

What about Pop . . .

BY ALAN KILKENNY

It wasn't quite like the Tardis, and the effect was rather more like Pawley's Peepholes, and it cost 8/-. I don't really know why I went; and I was tired anyway. But there I was, outside the Country Club, waiting patiently in the drizzle. And I wasn't the only one — the lines of 650 BSA's proved that. But the motorbikes were normal. In the front of the queue were some of the strangest characters I'd ever seen.

Inside there were more of them. Long violent jackets with velvet collars; bootlace ties with metal clasps; tourniquet tight trousers; crepe-soled suede boots and Brylcreem. The women were just as bizaare — varnished blondes; transvestite tarts, and the far from occasional glimpse of a stocking top.

The air was vaguely reminiscent of a cafe just off the Watford By-Pass, battling from time to time with Tommy Vance's own particular aura. What was Tommy Vance doing there? It was being televised for BBC 2's Disco 2. What was? A performance by the Wild Angels — a Rock and Roll band that look as though they've been on the road longer than I've been wearing long trousers.

Teddy boys and 'Rockers mingled with the heads (the regular patrons of the Country Club). It was all most disturbing. The main difference was ten years and a sense of expectation.

And then it started. The area in front of the stage conspicuously left empty was swamped with bodies. The atmosphere that developed from the music was something that previously I had only learnt of second-hand. It seemed as if everyone was discovering something that had been lost for years. For the fanatic this was probably just another weekend; for the heads it was something more — the prodigal sons were returning. Soon everyone was moving; later they freaked out completely.

Technically the band could have been bettered by hundreds of groups desperately trying to make it; but here there was something more. The scene had almost the same feeling as a performance by a negro blues artist. It was back to the grass roots again.

The band's timing was superb (after all, they'd had ten years or so to perfect it), the pianist playing with anything from one to five limbs, and the guitarist getting just about everywhere.

A cameraman crawled up a girl's thighs, disappearing into the throbbing mass of dancers. I remembered Dave Clark's machinations on Top of the Pops. It was getting hot. 'Long Tall Sally', 'Good Golly Miss Molly', 'Be Bop A Lu Lu'—they did them all. Incredible. My air of scepticism had disappeared, and, apart from a mistimed visit to the wrong toilet, I had a great evening. So did everyone else!

SOFT MACHINE — BRILLIANT OR TERRIBLE?

One of the difficulties about writing in this sort of paper is the seemingly enormous gap between the copy and publication dates. This makes reporting news almost impossible, and writing accurate previews difficult because you find that reviews would be more in order. Such is the case with the Soft Machine/Mike Westbrook concert that should have taken place last Saturday.

I could have written a 'review' with an infinite amount of conditional clauses that would make it less than useless. Instead I'll try to write about Soft Machine.

I suppose it started in late '66. Something strange was happening in London — Clubs operating unusual hours for unusual people sprung up along the Tottenham Court Road and Covent Garden — UFO, Happening 44, Middle Earth. Cannabis took the place of 'straights' — others moved further on — some too far. International Times was underground, and for a short time so were the musicians. Pink Floyd, Arthur Brown, Sam Gopal, Soft Machine. Some bands lasted — most changed. Personnel changes were very common. Soft Machine went to America and disbanded; reformed in England without Kevin Ayers. They always remained underground whilst bands like Jethro Tull manoeuvred themselves on to Top of the Pops. Today they are Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper and Robert Wyatt. They write all their own material and play superbly. As you have probably guessed by now they are absolutely indescribable. I hope you saw them.

(Soft Machine have recently released an LP entitled 'Soft Machine — Volume Two' (SPB1002). It is either brilliant or terrible — I can't quite make up my mind which).

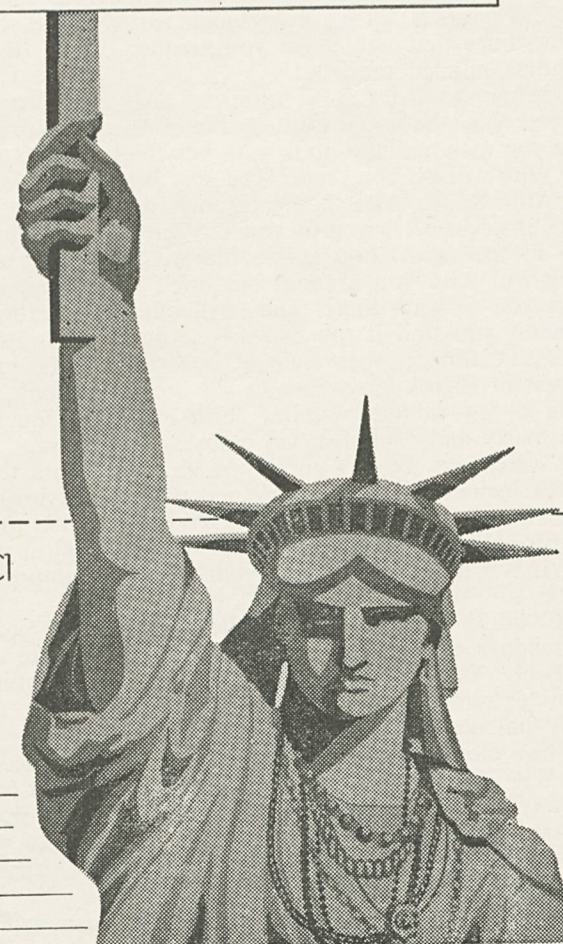
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FINER SPEAKS

Beaver Reporter Sam Ellis interviews the new Vice-Chairman of the Board of Governors, Mr. Maurice Finer

Beaver What do you think of the student position at L.S.E.?

Finer At the moment my feelings, which I think reflect those of the governors in general, are that there is undoubtedly room for considerable reform and improvement of the student position. I am passionately looking forward to a period of relative tranquility at L.S.E. to achieve this end.

Beaver As an ex-student of L.S.E., what changes do you now see?

Finer Basically, things have not changed; the issues in my time were very much the same as now. The big difference is that today's students have lost all faith in the political process in remedying the faults of society. I myself believe the political process is the only way.

"I am against parity in any sense where students have an equal voice with academic staff and the governing body"

B What improvements would you like to see at L.S.E.?

F The main tasks are concerned with improving physical facilities, for example the new library.



Professor Himmelmeit, appointed chairman of the Academic Advisory Committee for Britain's proposed Open University. At L.S.E. she is Professor of Social Psychology, and in the past has conducted research into such subjects as TV and the child, and children and social class.

B What do you think of the proposal to move L.S.E. out to Crawley?

F Personally I am against this. L.S.E.'s location is advantageous apart from its proximity to Fleet Street.

B Your views on representation?

F I am puzzled at the reaction of the students to the recent proposals, which I personally support. They may not go as far as some students would want, but I would ask this question: If representation is a live issue, why is it left to a small handful to take union decisions on this matter?

B Would you support parity?

F I am against parity in any sense where students have an equal voice with academic staff and the governing body. I think this is wholly impractical and unrealistic. L.S.E. as an institution has a lot to learn from the students and they ought to have a powerful voice, but no voice in, for example, the hiring and firing of staff, nor in the matter of syllabus content. But there is a whole range of possibilities.

B What do you think of the proposals to turn L.S.E. into a graduate school?

F The future of the School, in the long run, is bound to be a post grad. institution, but I am very strongly against a precipitate rush to it. The pace of the change will vary probably with the pace of the other universities. I would be sorry to see L.S.E. become post grad, but the whole logic, at present, impels it in that direction. In any case, it will be a long process over many years.

B How close will your links be with L.S.E. now?

F I have always had close links with L.S.E. — as scholar 1936-40. My eldest son was vice president of the Union in 1966. In the past there has not been enough communication. It is a two way process and all I can say is that we would all like to see more. Any moves in this direction have been made very difficult by the events of the last three years. It is also very difficult to communicate when students consider me a representative of monopoly capital.

B Your views on joint meetings?

F Mutual respect is essential, as is rational discussion. Both sides must be in a frame of mind to be moved.

B Lord Robbins has agreed to meet students, but has restricted their number to 40. Do you agree with this?

F In a situation where open meetings tend to become riots, perhaps it is useful to restrict numbers.

B Do you think governors should be present at Union meetings?

F No. It is important to keep the Union solely as a representative of the students. I would want to avoid any measure which could be misconstrued as interference by the governors. I wish the Students' Union would be democratically effective, because now it's not.

B In what ways?

F I would refer you to the events of the past three years.

B Will you succeed Lord Robbins?

F No comment. All I would say is that I hope the question of a successor to Lord Robbins is postponed for a long time to come.

B Will your legal experience be of any help to students and staff in L.S.E.?

F My legal experience makes me better equipped to see both sides of a case and to keep an open mind.

B How many governors meetings have you attended?

F I have attended every full governors meeting except one, and almost all the meetings of the standing committee.

"I wish the Students Union would be democratically effective, because now its not"

B What do you think qualifies you for the job?

F My long association with and interest in L.S.E. My wide experience of life as a lawyer, and the fact that I'm the father of two students. I think I have a well informed and progressive view of students.

B What do you see as the functions of the vice-chairman?

F Precisely what the title suggests. As a deputy to the chairman my day to day functions will be very much as before.

B Have you any explanations of student unrest?

"I cannot remember the meeting or discussion concerning the putting up of gates. Obviously I did not regard it as important"

F I have obvious views which I would not attempt to summarise now.

B Did you agree with the gates going up?

F I cannot remember the meeting or discussion concerning the putting up of gates. Obviously I did not regard it as important.

B Did you agree with the picket of the selection committee?

F It was not a serious way of raising the question of representation on this committee.

B What are your views concerning the calling in of police to remove two outsiders selling literature in the school?

F If there was no violence then I consider it reprehensible to call in the police.

B Do you think that the school should be used by the students for non academic purposes?

F Depends on the situation. I am in agreement with teachers, in circumstances where there are reasonable guarantees of non-violence.

Maurice Finer is as predictable as expected. No new tough measures, no radical reforms, a perpetuation of the Robbins attitude. In his own words "I hope the question of a successor to Lord Robbins is postponed for a long time to come". It is not for me to pre-judge him — you must form your own opinion on what he said. However it is worth noting his remarkable memory over the issue of the . . . er . . . ah I remember now—GATES.

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