national comprehensive system sought but not reached - some Tory local authorities refused to instigate one... Throughout the country, sufficient finance was not forthcoming. Classroom discipline dropped further and teachers started to take early retirement. In 1971, the system only covered 35% of the age group. It has taken many years, where local authorities did introduce a comprehensive system, for their standards to return to the previous Grammar School's and then mainly in middle-class areas.

I left industry to become a teacher to escape the ravages of strident unionism, believing that advancement - in the profession, by good practice and dedication... My hopes were later dashed; there were greater forces afoot - politics, favouritism and pandering to fads...

Christmas 1980, the family was in holiday mood. I was home from teaching - completing my first term second year degree course. Simon was in his second year science degree - at UMIST, David, in his final 'A' level year... the family's rigours, pursuing intellectual development needed a break, now was the time to take stock... but unbeknowningly greater forces were at work...!