

**THE CULTURE GAP: An Experience
of Government and the Arts**

Hugh Jenkins

Marion Boyars, 1982 pb £4.95.

ISBN 07145 2643 6

**POPULAR CULTURE:
PAST AND PRESENT**

edited by **Bernard Waites, Tony**

Bennett and Graham Martin

Croom Helm Ltd with The Open

University, 1981 pb£5.25.

ISBN 070991909 3

The Culture Gap offers another handy indictment of the last Labour administration, this time from the viewpoint of a left Minister's attempts to halt the dismal dwindle; it is also a useful information source about government policy for 'the arts'. Hugh (now Lord) Jenkins describes himself as a 'left-wing Parliamentary socialist, Marxian like Laski, rather than Marxist' and at the start of the book gives a biographical sketch of a working class background and a long stretch of trade union activity,



notably in Equity, before becoming an MP in 1964. Wilson made him Minister of the Arts in 1974; Callaghan sacked him in 1976 and most of the book is about what happened in between.

The Ministry was first established in 1964 and its office-holder until 1970 was Jennie Lee whose famous White Paper, *A Policy for the Arts — the First Steps* (1965), is reproduced in the book and provides the idea behind the title. The paper demanded that government help 'to bridge the gap between what have come to be called the "higher" forms of entertainment and the traditional sources — the brass band, the amateur concert party, the entertainer, the music hall and pop group — and to challenge the fact that a gap exists.' As Lee's Labour successor, Jenkins started out in office to fulfil her call for a more 'coherent, generous and

imaginative' approach to the arts.

Generosity he certainly achieved: he lifted the Tory museum charges immediately and was the last of the big spenders where subsidies are concerned. But the rest is part of an increasingly familiar tale of thwart and obstruction in attempting to carry out the manifesto — though none the less shocking in re-telling. Two examples stand out: Jenkins' support for the wealth tax against the hypocrisies of the 'National Heritage' lobby who sought exemption for their own private art treasures; and his attempts — revealing in the light of recent events — to democratise the Arts Council with a proportion of elected membership and more explicit criteria for awarding grants.

He was barracked in his efforts throughout. And what is most interesting in his account is not so much the continual and

obvious press howls for his resignation, but the more sophisticated, insidious resistances he encountered. A whole repertoire of discreet *savoir-faire* was deployed against him: a word in the ear, avoiding the eye, going over the head, losing the memo, not-available-today, a-slight-misunderstanding, I'm-so-sorry. These games were played not only by the senior civil servants and wealthy arts patricians who almost 'automatically' resist him, but also by his 'own' side, the DES Ministers — Prentice and then Mulley — he served under, and the clique around Wilson. They never opposed Jenkins by argument but used contempt and rank pulling. It was impressed upon him that he was a *junior* minister and not of cabinet status.

But he also did not 'belong' in a class sense: he was not particularly 'of the world of Westminster, nor a university or club

Bookshop Classifieds

To advertise your bookshop for only £2 per line, telephone 01-251 4406 and ask for Tom.

• For a list of radical bookshops in Britain, send a s.a.e. to: **Federation of Radical Booksellers**, c/o Oakleaf Books, 109 Church St, Wolverton, Milton Keynes.

Ireland

• **The Bookshop** 30 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1. Largest Selection of working class literature in Dublin.

London

• **Collets London Bookshop** 64-66 Charing Cross Rd, WC2H 0BD. For all books on Gay and Feminist politics, Ireland, Disarmament, Marxism, Social Sciences, Third World, Racism, Fascism, Aesthetics, Industrial Relations.

• **Central Books** 37 Grays Inn Rd WC1. Open 9.30-5.30 Sat 10-12. Tel 01-242 6166. Chancery Lane (central line) and Kings Cross tubes. New and second-hand books. Mail order welcome.

• **Economists Bookshop** Clare Market, Portugal St WC2. Tel (3-5pm weekdays) 01-405 5531. Specialising in the social sciences, including socialist and feminist studies. Magazines. Pamphlets. Second-hand department.

• **Housmans Bookshop** 5 Caledonian Rd N1. Specialists in peace movement books (write for lists), also wide range of radical books.

• **The Other Bookshop** 328 Upper St N1. Tel 01-226 0571. For all your radical, feminist, radical black and third world literature. Open

Mon/Tues/Sat 10-6 Wed 12-7 Thurs/Fri 11-7.

• **Bookmarks** 265 Seven Sisters Rd N4. North London's leading socialist bookshop. Two floors of good books and pamphlets.

• **Kilburn Bookshop** 8 Kilburn Bridge, Kilburn High Rd, NW6. Tel 01-328 7071. A new general bookshop with in-depth coverage of feminism, literature, Irish studies and Black studies.

• **Hammersmith Books** A world-wide mail order service since 1948. Over 100,000 out-of-print titles. Barnes High St, SW13. Tel 01-876 7254.

• **Mandarin** 22 Notting Hill Gate W11. Tel 01-229 0327. For new books on politics, philosophy, sociology, poetry etc. Comprehensive list available for books on current affairs.

• **Balham Food and Book Co-op** 92 Balham High Rd SW12. Alternative bookshop, wide range of wholefoods and vegetarian cafe. BFBC — a Workers Co-op.

• **Library Bookshop** Tel 01-729 4723. Shoreditch: Pitfield Street N1 6EX. Open Mon-Fri 11-7 Sat 10-5. Stamford Hill Library, Portland Avenue N16 XBS. Tel 01-809 2698. Open Mon-Fri 11-7 Sat 10-5 closed Wed. Afro-Caribbean and Jewish interests stocked. Also comprehensive range of socialist literature.

Midlands

• **Oakleaf Books** 109 Church St, Wolverton, Milton Keynes. Tel 0908-314366. Socialist-feminist bookshop.

• **Blackthorn Books** 70 High St, Leicester. For all your socialist and feminist literature. Non-sexist children's books. Also literature by Black writers. Tel Leicester 21896.

North East

• **York Community Bookshop** 73 Walmgate, York (0904 37355). Wide range of radical

books. Open Mon-Sat 10-6.

• **4th Idea Bookshop** 14 Southgate, Bradford 1. Tel. 305927. Wide range of radical, black and feminist books, postcards, badges, records etc. Bookstalls and Services provided. A Workers Co-operative.

North West

• **Progressive Books** 12 Berry St, Liverpool 1. Wide range of socialist books, pamphlets, posters, badges. Specialities include Trade Union Handbooks and Black Studies.

• **Grass Roots Books** Manchester's radical bookshop at 1 Newton St, Piccadilly. Open 10-6 Mon-Fri. Sat 10-5.30

• Don't forget to visit **Progress Bookshop**, 28 Hathersage Rd (tel 061 224 5378) when in Manchester. Stockists of Marxism Today and most popular Left journals, books, stationery, large second-hand section. (Call in for quick and friendly book service, open 4 days a week).

Scotland

• **First of May**. Scotland's comprehensive radical bookshop for Socialist, Feminist, Anarchist, anti-nuclear, environmental, Gay, Third World and non-sexist children's books. Open 10-6. 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh. Tel 031-225 2612.

South East

• **Nick Spurrier**, 79 Whitstable Rd, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8EA. Tel 62764. Monthly lists of 2nd hand books on trade unions, Soviet Union, socialism, economic history. Books searched for.

Wales

• **Neges Books** 31 Alexandra Rd, Swansea. Tel Swansea 461573. Radical books, magazines, in English and Welsh.

'man'. Indeed he comes across for the most part as an isolated outcast individual, too straight and principled to want to play it the same tortuous ruling class way and yet — and hence the vanities — deferentially grateful to be 'noticed' by the odd machinating peer like the ubiquitous Goodman. But given that he *did* see through 'the charmed circle', 'the cultivated smoothies' and the Arts Council 'poodles', the most telling absence in the book is any reference to the building of alliances both within and outside parliament so that he could start developing alternative ideas and arguments in a collective and combative way. Apart from a small advisory group of left intellectuals, he was on his own. And it is precisely the implications of *this* sort of 'culture gap' that he should have explored further because it is here that he is rendered ineffective.

The 'gap' Jenkins does explore is more specifically to do with cultural provision. He refers to 'cultural disenfranchisement' and asserts a passionate belief that working people deserve better than what a class-segmented marketplace lobs at them. His calls for a 'common culture', echo the moral polemic of *Uses of Literacy*, where Richard Hoggart advanced the thesis that mass culture's 'invitations to a candy-floss world' were 'unbending the springs of action' —

debilitating traditional working class values.

In the 25 years since *Uses of Literacy* was published, Hoggart's has been the major pioneering influence also in establishing the current research in popular culture. Without its influence, it is unlikely there would be an Open University course in popular culture and this reader which accompanies it. But much of the new research has developed as a critique of Hoggart's formulations, seeing the concern to overcome any 'culture gap' as paternalist and asserting that far from turning into candyfloss, working class people have subverted and given new meanings to consumerist values.

The new emphasis on 'reappropriation', the insistence that 'the springs of action' remain unbent, runs through many of the selected readings in *Popular Culture*. Included is a sustained examination of the 'moralist' position from Dick Hebdige, one of the younger generation of researchers who have examined young subcultures in terms of 'resistance through rituals' or the sort of subversive 'style' which creates an active identity out of consumer artefacts: the punk's safety-pin; the rocker's bike; the mod's suit.

In its celebration of various subordinate groups' abilities not to be conned by 'mass' culture, but to find ways of resistance and

transcendence, recent research in popular culture has offered a useful corrective to oversimple moralist polemic. But it has some problems of its own and *Popular Culture* helpfully illuminates them. To touch briefly on two: whether it is EP Thompson's radical tradition of the 'freeborn Englishman' or Paul Willis' motor bike boys study, both represented here, recent research suffers from a profoundly masculinist bias. Do women and girls figure at all in popular culture, I wonder? Or can you even talk about us 'having' culture in the same way as you can for boys and men? — a question aptly posed by Angela McRobbie in her evaluation of the *Jackie* magazine in this volume. Secondly, the whole emphasis on making and transforming meaning can encourage an idealist neglect of the conditions that structure inequality. And the sincerest egalitarian wish not to make judgements of value but to understand forms of popular culture primarily in their own terms may well have the unintended consequence of obscuring the need for socialist policy in creating wider opportunity. So it's no bad thing to have Jenkins' reminder of Labour manifesto promises and Hoggart's continued reluctance to celebrate the safety-pin when the wearer can't read.

Rosalind Brunt

MEDIA CULTURE & SOCIETY

SPECIAL ISSUE: THE INTELLECTUALS

Issue editors: Philip Schlesinger and Colin Sparks

Contents

Editorial

Philip Schlesinger: In Search of the Intellectuals: Some comments on recent theory

Miriam J. Kostecki and Krzysztof Mrela: Workers and Intelligentsia in Poland: during the last days and in between

Philip Elliott: Intellectuals, the 'Information Society' and the disappearance of the public sphere

Charles Kadushin: Intellectuals and cultural power

Keith A. Reader: The intellectuals: notes towards a comparative study of their position in the social formations of France and Britain

Edward S. Herman: The institutionalization of bias in economics

Book Reviews

Special issue price: £6.00 (UK only) / \$ 16.00 (overseas)

Full Rate: £24.00 (UK only) / \$ 63.50 (overseas)

*Personal Rate: £12.00 (UK only) / \$ 32.00 (overseas)

*Personal subscription rates are available only on orders placed directly with the Publisher and paid for out of personal funds.

By taking 'the intellectuals' as its theme, this issue recognises the growing interest in the questions surrounding this social category. A unique article from Poland, by Miriam Kostecki and Krzysztof Mrela gives a devastatingly frank account of relations between workers and intelligentsia in the 'pulverized society' of today's Poland.

In the introductory essay, Philip Schlesinger sets out some contemporary concerns of theories of the intellectuals, and suggests the value of a comparative approach, sensitive to the relative autonomy of intellectual practices. He criticises Gouldner's new class-theory and assesses some recent East European work.

Philip Elliott argues that prophecies of an 'information rich' society are misleading. Rather, he suggests, the pattern of media development now, and in the near future, will erode what is left of the public sphere, with negative effects on critical intellectual work, public service broadcasting and political debate.

The other contributors are also concerned with the impact of market forces on intellectual work. Edward Herman offers a critique of US political economists, who, he contends, are not scientifically detached, but take up problems dictated by their class position. In fact, he argues, they are ideologists. The present vogue for 'supply side' economics is determined by the market; one in which its protagonists seek rewards for their intellectual wares.

Charles Kadushin considers the market for books in the USA. During the past decade, he thinks, the decline of intellectual circles which link together publishers and academic entrepreneurs has reduced the marketability of high calibre books.

In some comparative observations, Keith Reader, by contrast, suggests that in France intellectual circles are alive and well, and taken seriously, unlike Britain. He outlines the problems in transferring Althusserian Marxism from its own national culture to Britain, stressing the different intellectual markets in each society.

This issue of *Media, Culture and Society*, international in scope, and wide-ranging in its theoretical perspectives and empirical reference points, makes a significant contribution to the study of the intellectuals.

ACADEMIC PRESS

A Subsidiary of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers
24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DX, England