

**THE PREMIER LEAGUE AND THE NEW
CONSUMPTION OF FOOTBALL**

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Abstract :

This thesis is a historical and critical examination of the development of the Premier League and the new consumption of football, which attempts to link these developments with wider post-Fordist transformations. The thesis argues that the transformation of labour relations in football set the Football League on a course of organic political economic development which privileged the big city clubs. During the 1980s, these clubs became conscious of this divide and, in a complex series of negotiations, effected a breakaway from the League to form the Premier League. It is argued that the latter organisation was the institutional framework in which the new consumption of football was possible.

The particular form of that new consumption of football was determined by certain discursive interventions from 1985, which prescribed a particular course of reform for football. The thesis argues that these discourses were intimately related to wider post-Fordist developments and were privileged both because of those (post-Fordist) developments and the organic transformation of football itself.

The thesis goes on to suggest that the conjunctural discourses of reform were implemented by a fraction of the capitalist class, the new business class and Part IV, involves an extensive examination of this class fraction's participation in the game and the fans' resistance and compliance to this project. By examining both the long-term, organic developments and the more immediate conjunctural moments of the 1980s, the thesis attempts to provide a holistic account of recent developments in football, which it is hoped will throw light on Britain's post-Fordist transformation.

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PREFACE

After the disasters of Bradford and Heysel in May 1985, there was a commonly articulated view that football had had its day as the 'national game' and was a moribund sport ¹; the game was played poorly in front of dwindling crowds of increasingly violent and often racist males in unsafe and unsanitary grounds. By May 1995, despite a season which had been tarnished by the general wave of media-discovered 'sleaze' ², football had undergone a quite startling transformation; crowds have increased and their social constitution has altered to include more women ³, while many grounds have been entirely re-built so that the best grounds in England now compare with any in Europe. In short there has been a sea-change in the popular perception and the cultural position of the game.

Although football required reformation in the mid-1980s, the jeremiads of 1985 were somewhat exaggerated; the game still commanded an attendance of 16.5 million (The Football Trust 1991:9), which was vastly more than the attendances at any other sporting event, and attracted the largest television figures of any sport. The transformation of football in the decade between 1985 and 1995 was certainly radical then but it was not the miraculous return which the prophets of doom would imply; the game still had wide public appeal.

Nevertheless, despite the enduring appeal of football to many (men), despite its problems, the speed and extent of this transformation of football was extraordinary; not even those individuals who continued to support football throughout the 1980s could have foreseen the metamorphosis of the game. The unusual rapidity and extent of the changes to football in this decade suggest that a sociological examination of

their causes and consequences would be worthwhile. This thesis attempts exactly this ; to analyse the cultural causes and consequences of football's revolution between 1985 and 1995, although the analysis extends back to 1960 in order to contextualise the crisis of the mid-1980s.

The transformation of football in the decade between 1985 and 1995, has comprised two, interrelated developments. On the one hand, the Premier League, as a political economic institution which redistributed revenue to the biggest clubs, emerged ; this League was finally established after extensive negotiations during the summer of 1991 and was formally inaugurated on 10th October 1991. It consisted of all twenty-two clubs of the old First Division, who wanted to leave the Football League and its obligations to the lower leagues. On the other hand, the consumption of football was transformed during the 1990s, with the development of all-seater stadia, the increase in ticket prices, the introduction of new marketing techniques and the new coverage of the game on television.

This thesis tries to account for football's revolutionary decade by analysing the development of the Premier League, as a political economic institution, and the new consumption of football in the 1990s. The Premier League and the new consumption of football are intimately related because the development of the breakaway League has facilitated the transformation of the consumption of football by altering the political economic structure of the game. In short, the Premier League has increased the revenue of the biggest clubs, thereby enabling them to make the necessary investments in their grounds, by which the new consumption of the game has been chiefly effected.

The thesis lays out the theoretical and historical frameworks in the first two chapters which will inform the analysis throughout. Part II, 'The Prehistory of the Premier League', lays out the organic conditions which gave rise to the revolutionary decade and to the discourses which informed the solutions to football's crisis. The rest of the thesis, Part III, 'Discourses of Reform', and Part IV, 'The New Consumption of Football' is an examination of the conjunctural moment between 1985 and 1995, when the reform of football was self-consciously debated and implemented. The thesis argues that the arguments and projects in the conjunctural moment from 1985 were crucially informed by the trajectory of organic developments which privileged certain solutions to football's crisis as appropriate.

PART ONE

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORKS

CHAPTER 1

FOOTBALL, RITUAL AND HISTORICAL CHANGE

1. Football as a Ritual

Irving Scholar, the chairman of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club from 1982 to 1990, found the significance with which this small North London business was invested extraordinary (Scholar 1992:296, also Horrie 1992:vi). The overwhelming importance which is attached to professional football clubs, in spite of their financial modesty (in comparison with the vast multinational empires of the post-Fordist world), lends the football club what Barthes might call a 'mythic quality' (1972:19). The significance of football lies not in its financial value but rather in the fact that large numbers of (mainly male) individuals in English society regard it as important. The game operates as a central arena of identity and a major mediating resource in the social relations between men. Football, then, is a ritual. It is regularised activity which performs as an arena in which the meanings and concepts of a particular section of the class and gender order of English society are expressed and negotiated. If football is a ritual, then this examination of its transformation in the 1990s should derive its method from the anthropological analysis of ritual.

To that end, Geertz's seminal analysis of Balinese cock fighting (1973) provides a theoretical approach to the study of ritual which might be usefully applied

to the case of English football. Geertz's account of Balinese cock fighting is both a piece of anthropological analysis and a statement of method. Geertz argues that anthropology must aim at reaching the 'deep play' of other cultures. That is, the anthropologist must attempt to gain some understanding of the way that other cultures interpret themselves. For Geertz, a society is not a mechanistic instrument of consent and compliance but rather culture comprises a much looser set of understandings, values and meanings. The task of the anthropologist is infiltrate the self-understandings of other cultures to demonstrate the ways in which individuals in that culture interpret their situation in order to negotiate their relations with other members of that culture. Geertz suggests that these self-understandings, which individuals interpret in their everyday life, are inscribed in a culture's texts - by which he means various social practices. This view of culture implies an anthropological method which differs quite radically from Geertz's functionalist and structuralist predecessors :

The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong. (1973:452)

For Geertz, the task of the anthropologist is not simply to outline the structure of kinship or the structure of the 'savage mind' which the natives invariably reproduce in their social practice. Rather, the anthropologist has to attempt to discern the way in which natives actively interpret the meanings and values which their culture provides in their creation of identity. From this hermeneutic position, Geertz argues against the functionalist view that ritual merely involves the inculcation of values onto malleable native minds, and suggests instead that through the ritual of the cock-fight, Balinese men express their own self-understandings to themselves.

Its function, if you want to call it that, is interpretive; it is a Balinese reading of Balinese experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves. (1973:448)

For Geertz, not only is the active participation of the Balinese necessary in creating themselves as Balinese but the story, which they tell themselves, is not consensual but rather that story involves both the expression of the strict hierarchy in Balinese society and a commentary upon it.

it [the cock fight] provides a metasocial commentary upon the whole matter of assorting human beings into fixed hierarchical ranks and then organizing the major part of collective existence around that assortment. (1973:448)

Geertz argues that the cock-fight does not create status distinctions in a simplistic functionalist way but that through the expression of self-understandings status is brought under consideration for debate and re-negotiation. In his assault on deterministic functionalist explanations, Geertz, perhaps, overstates his interpretive case. It is quite conceivable to imagine that status distinctions could be created through ritual but in the interpretive manner which Geertz specifies rather than by functionalist inculcation.

For instance, the rich in Balinese society are able to express their status through cock-fighting because the rich are involved in the 'deep play' of the large bets, which they stake, rather than the small side bets of the poor. Through this 'deep play', the rich demonstrate their status but that demonstration, as Geertz points out, is not automatic; the poor have to interpret that demonstration and in their interpretation will question and negotiate the status of the rich. Contra Geertz, the functionalists are not wrong to suggest that status discrimination is created through the ritual but their explanation of how that discrimination is created is too deterministic. The metasocial commentary about individuals' understanding of themselves and their relations with

others which Geertz suggests is articulated through ritual closely parallels the framework which I want to adopt in the analysis of football.

Furthermore, Geertz's argument is particularly relevant to the analysis of football as a ritual because his hermeneutic method substantially anticipates the contemporary literature on consumption. The contemporary debates on consumption foreground two essential themes ; firstly, that through consumption, individuals recreate their identities and their understandings of social relations and that, secondly, with the advent of post-Fordism, consumption (in the form of the purchase and use of commodities) has attained a position of cultural priority over production. Although I will discuss post-Fordism at length in the following chapter, consumption theory's historical claim is not relevant to this discussion of ritual.

In the recent literature, the argument that through consumption individuals express their self-understandings and interpretations of the world has been most successfully proposed by Bourdieu (1984), although much of his argument is anticipated in Veblen's famous essay on the leisure classes (1970). Bourdieu argues that each class has a habitus, which operates like a Kantian transcendental category. A habitus is the set of concepts which frame experience and make experience possible. The habitus is the means by which we look on the world and it dictates what we see. Bourdieu argues that the habitus of each class determines that class's tastes and one of the principal roles of the habitus is to create a set of tastes which distinguish individuals of one class from those of another. The Kantian status of the habitus is problematic but Bourdieu's argument that through consumption, individuals attempt to differentiate themselves from certain groups and align themselves with others has been widely articulated in the literature on consumption (see Tomlinson (ed.)1990:30,

Miller 1987). It is at this point that consumption theory and hermeneutics, as it is expressed by theorists such as Geertz, begin to merge because both approaches foreground the way individuals manipulate cultural resources to express their own understandings, their position in society and their relations to others.

By drawing on Geertz, this thesis situates itself within the contemporary literature on consumption for that literature is finally hermeneutic. In the ritual of football, individuals express their notion of themselves and of their culture in their practice of fandom (i.e. their consumption of the game). Through that practice, social relations and the understanding of the society of which they are part are created and articulated. Thus, football becomes 'central to how we see ourselves as a nation' (Tomlinson and Whannel (eds.)1986:120, see also Bromberger 1993:90-1, Williams and Wagg 1991:83) However, the community which is imagined (Anderson 1990) in the football ritual is neither static, consensual nor coextensive with society for, not only are the social relations which are expressed in football contested but these social relations are situated within a particular social milieu. English professional football appeals to and expresses the meanings of a specific and historically given class and gender order.

Geertz's hermeneutics and the contemporary theory of consumption provide us with an adequate theoretical framework for the analysis of the new consumption of football. Yet, this analysis of the consumption of football which follows substantially involves issues of contestation and debate over the interpretation of social relations between classes. Therefore, it seems essential that some consideration be given to the writings of Marx since they constitute the single most important sociological source for the issue of class relations.

2. Marx, Gramsci and Hegemony

Marx adopts a more radical position than Geertz with regard to the issue of social hierarchy, arguing that the ruling class requires not merely that their hierarchy is expressed and commented upon in social discourse but rather, that the ruling class will insist that its values be communicated through 'the mental means of production'.

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force in society, is at the same time the ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the mental means of production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (1977: 64)

If the implications of Marx's famous statement here are applied to the discussion of ritual above, then the ritual becomes not an arena in which any individuals in society can freely express their view on that society or its inequalities but rather that those who rule the society will have a privileged position in relation to this ritualistic 'means of mental production'. These privileged individuals will attempt to impose their vision of society and their self-understandings on any ritual which is part of the mental means of production. Marx's argument is, in point of fact, even stronger than this for he insists that not only are the ruling class able to dominate the meaningfulness of rituals but that they are obliged to do so if they are to rule; the dominant class *is* 'the ruling intellectual force' and it owns the 'means of mental production'.

Marx's argument that the ruling class must communicate their ideas to their subordinates if they are to perpetuate their rule has been taken up and most fully developed in the work of Gramsci. Gramsci argued that the ruling bourgeoisie maintained themselves by means of the state with its coercive mechanism but also

crucially through civil society by political means and, specifically, by the production of consent. Such consent, Gramsci argued could only be achieved if the bourgeoisie was able to communicate its values and ideals to the working class. The achievement of consent marked the moment of hegemony for the ruling class, when the bourgeoisie triumphed over society not only physically (through economic and military) force but morally as well.

from the moment in which a subaltern group becomes really autonomous and hegemonic, thus bringing into being a new form of State, we experience the concrete birth of a need to construct a new intellectual and moral order, that is, a new type of society, and hence the need to develop more universal concepts and more refined and decisive ideological weapons. (1971:388)

If we take this sentence literally, then Gramsci is actually arguing that the subaltern group institute a new moral order after they have become 'hegemonic'. Such a reading is inconsistent with his line of argumentation in the rest of *The Prison Notebooks* and can, perhaps, be ascribed to the tentative and fragmented nature of these writings due to the circumstances of their production. That this sentence must be interpreted loosely in the light of his other writings and not literally becomes obvious when we consider the implication of the literal reading. If Gramsci really did mean that the subaltern class became hegemonic and then transformed the moral order of society, it is very difficult to comprehend to what that hegemony would amount. Elsewhere, this moral order is described by Gramsci as 'hegemony', but this passage implies that this moral order appears after the subaltern group is 'hegemonic'. In the light of this discrepancy, in which the moral order which elsewhere constitutes a hegemony here precedes the subaltern's class hegemony, it would seem best to interpret this sentence as meaning that as the subaltern class develop into a position of hegemony, they need to construct a new intellectual and moral order. The particularly important clause in

this sentence is Gramsci's claim that the subaltern class needs 'to develop more universal concepts'. This can mean two things. Either, that the subaltern class, which is becoming hegemonic, needs to communicate concepts which are universal because they operate at the highest, or most fundamental, level. They are the underlying organising principles of thought. Or alternatively it could simply mean that the concepts which comprise the subaltern class's moral order are universally accepted. Both would seem to be possible and, perhaps, Gramsci means both.

In their work, *Policing the Crisis*, Hall et al. have foregrounded Gramsci as a primary theoretical resource for the analysis of culture and, in particular, they emphasise that the project of hegemony involves the attempt of the ruling class to universalise their worldview so that the commonsense by which individuals understand the world accords with the ruling class's understandings (Hall et al. 1978:156). However, Hall et al., in this work and in *Resistance through Rituals* (1976) argue that the project of hegemony, as the universalisation of the commonsense of the ruling class, is never complete and that it never attains universality. The values and meanings of the ruling class have to be interpreted by the subordinate classes and such interpretation inevitably involves rejection, alteration and resistance (Hall and Jefferson (ed.) 1976:12,16,81).

The point of discussing Gramsci's concept of hegemony is that it highlights the issues of domination and contestation while at the same time staying within the hermeneutic framework which I derived from Geertz (and the contemporary theory of consumption). Since I will argue below that the transformation of football in the 1990s must at least be partly understood as the economic and social project of a specific (entrepreneurial) fragment of the capitalist class, this foregrounding of the issue of

hegemony (of cultural domination and resistance) is important. However, although it seems that Gramsci's writings are relevant to this analysis, the terminology itself seems potentially problematic.

The strong notion of hegemony which Marx expressed in *The German Ideology* has to be qualified ; the values of the ruling classes are always contested in the negotiation of relations between classes. Furthermore, it is difficult to maintain that there is any single hegemony over any society. Certainly, common ideas and themes run through the many social milieus which comprise any society but the particular form which the social relations between classes take in any particular milieu cannot be captured by a general concept of hegemony ; that term is too blunt to tease apart the connection between the particular set of ideas which inform the ruling class's project and the reception and negotiation of that project by subordinate classes.

There is then no single hegemony in a society but rather there are a series of overlapping and interconnected projects and values which share some general features but which must be understood in their specificity. If there is no single hegemony which universally informs the project of a coherent capitalist class across the whole of society, but rather fragments of the capitalist class adopt idiosyncratic strategies which have a family resemblance to the strategy of other fragments at a particular historical period, it is perhaps more illuminating to dispense with the term 'hegemony', although retaining an affiliation to the concept itself, and speak instead of discourses. The point of making this terminological change is that it disposes of any theoretical attachment to a monolithic notion of class and class rule.

The analysis of the transformation of football in this thesis draws heavily upon the concept of post-Fordism, which will be defined in the next chapter, and the use of

the term discourse over hegemony assists in maintaining analytical clarity in the use of the concept of post-Fordism. The point of emphasising the term 'discourse' above hegemony in relation to the concept of post-Fordism is that, it cannot be assumed that post-Fordism has already been brought into existence over British society before the transformation of football and then merely reapplied to the context of football. British post-Fordism and, indeed, post-Fordism in every society is a complex phenomenon. Firstly, it is still in the process of establishing itself as a principle of economic and social organisation ; it is not a completed project. Moreover, post-Fordism has not been applied to a society on high, decreed by a monolithic state, but rather post-Fordism refers to the partial and particular transformation of social and economic relations in particular spheres of societies. In these specific social milieus, discourses, which argue for the reformation of social relations and economic organisation, are articulated by emergent class fractions and contested by others. If the term 'post-Fordism' is used clumsily, then these transformations of social relations are seen merely as examples or templates of a principle of social organisation which has already been long established over British society ; to analyse the transformation of football in this fashion is to put the analytic cart before the horse of social reality. The term discourse assists in the avoidance of this conceptual hypostatisation because it implies historic, uncompleted and specific processes whereas the concept of hegemony suggests that a set of solid principles and universal meanings, called post-Fordism, have already been established over society and have in the 1990s been (more or less unproblematically) transplanted to the sphere of English professional football.

The use of the term discourse in this thesis is intended to refer to the values and arguments by which certain classes and class fragments have proposed and

sustained their projects. Consequently, the notion of discourse is not that far away from Gramsci's concept of hegemony but the particularity which the term discourse connotes and the fact that it suggests an uncompleted social development, promotes it as an analytical term in this context over the 'hegemony'.

3. Historical Change

Although the analysis of the new consumption of football constitutes a central concern of this thesis and the theoretical framework which has been discussed above is intended to outline the method by which that subject will be approached, it is also my concern to explain the development of the Premier League itself which is both a part of the new consumption of football and the institutional and political economic framework within which the transformation of consumption has taken place. In order to explain the development of the Premier League itself, it is necessary not only to have a theory of ritual but also a theory of how rituals undergo historical change. Of course, such a theory of ritual change has to be related to a wider theory of social change since ritual is but an expression of social relations and, therefore, bound up with any transformation of those social relations. Gramsci's Hegelian reading of Marx⁴, which foregrounds historical transformation, rather than its structuralism which is typical of other (e.g. Althusserian) strands of Marxism, is a useful resource for the construction of such a theory of social change.

Gramsci regarded Marx's Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1971) as an important resource for the development of his 'philosophy of praxis' - the term which he used to describe his theory of revolutionary practice. The importance of 'The Preface' to Gramsci's thought is revealed by his

regular reference to it in *The Prison Notebooks* (1971:106,177,409,432) and is

highlighted in Gramsci's critique of the Italian Communist Party's *Popular Manual*.

It is worth noting that the *Popular Manual* does not quote the passage from the Preface to the *Zur Kritik* nor even refer to it. This is pretty strange, given that this is the most important authentic source for a reconstruction of the philosophy of praxis. (1971:460)

Since Gramsci endows the specified passage from the *Zur Kritik* with such

importance, it is worth quoting the passage in full.

No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of old society. Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present. (1971:21)

In *The Prison Notebooks* Gramsci argues that it is possible to develop a whole set of historical methods from this passage (Gramsci 1971:177) and, having cited the above passage he goes on to lay out some of those methods. The crucial methodological divide which this passage suggests to Gramsci is the separation between the 'organic' and 'conjunctural' (Gramsci 1971:177, see also Joll 1977:85). For Marx, the emergence of a new social formation or development cannot be attributed to immediate and conjunctural factors because it is necessary to consider what gave rise to these immediacies and what rendered them significant in the first place. Rather, any particular historical transformation has to be predicated on vast (organic) economic changes which problematize the existing form of social relations. Society resolves these crises in accordance with the economic conditions which had produced that crisis in the first place ; the economic development of a society only allows for a certain possible horizon of options.

This historicist position is captured well by considering the old aphorism,

For want of a nail, a shoe was lost, for want of a shoe, a horse was lost, for want of a horse a battle was lost, for want of a battle, a kingdom was lost. All for the want of a nail.

Marx's historicism would turn this aphorism on its head and argue that no kingdom could ever be lost for the want of a nail. Instead, Marx would set about trying to understand how a nail could have attained such pre-eminent importance in historical change ; in other words, the overwhelming significance of the particular fact of a shoeless horse could not be accepted at face-value as it would be necessary to specify the wider social conditions which gave rise to a situation in which a single horse had such world-historic significance.

Although Gramsci cites the passage from the *Zur Kritik*, his own historicist arguments take a somewhat different turn to that presented by Marx, for whereas, Marx is, in this passage, very economicist, pointing to a direct relationship between a society's economic development and its subsequent historical transformation, Gramsci himself endows the economic with a more circumspect determining influence. Having laid out the need for distinguishing between the organic and conjunctural, he asks the rhetorical question of whether fundamental historical crises can be caused directly by an economic crises (Gramsci 1971:178). He replies ;

It may be ruled out that immediate economic crises of themselves produce historic events : they can simply make the terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought and ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of natural life. (Gramsci 1971:178)

In contradistinction to Marx of the *Zur Kritik*, therefore, Gramsci does not give the economic an exclusive determining role. Rather, the economic development of a society acts only as a horizon of possibility, facilitating the reception of certain

solutions, privileging particular ideas and values, over others. Thus an effective historical method must view economic developments as the organic facilitating framework which informs and influences historical change but does not finally determine it. A proper historical method must examine the conjunctural moment when the 'modes of thought and certain ways of posing and resolving questions' are brought to bear on the social problem in hand.

For Gramsci, then, historical change must be explained by reference to organic, economic developments which give rise to certain conditions in which change is necessitated, and to conjunctural, ideological moments when the specific nature of those changes are debated and realised. This dual historical method, utilising the concept of the organic and conjunctural, seems to provide a useful framework with which to analyse the development of the Premier League and the new consumption of football. On the one hand, it is necessary to consider the long-term developments which gave rise to the need for the development of a Premier League. However, those organic economic developments of the long durée did not automatically determine the subsequent establishment and form of the Premier League or the new consumption of football. Those specificities have to be analysed as particular results of certain conjunctural elements. However, since the organic developments have substantially stimulated the need for reform, the organic also privileges certain discourses and the classes which articulate these discourses. In other words, although historical change cannot be read off from organic development directly, there is, nevertheless, a certain logic to historical development. Organic economic development favours certain groups and at the same time presents society with particular problems ; since these groups are

emergent, they are best positioned to take advantage of those developments and solve them in accordance with their own interest.

It should be emphasised that the divide between the organic and conjunctural which informs much of this thesis is a methodological one. It is effected for reasons of clarity. It does not follow any ontological divide between the organic and conjunctural. On the contrary, both the organic developments of the long durée, and the more immediate conjunctural moments consist of the same social processes ; they both involve political economic exchange and the discursive negotiation over that exchange. However, whereas the organic refers to those long periods, in which there is little self-conscious negotiation of political economic relations, the conjunctural moment refers to those moments when there is a self-conscious realisation of the inadequacy of the form of social relations to the (organically) developing political economic situation.

Conclusion

If football is a ritual, in which social relations and the understandings which inform them are expressed and negotiated, then it follows that at the conjunctural moments of a society's development (when there is a heightened self-consciousness about the form of social relations, as they become inadequate to political economic developments), that football, as an intense ritualistic arena of meaning, will be an important site for the articulation of discourse and struggle. Debates about social relations will be expressed through the magnification of the ritual.

In the following chapters, I want to argue that the transformation of football in the decade from 1985 to 1995 followed this course, specified by my theoretical framework. The wider organic changes both of British society, and within football

itself, from the late 1950s rendered the form of social relations in football both between the clubs and between the clubs and fans inadequate to political economic developments. This gap between the social relations and meanings by which football operated and which it expressed in its heightened moment of ritualistic intensity, stimulated discourses which self-consciously pointed up this gap and demanded the reformation of football.

However, before we can go on to consider the specifics of both the organic political economic developments within football which gave rise to the crisis of 1985 and to the subsequent discourses of reform, it is necessary to outline the wider historical context in which the revolutionary transformation of football occurred. It is necessary to consider the curious social formation which was Britain's answer to the collapse of the Keynesian welfare state and its interpretation of the global phenomenon of post-Fordism.

NOTES :

1 Examples of this opinion include *The Guardian*, 'Yet the image of professional football as a dying entertainment eking out an existence in squalid surroundings dies hard' (22/8/86:21), *The Financial Times* (20/9/86:22a), *The Times*, 'It [football] needs more than yesterday's cosmetic alterations to rescue a dying game which we have all loved' (29/4/86:40h).

2 The principal examples of 'sleaze' in the 1994-5 season were the revelation of George Graham's (the Arsenal manager) acceptance of a 'bung' in the transfer of John Jensen to the club, the accusation by *The Sun* (supported by video evidence) that Bruce Grobbelaar, the Liverpool goalkeeper, accepted a bribe to throw a game and the criminal proceedings against Eric Cantona, Paul Ince, Duncan Ferguson and Dennis Wise for cases of assault on and off the pitch.

3 The Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research's survey, during the 1993-4 season, suggested that 12.7 per cent of Premier League attendances were female.

4 Boggs (1976) and Joll (1977) have both argued that Gramsci was attached to a Hegelian perspective, which foregrounded historical development and the importance of ideas to that development.

He [Gramsci] thought, like Hegel, that political revolutions are preceded by a revolution in the spirit of the age. (Joll 1977:31)

Gramsci became attached to the Hegelian perspective shared by Croce and Labriola and thus was increasingly critical of the objectivist theory expressed by the leaders of his own Italian Socialist Party. (Boggs 1976:21)

CHAPTER 2

POST-FORDISM AND THE CONTEMPORARY TRANSFORMATION OF BRITAIN

In the last chapter, I argued that ritual articulates the meanings which inform relations in the wider social formation of any society. Furthermore, rituals will be transformed (through discursive and conjunctural interventions), when those social relations have been re-negotiated in such a way that a society's ritual no longer articulates the self-understandings to members of a society about themselves and their relations with others. Ritual is, then, related to the organic transformation of a society and will be brought into line with those organic developments in conjunctural moments.

Since ritual articulates wider social meanings and is bound up with the organic political economic transformations of society it is necessary to have some sense of the contemporary development of British society. This development has been described variously as the move to post-Fordism (Hall and Jacques (eds.)1990) or as 'disorganised capitalism' (Lash and Urry 1987) ¹. Through a reading of these and other accounts, this chapter will describe the principal features of the move to a 'post-Fordist' society in which (I will argue later) the emergence of the Premier League with its new means of consumption has become possible.

1. The Post War Settlement

A. Keynesianism

British post-War society was crucially informed by the orienting principles of Keynesian economics. In brief, Keynes argued that the Depression of the 1930s was caused by underconsumption. Consequently, the central policy of any government must be to maintain full employment. Full employment obviated the threat of underconsumption because a wage-earning and secure population would be able to afford the goods which mass manufacture was producing, thereby avoiding underconsumption, subsequent redundancies and the consequent vicious circle into further underconsumption which would follow.

In addition to the economic strategy of full employment as a central organising principle for the economic policies, Keynesianism also involved a wider social policy, which principally involved the creation of a welfare state. The logic behind this development was that if workers were insured against the debilitating effects of illness and redundancy, they would be more willing to spend their income and thus reduce the threat of underconsumption. The implementation of a full employment policy and the creation of a welfare state was substantially founded on a corporatist settlement, between British capital, the state and the unions (Lash and Urry 1987:233). The corporatist settlement was central to Keynesianism as it allowed wages and prices to be set by agreement and, therefore, stabilised (Piore and Sabel 1984:83-4), which was crucial to sustained economic growth.

B. The New Affluence and American Fordism

Keynesian post-War Britain was embedded in the growing global and increasingly American-dominated markets. The United States had from the 1920s increasingly organised itself along Fordist lines, which involved Taylorist principles of scientific management on the shopfloor, connected to the growth of a more affluent and secure workforce ; American Fordism realised and indeed, anticipated much of Keynes' economic theory. In the United States, Fordism had become particularly established during the Second World War, when the demand for the products of mass manufacture arose as never before. After the War, American Fordism was still developing and creating new consumer commodities for its increasingly affluent workforce but in order to sustain this economic development, it was necessary to open new markets overseas. As the United States' closest political ally and cultural relative, it was logical that the American Fordist corporations should look to Britain as a potentially lucrative new market. Thus from the late 1950s, American Fordist consumer commodities began to appear in Britain. *

The Keynesian settlement, which provided the workforce which security and a level of pay, which encouraged consumption, assisted in establishing these new markets for the mass-manufactured products of Fordism. Thus, substantially as a result of American rather than indigenous mass production, there was something of a revolution in affluence from the late 1950s. For instance, car ownership increased from 2.5 million in 1952 to 7.5 million in 1963 (Sampson 1965:618) and there was a similar growth in the ownership of household goods. Between 1952 and 1963, television ownership increased from 11 to 85 per cent of households in the United

Kingdom, washing machines from 10 to 52 per cent, refrigerators from 6 to 37 per cent and vacuums from 40 to 80 per cent (1965:622).

The significance of the development of this affluence for the wider argument here, is that it initiated a quite radical transformation of class relations and working class culture, as the extensive 'embourgeoisement' debate in sociology in the late 1950s and 1960s² has testified. These profound social transformations are important in the context of an account of British post-Fordism because the latter was crucially informed by the new affluence of the working class. When the Keynesian post-War consensus eventually collapsed in the 1970s³, any solution and reformation of social, economic and political relations had to be framed by the new affluence of the working class. Only a social settlement which preserved this new affluence (for the majority), had any chance of acceptance. In other words, the new balance of class relations which was brought into existence under Keynesian, in the form of affluence, was crucial to subsequent social formations, even after the demise of the Keynesian framework in which that affluence had been won.

2. Post-Fordism : The Global Phenomenon

The concept of post-Fordism has not been unchallenged. It has been argued that Fordist mass production techniques are still of central importance to the capitalist economy. For instance, it has been argued that the fast food industry is entering its Fordist apogee (Lee 1993:111). According to this argument post-Fordism overstates the decline of the mass production and consumption economies which dominated the post-War years and it is still necessary to acknowledge the persistence of many of the key economic and political constituencies of Fordism (Lee 1993:111). Ironically,

Piore and Sabel (1984) make exactly the opposite argument. They suggest that the concept of Fordism became paradigmatic from the 1920s, blocking from view the very important role which craft industry played both in the previous century and even during those decades in which Fordist production techniques were supposedly hegemonic. For instance, in the 1970s, roughly 70 per cent of all products in the metalworking sector in the United States consisted of small batches (Piore and Sabel 1984:26). Piore and Sabel suggest that 'post-Fordism' constitutes the return of a repressed method of production.

Although Lee's argument is valuable, in that it cautions us from blind adherence to a concept, it is difficult to maintain that business is really still going on as usual on the Fordist shopfloor. Although the firms which produce the basic consumer goods may still employ the tried and trusted Fordist techniques of production because their markets are stable, those corporations which are either producing new consumer products or operating in competitive markets (e.g. cars) have had to adopt post-Fordist production techniques. In other words, the most important companies will be post-Fordist. Furthermore, as Hall and Jacques (1990) pointed out, the concepts 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism' do not simply refer to a set of production techniques but rather to a whole culture. Western capitalist culture has been radically transformed since the 1970s so that the position of the state and the class structure have been fundamentally altered. To deny these changes and therefore to reject the concept, which (however problematically) attempts to communicate these changes, is obtuse.

The crucial economic feature of post-Fordism is flexible specialisation (Piore and Sabel 1984:17). This technique is seen in the networks of technically sophisticated, highly flexible manufacturing firms in central and north-western Italy

(Piore and Sabel 1984:17) and in car manufacture in Japan (Murray 1990:45). Post-Fordist production differs from Fordist production in two essential ways. It is based upon advanced computer technology as opposed to electrical and mechanical machinery and it employs skilled workers who have substantial control and input into the production process. The latter is especially significant because it allows post-Fordist firms greater flexibility - skilled workers are better able to adapt and they are more capable of innovation. Such innovation is, according to Piore and Sabel, central to post-Fordist production ; one of the weaknesses of Fordist mass production was its tendency to stifle innovation (Piore and Sabel 1984:37).

Like the Fordist system, post-Fordist production based on flexible specialisation did not emerge already fully formed. Rather certain types of company (whose production was flexible) were able to survive the buffetings of the 1970s (Piore and Sabel 1984:194) and, indeed, began to grow in that climate.

Taken separately, these firms' successes appear ad hoc, as much the result of good fortune as of design. But underlying these various lucky accidents were common principles of organisation principles that constitute a viable alternative to the survival strategies of the mass producers. (Piore and Sabel 1984:194-5)

The new flexibly specialised production techniques of post-Fordism produce, it has been argued (Lash and Urry 1994), a new type of commodity. This commodity is not one which has a use or even exchange value but rather whose value is symbolic. Post-Fordist commodities have sign value (Lash and Urry 1994:1-4). They offer up symbols, out of which consumers can craft their identities which themselves have become more reflexive (according to Lash and Urry).

The development of post-Fordism has involved a radical transformation of social organisation and class relations. In particular, post-Fordism has involved a re-

organisation of society around the new division of core and periphery (Murray 1990:58). The core comprises a well paid, secure and skilled workforce, who are supported by an increasingly private welfare system, based on insurance, while the periphery consists of casualised, low paid employment, dependent on an inadequate public welfare system (Murray 1990:58). The division of the post-Fordist workforce around a core and periphery has elsewhere been described as the development of a 'two-thirds, one-third' society (Therborn 1990, Hall 1990:34,118).

The global concept of post-Fordism is induced from the examples of specific societies. As an induction, which has established general principles from particular examples, the concept of post-Fordism is useful because it highlights the wider relevance of particular developments which have occurred in British society. However, it is important to realise that the contemporary transformation of British society cannot be read off as the mere application of a global principle. British post-Fordism is a specific and curious phenomenon which is intimately connected with the historical trajectory of British society. It is necessary to consider British post-Fordism in its particularity.

3. Post -Fordist British Society

A. The Economy

Despite its claim of being the 'first industrial nation', Britain was ironically never fully industrialised, relying more on the easy wealth which its Empire provided and which the 'habitus' of its ruling class (a curious blend of aristocracy and bourgeoisie) regarded as an appropriate method of accumulation (see Wiener 1985, Landes 1989). Thus Britain's manufacturing base was always somewhat patchy and ad

hoc and, in particular, Britain's industries were never organised on the rigorous Fordist basis which operated so successfully in the United States and in Germany.

In the light of Britain's amateurish industrialisation, it is not surprising that in the face of the new global economy of the 1970s, the easiest response for the British economy was to promote the financial markets of the city, benefiting from the sizeable invisible income which those markets brought (to the South), and to focus not on the production of post-Fordist goods but on their sales to an increasingly service-oriented society. The relevance of post-Fordist production to the British experience should not be overemphasised, as the move to post-Fordism in this country has involved the quite radical decline in manufacturing employment. For instance, whereas 8 million were employed in manufacturing in 1971, only 5.5 million were still employed in the same sector in 1984 (Lash and Urry 1987:99), while the number of individuals employed in the service sector increased from 11.3 million in 1971 to 13.3 million in 1984 (Lash and Urry 1987:99).

In their later work, Lash and Urry (1994) have argued that Britain's (and the United States's) consumption-oriented economies (with its attendant service-oriented employment profile) is 'much more modern, individualised and reflexive than Japanese or German counterparts' (Lash and Urry 1994:108). I would suggest that this is an ethnocentric claim (made by a North American and an English sociologist) and that rather than being avatars of the highest forms of economic development, the United States' and Britain's curious service-led version of post-Fordism is merely the strategy which these two societies have had to adopt as Germany and Japan have forged ahead.

Britain's post-Fordist economy is curious, then, in that it is concerned not with the production of the 'sign-value' commodities of which Lash and Urry speak but rather, principally, with their distribution. The British post-Fordist economy is crucially consumer driven, dependent upon the retail of commodities. This peculiarly British solution, in which we have literally turned ourselves into a 'nation of shopkeepers', is reflected in the contemporary transformation of the class structure.

B. The New Class Structure

The shift away from manufacturing has radically altered the class formations and relations which had come to be looked on as 'traditional' in Britain. In particular, the class structure of British society has been crucially reformulated by the division of the workforce into a core and periphery which was noted as a typical process in the global phenomenon of post-Fordism.

Although the decisive rift in post-Fordist society lies between the core and the periphery, the core is itself divided so that it has been argued that contemporary post-Fordist Britain has become a trichotomous society (Therborn 1990:111-2, Burrows 1991:8; McDowell 1989:1-3). The two essential groups within the core, and which comprise the affluent two-thirds, according to this argument, are the lower grade white-collar workers, who perform menial (and boring) functions, in the bureaucracy of large service corporations, and the so-called 'service class', which refers to professionals who work at the highest bureaucratic levels, often as functionaries for the capitalist class. Capitalists, themselves are somewhat obscured in this model under the term of the service class. Sociological discussion of the white-collar workforce has been principally concerned about whether this group constitutes a proletariat (see

Crompton and Jones 1989). The significant point about these arguments for the discussion here is that the 'traditionally' differential employment between the working and middle classes has been substantially blurred. The middle class bureaucrats have been deskilled by the development of computer technology and service corporations have looked to employ an increasingly female workforce in the lower echelons, as they are usually more deferential and can be paid less⁴. The need for low-grade white-collar employees in the bureaucracies of the service industries has meant that many working class individuals have attained jobs which would never have been open to their parents. Consequently, there has been a convergence between the middle classes and certain sections of the working class. It must be emphasised that substantial sections of the working class (especially in the former industrial areas of the North of England) have not enjoyed this move into white collar work at all but have been consigned to all but permanent unemployment, poverty and crime. They comprise the periphery of British society (Lash and Urry 1987:99).

At the higher levels of management in the multinationals a new 'service class', about whom there has been extensive sociological debate, has emerged (Goldthorpe 1980, Abercrombie and Urry 1983, Lash and Urry 1987, Savage et al 1992). The term 'service class' has tended to be used as to describe the emergent class, which operates in the highest ranks of the service bureaucracies of post-Fordist Britain, performing functions of control for capital (Abercrombie and Urry 1983:122). As Goldthorpe's study demonstrates, many members of this class have come from middle and working class backgrounds (Goldthorpe 1980:71). The service class, then, constitutes a quite radical transformation of the traditional British upper classes who have populated the City and the Civil Service in the past. The service class is

essentially a new social formation, comprising a coalescence of individuals, in a dynamic position of dominance as a result of entrepreneurial opportunities thrown up by the development of post-Fordism.

The 'yuppie' has been emblematic of the development of the service class in Britain. For Savage et al., the 'yuppie' is the representative of the service class and marks a new balance of power within the middle classes, which has emerged out of the convergence of various formerly separate fragments of the middle class. In particular the service class has attained dominance over the public sector, professional middle class.

The rise of the new group might be evidence for a new division within the middle class, between a public sector, professional, increasingly female middle class, on the one hand, opposed to an entrepreneurial private sector, propertied middle class on the other. Historically, we have argued that the professional middle class lord it over the rest. Today managerial and private sector professional may be shifting from its sphere of influence and may be joining the previously marginalised petite bourgeoisie in a more amorphous and increasingly influential private sector middle class⁵. (1992:218)

The emergence of the service class has been a radical transformation of British class and constitutes a critical social development in the creation of a post-Fordist society.

However, the concentration on the service class in much of the recent sociological literature has obscured the nature of the capitalist class in post-Fordist society. This partial blindness to the latter is justified on the grounds that in post-Fordist society, and indeed in the large Fordist corporations, there has been a merging of the two classes. So great have capitalist interests become, with the growth of multinational corporations, that no single capitalist can retain control. Consequently, many of the largest capitalist interests are owned and administered by boards who essentially comprise the most senior members of the service class and, often, these

individuals do not own the shares for which they speak but are the representatives of other institutions who own the shares (Scott 1985).

Yet, the capitalist class has not disappeared. The capitalist entrepreneur is still an important figure in the post-Fordist economy and it is noticeable that many of these figures are involved in the production and consumption of new commodities (or the transformation of more traditional ones). In Britain, the 'heroic' capitalist class is represented by individuals like Richard Branson, Rupert Murdoch, the late Robert Maxwell, Tiny Rowlands, and Alan Sugar, as well as a whole range of lesser figures (such as Sir John Hall)⁶. There are two central characteristics of these figures. Firstly, their operations have tended to involve the production and sale of new consumer items. Branson originally operated in the music industry. Murdoch, meanwhile, has transformed the traditional industry of newspapers to conform with post-Fordist production and consumption patterns and has reinvested his profits into the similar transformation of television, with the creation of his Sky TV company.

Murdoch's reinvestment of profit brings us to the second distinguishing feature of the post-Fordist capitalist class. It is principally a financial entrepreneurial class. It is, of course, true that historically all capitalists have reinvested their profits in search of ever greater returns but the contemporary capitalist is distinguishable from previous generations by the global opportunities for investing money which the fluid, transnational flow of capital in the post-Fordist world allows.

Consequently, we are left with a system of social classification, which categorises post-Fordist Britain into four groups; the lumpenproletariat, the white-collar workers, the service class and the capitalists. These groups are not monolithic and they are internally differentiated in their styles of consumption and self-

understandings and, perhaps most importantly, by their differential engagement with and dependence on the private and public sectors⁷. Nor am I suggesting that the division between these groups is absolute, or at least, especially not in the spheres which constitute the core.

The relevance of the outline of the social constitution of British post-Fordism is that the balance of class forces in the 1970s and 1980s determined what economic and ideological projects could be implemented, although it should be noted that the ideological and economic project which was adopted (Thatcherism) itself contributed to the development of this social formation in dialectical fashion. The historic development of the class structure ensured that the project which would be adopted would preserve the affluence which had been attained during the long boom of the post-War period. In other words, on the level of class formation and relations, British post-Fordism did not constitute a break with the past, as it did in the sphere of economics and ideology, but was intrinsically informed by emergent class formations and relations.

C. The Ideology and Politics of Post-Fordist Britain

The post-War consensus reached a point of crisis in the 1970s, from which it could not recover itself within the confines of its own project. Gamble has argued that there were three potential strategies of renewal in the face of this crisis ; de-industrialisation or two forms of industrial regeneration programmes, which Gamble terms industrial regeneration I and II (Gamble 1983:123-4). 'Industrial regeneration I' involved restructuring the industrial base by destroying the trade unions and

reaffirming the power of management, while 'industrial regeneration II' referred to a restructuring which would involve the state and would be carried out with the collaboration of all classes (Gamble 1983:124). Similarly, Overbeek (1990) has suggested three potential solutions to the crisis of the 1970s. Overbeek argues that Britain could either ride out the storm of the crisis, restructure industry by means of state intervention or apply market solutions which would break the strength of labour and the state sector economy which were seen as major causes of the crisis (1990:154). Overbeek's first suggestion is somewhat fanciful as it was not really an option but his second and third options plainly parallel Gamble's first and third strategies.

Although there were three potential solutions to the crisis of the 1970s, it was the free market strategy which was adopted. The adoption of the free market seems to be explicable by reference to some of the arguments which have been made above. By the time the post-War settlement was in crisis, Britain's own curious consumption-led post-Fordism with its attendant class structure and balance of class power and compromise was already making itself felt. The free market strategy was adopted because it provided the most accessible means of defending emerging class interests in the face of intense economic competition. In particular, the free market strategy promised to defend the affluence which had been gained under Keynesianism,

Thatcherism famously articulated the nascent understandings and interests of this new social formation. Since Thatcherism was bound up with the development of a new post-Fordist social formation and since, as we shall see below, it was eventually applied directly to football, it is necessary to examine the nature of Thatcherism at some length, even though its connections with the concern of this thesis will be left

until later. For now, Thatcherism alone will be considered by examining the arguments of three principal sociological analyses, Hall's 'authoritarian populism', Jessop's argument for Thatcherism as statecraft and Gamble's notion of 'the free market and strong state'.

i. Hall's Authoritarian Populism

Hall's analysis of Thatcherism as 'authoritarian populism' was carried out within a Gramscian framework, focussing on the specifically ideological work which Thatcherism effected. For Hall, ideological factors are crucial because social practice is informed and legitimated by reference to a set of loose 'commonsensical' understandings, which comprise any culture's ideology.

Hall argues that the economic crisis of the 1970s threw notions which had been taken as commonsensical during the stable years of the post-War settlement into doubt. Consequently, the first and principal ideological task which faced Thatcherism was to clear away the old post-War commonsense, replacing it with a new framework of understandings. Once a new ideological framework was in place, British society and economy could then be transformed to overcome the crisis that it faced.

Hall argues that the principal element in the new commonsense, which Thatcherism was attempting to establish, was 'authoritarian populism'. By this Hall referred to the new repressiveness on the part of the State which Thatcherism advocated against the unemployed and the criminal. However, the distinctiveness and success of Thatcher lay in the fact that this new authoritarianism did not emanate from big business, keen to protect their interests and their property, nor from the state itself but was articulated as a response to the appeals of the 'little non-political person in the

street' (Hall and Jacques 1983:10). The authoritarianism of Thatcher expressed the fears of the middle class and affluent working class about rising crime. The growing fear of crime was due, in part, to the threat which property crimes now posed to the new working class. Authoritarian populism seemed to provide security in the uncertain world of 1970s. Those individuals who advocated state repression of the criminal classes (sometimes portrayed as synonymous with ethnic minorities) also resented the loss of income in the form of tax, which funded the welfare state. The ideological role of 'authoritarian populism' was to articulate the sentiments of a property owning 'people', whom it promised to defend.

ii. Thatcherism as Statecraft

Jessop has criticised Hall's notion of Thatcherism as 'authoritarian populism' on the grounds that it overemphasises the ideological function of Thatcherism without considering the actual policy decisions which Thatcher made while in office.

Consequently, Hall's analysis, Jessop argues,

tends to homogenise the impact and universalise the appeal of Thatcherism. (1988:74)

The AP [authoritarian populist] approach focusses on the ideological message of Thatcherism and thereby endows it with an excessively unified image⁸. (1988:74)

Jessop suggests that, since Thatcherism had an appeal across a wide social spectrum, it is wrong to foreground ideology as a critical element in this political phenomenon.

If we are to begin such an analysis, we must consider the appeal to Thatcher to individuals across a broad spectrum of social locations. Thatcherism must be seen less as a monolithic monstrosity and more as an alliance of disparate forces around a self-contradictory programme. (1988:74)

Jessop implies then that since the outlook of these groups was so different the alliance which Thatcherism forged between them could not have been at the level of ideas and values but only at the basic level of material interests, to which Thatcher played at different moments in her career. The changing nature of Thatcherism, dependent on the groups, whose support she was courting, is central to Jessop's arguments against Hall, for, if she was merely stitching together a pragmatic alliance that would sustain her in power, then Hall's notion of a hegemonic project seems to become problematic. Thus, Jessop divides Thatcherism into three main strategic stages to sustain his case against Hall. Firstly, Thatcherism emerged as a social movement defined in opposition to the post-war settlement between 1975-9, mobilising electoral support and winning crucial support from the Establishment. Secondly, there was a period of consolidation culminating in the first effective control of the Conservative Party, Cabinet and political agenda by Thatcherite forces between 1979 and 1982. Finally, there was a period of 'consolidated Thatcherism' in which the long-term transformation of British society was possible between 1983-7 (Jessop et al. 1988:61-66).

Related to this three-stage consolidation of power, Jessop proposes that there were three key sites in British society, in which Thatcher found support and on which she constructed her power-base over the three periods which Jessop has outlined (Jessop et al. 1988:90-2). The principal site in which Thatcher found support was the City which was pleased with her *laissez-faire* policy towards the financial markets (1988:90). Thatcher also found support in industry, although the support here was tempered and varied across different types of industry. Generally, industry welcomed Thatcher's policy of low inflation but were unhappy, in complete contrast to the City, with high interest rates, which put up the cost of borrowing for them (while helping

the banks to make a tidy profit) (1988:91). Specifically, Jessop argues, there was rapid growth⁹ in oil, agriculture, communications, finance and electrical engineering, promoting support for Thatcher in these sectors but there was no increase in the food, drink, tobacco, mining and retailing industries and, finally there was a decline in manufacturing and construction (1988:91). Finally, Thatcher faced divided opposition from organized labour (1988:92). The significance of this divided opposition was the fact that an un-ignorable proportion of the new, affluent (and principally Southern) working class supported Thatcher.

It seems self-evident that the success of Thatcherism (like any political project) was predicated on the support of a healthy alliance of influential social groups. I have tried to suggest that Thatcherism did not invent an alliance which was entirely absent before her entrance onto the political scene but, rather, she articulated certain alliances based on emergent class interests which were already nascent in the rotting timbers of the Keynesian welfare state. However, those class interests were not automatically given, independent of ideology, but rather the definition of interest is itself an ideological achievement ; even the most obvious economic self-interest is ideological because it is predicated on the belief in the primacy of the economic. Thus, in the end, even the most pragmatic form of statecraft must be informed by a guiding set of principles and values which define the 'pragmatic'. Those values and principles are ideological and, consequently, pragmatic statecraft finally becomes ideological. In the end then, pragmatism is merely another ideology but one that dare not speak its name.

Ultimately, Jessop is incapable of sustaining his argument that Thatcherism is merely pragmatic statecraft, which does no more than stitch together a structurally

determined alliance. In an unwary moment, he lets his guard fall to reveal that even he finally has to concede the crucial ideological element to Thatcherism (even in its most statist form). In discussing the origins of Thatcherism as a social movement (1988:60-1), Jessop argues that Thatcherism :

managed to link long standing but hitherto diffuse, unvoiced petty bourgeois resentment against the post-war settlement (PWS) with emergent working class discontent. (Jessop 1988:61)

The question of how such discontent was articulated is answered on the previous page when Jessop suggests that popular and electoral support was mobilised around key material issues (tax cuts, council house sales) as well as authoritarian populism. With the mention of 'authoritarian populism', Jessop pulls the rug out from beneath his own feet because he thereby concedes that these diverse groups did form an alliance by means of an outward expression of their understandings in the form of calls for harsher state repression of criminals and undesirables.

My rehabilitation of Hall through this critique of Jessop is not intended, however, to deny the shortcomings of Hall's notion of 'authoritarian populism'. Although it was a prominent feature of Thatcherite doctrine, the demand for a stronger state was only one strand in her thinking and it would certainly not have been sufficient to gain the support of the City and certain industrial sectors. Thatcherism also consisted of a belief in the free market, derived from monetarist theory. A serious account of Thatcherism must include that element and, consequently, it is necessary to turn to Gamble's work which incorporates both notions of the strong state and the free market under a single analytical framework.

iii. The free market and the strong state

Gamble has argued that in 1979 Thatcherism set itself five tasks. Those tasks were to restore the health of the economy and social life, to restore incentive, to uphold Parliament and the rule of law, to support family life and to strengthen Britain's defences (Gamble 1988:121). The first two projects were concerned with implementing a free economy while the last three were concerned with the creation of a strong state (1988:121).

Thatcherism's espousal of the free market and the strong state appear contradictory and, consequently, suggest that Thatcherism cannot be analysed as ideologically significant. A closer examination of these ideological elements will reveal their compatibility. The centrality of the notion of the free market in Thatcherite doctrine stems from the role that this monetarist ideology was given in breaking the post-War settlement. Much of the crisis in which Britain had found itself in the 1970s was due to the continual but failed attempts of government to manage the economy and, in particular, the unions. The doctrine of the free market relieved the government of this task and allowed capitalist interests to break the unions ; free market ideology, thereby, denied the validity of 'One-Nation Toryism', which had been a fundamental principle to the welfare state, relieving capital and the state of their duties towards the workers which had been expected of them during the post-War settlement. Furthermore, free market ideology favoured the capitalist (and also the service) classes because it promised to alleviate government restrictions over business, thereby creating the conditions for greater capital accumulation.

Once it is understood that the demand for a strong state was similarly related to class interests and understandings, the apparent contradiction between the appeal

for a strong state *and* a free market disappear. By dispensing with the 'One-Nation' strategy of the post-War settlement and by introducing economic policies which would cause unemployment, Thatcher would require a strong state to control the civil disorder that these measures would engender, in the form of demonstrations, riots and crime. The development of a strong state was essential for the continued security and prosperity both of large businesses which benefited from free market policies, and those individuals who worked in those businesses from the service class down to the affluent working class. The development of the strong state was designed to allay these classes' fears for their persons and property which were stimulated by the threat of the growing lumpenproletariat. In Gamble's analysis of Thatcherism, therefore, the authoritarian populist strand, which Hall gives pride of place, actually constitutes only one element in an ideological complex. In addition to the strong state's repressive defence of property, that state is essential to the smooth running of the free market, through its system of laws and its control over currency. Gamble describes a much fuller ideological picture of Thatcherism and he links that ideology up with more influential sections of society, than does Hall, who suggests that Thatcherism is nothing more than the outgrowth of the resentment of the 'little non political person in the street' (Hall and Jacques (eds.) 1983:10).

Gamble is not merely concerned, however, with ideology in the abstract. He also discusses the way in which this ideology is implemented into policy. To that end, Gamble divides Thatcher's premiership into two periods, which parallel Jessop's own schema. Gamble terms the first period from 1979 to 1982 'the slump', when Thatcher attempted to impose monetarist policies (1988:98) but was actually forced to increase government spending due to the recession (1988:105). Gamble's second period runs

from 1982 to 1987 and which he calls 'the recovery'. Gamble argues that by 1987, monetarism was quite unimportant as a guide to what the government was doing.

Gamble's account of the policies of the Thatcher governments and some of their discrepancies with Thatcherite rhetoric (principally the abandonment of monetarism) lead him to a position which is similar to that of Jessop. Gamble, finally, argues that Thatcherism is much better explained as statecraft than as ideology (1988:141). Despite the admirableness of concentrating on the specifics of Tory policy, the claims that Thatcherism was only a form of statecraft do not fit in well with the rest of Gamble's work, nor are they finally theoretically defensible. If the ideological element of Thatcherism was a mere side-issue to the real point of Thatcher's premiership - the pragmatic implementation of policy - then it is difficult for Gamble to justify the extent to which he goes to analyse the ideological formulations of the free market and strong state. Furthermore, if Thatcher was no more than a pragmatist, then, her extensive efforts to broadcast her project by means of speeches and the publication of policy documents by '(heavily funded) right-wing think-tanks, such as the Institute for Economic Affairs, seems hardly justifiable or indeed comprehensible. Furthermore, as I have already argued with reference to Jessop, the very suggestion of the possibility of an entirely pragmatic and un-ideological statecraft is itself unsustainable. The very decision to be practical (and it is not at all clear that Thatcher was inspired by mere practicality in policy making) requires a judgement based on standards (of what is practical) to be made. These standards are necessarily ideological as they are actively derived from interpretations.

Both Jessop and Gamble make the error of concluding that just because the Thatcher government was unable to implement certain aspects of their ideology, in

particular, monetarist reforms, this ideological strand was, therefore, irrelevant. Such a dismissal is unwarranted. Firstly, it ignores the potentially interesting work which the ideology has done in spite of its failure to become policy. For instance, the monetarist strand of Thatcherite ideology has not been ineffective in the reforms which the Tory governments of the 1980s were able to institute. Pure monetarist policy may well have been impossible to impose on the British economy but the central doctrine of monetarism, the free market, informed crucial reforms in the private and public sectors. The notion of the free market legitimated the government giving business a freer hand in its own affairs in the private sector, while (ironically) the application of the free market in the public sector has been the means by which ever greater governmental controls over spending have been brought about. The technicalities of Hayek's thought may be irrelevant to understanding Britain's response to the post-War crisis but his mediated influence on reforming policy in the 1980s in the guise of a commitment to the free market is difficult to deny.

Despite the eventual shortcomings of Gamble's analysis of Thatcherism (i.e. its retreat to mere pragmatism), Gamble's account nevertheless provides the fullest account of Thatcher's project, incorporating both ideological strands and linking them (admittedly not entirely satisfactorily) to the actuality of her policy. It is the definition of Thatcherism which will, consequently, be used with reference to the debates around the reformation of football in the mid- to late 1980s (in Part III) and, in which Thatcher played an important role.

Conclusion

This chapter has involved a lengthy discussion of the idiosyncratic transformation of British society to post-Fordism. The length of this discussion is justified on the grounds that the transformation of football cannot be understood without reference to these wider social developments. In particular, as we shall see in Chapters 6 to 9, Thatcherism, as the ideological and political expression of Britain's post-Fordist transformation, was particularly crucial to the reformation of football. The relevance of this account will become clear in the following chapters as we turn to the specifics of the development of the Premier League and the new consumption of football.

NOTES:

1 To all intents and purpose Lash and Urry's notion of disorganised capitalism is synonymous with post-Fordism. By disorganised capitalism they refer to an economy where the flows of capital are so rapid, diverse and global that no single nation-state can control its own economy any more. Instead, multinational corporations flexibly move capital around the globe in search of cheap labour and lucrative markets.

2 The embourgeoisement debate concerned itself with the issue of whether the working class were becoming more middle class or not. The following texts were important in the debates: Abrams (1960), Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1969), Young and Willmott (1986), Roberts (1983), N. Dennis et al. (1956), Jackson (1968), Klein (1970), Anderson (1966). Frankenburg (1970), Hoggart (1957), Zweig (1962).

3 The Keynesian settlement collapsed because of ; (a) the long-term decline of the British economy and its over-reliance on the City (Landes 1989:326-358, Gamble and Walton 1976), (b) world inflation and the oil crisis (Gamble and Walton 1976, McDowell 1989), (c) the impasse of the corporate settlement between unions, the state and capital, and (d) the fragmentation of the mass consumer market (Piore and Sabel 1984:191, 192, 252, Lee 1993:104)

4 Recent 'Essex girl' jokes in the City have been concerned with re-asserting distinctions by the traditional white collar workforce and the service class against the influx of female workers of working class origin into formerly middle class employment.

5 I take it that by private sector middle class, Savage et al. refer to what others call the service class.

6 The mentioning of Sir John Hall, who has used financial capital, to build the MetroCentre, a major shopping mall on Tyneside, is strategic as a secondary project has involved the transformation of Newcastle United (see Chapter 10).

7 See Edgell and Duke (1991) for an interesting, though problematic, discussion of the effects of the division between private and public sectors on class formation.

8 Nowhere does Hall suggest that ideologies are unified. Indeed, his notion of 'commonsense' as a background resource to be drawn upon by social agents, and which is derived from Gramsci, explicitly emphasises its partial and incoherent character.

9 Jessop provides no definition of exactly what he means by 'growth'. I assume he is referring to output.

PART II

THE PREHISTORY OF THE PREMIER LEAGUE

CHAPTER 3

THE MAXIMUM WAGE AND THE RETAIN AND TRANSFER SYSTEMS

In this chapter, the analysis of the development of the Premier League and the new consumption of football begins in earnest. That analysis will traverse the terrain of political economy, the discursive struggles of the 1980s and finally the new forms of production and consumption of football in the 1990s. This will be informed throughout by the theoretical and historical arguments of the previous chapters.

This chapter examines the particular changes in the Football League's regulations with regard to the contracts between professional players and their clubs, which have historically determined the nature of labour relations within football. This chapter attempts to highlight a crucial connection between the conjunctural discourses within football which demanded the reform of labour relations and the wider organic development of British society. In particular, the social development which was central to the discourses which demanded reform was the growth of affluence (especially among the working class) as a result of the implementation of Keynesianism, the penetration of the mass produced goods of American Fordism into domestic markets and the related long boom of the post-War period. The conjunctural discourses within the game, principally articulated by Jimmy Hill, self-consciously situated football within this wider social context in order to demonstrate the

inappropriateness of labour relations of football in the light of the wider social formation.

From the establishment of the League in 1888, the contracts between players and clubs were regulated by three Football League rules : the maximum wage, the retention and the transfer systems. The maximum wage was self-explanatory; the League set a wage above which no player could be paid. This wage did increase over time to maintain parity with other employment but it was never excessive.

The retention system was rather more complex and was, in actuality, intrinsically bound up with the transfer system. However, although the two systems were intimately related in practice - they were designed to maintain team stability within the League clubs - they were, at the same time, formally separate. The retention system ruled that all clubs had to send the registrations (contracts) of every player to the Football League by the closing day of the season (Football League, rule 62, 1959:103). At the same time, the clubs submitted a list of players who were available for transfer to the League. The League sent that list out to all the clubs in the League, who would apply to the League for further details if they were interested in procuring the registration of any player on the Transfer list (Football League, rule 62.d 1959:103-4).

The difficulty with the retention system arose when a player wanted to leave a club but that club refused to put that player on the transfer list at the end of the season. Under the League's retention rule, the club was able to keep that player on and register him, against that player's will. Furthermore, even if a player was put on the transfer list, that player had no say in the destination of his transfer. The club had the

final say in whether a player was retained or transferred and, if transferred, to which club he should go.

Although draconian, the rationale behind these regulations was comprehensible. The rules were designed to create stability in the League ; it was difficult for players to move under the retain and transfer system and clubs could, therefore, rely on the fact that they would have a stable team throughout the season. Secondly, the maximum wage minimised the costs of football and, therefore, maintained at least some parity between the big city clubs, which were financially advantaged by the large attendances they could attract, and the small town clubs. The Football League regarded at least some degree of equality as desirable since it enhanced competition within the League; potential challengers for the title could theoretically come from any city or town.

This chapter attempts to account for the complete reform of a system (within the period between 1961 to 1978), which had regulated labour relations in professional football from 1888 to 1960. This transformation of labour laws in football is fundamental to any explanation of football's revolutionary decade since the reforms initiated a trajectory of political economic development which created the organic conditions in which the Premier League and the related new consumption of football was possible. The abolition of the maximum wage and the reformation of the retain and transfer systems introduced an inflationary economic climate into professional football, which considerably strained the finances of clubs. However, these inflationary pressures had differential effects on the League as the big city clubs were financially better equipped, with their larger attendances, to cope with the new economic climate. The transformation of labour relations from 1960 to 1978 created

the horizon of possibility for the development of the Premier League because this transformation initiated the economic divide between the big city clubs and the rest of the League. As I shall attempt to show in Chapter 5, that informal divide was gradually formalised throughout the 1980s, until the economic interests and autarky of the bigger clubs became so great that they could contemplate and effect a complete separation from the structure of the League.

This account of the reformation of labour relations in English professional football analyses the conjunctural moment in the early 1960s and the mid-1970s. The reform of labour relations was demanded at these moments because those relations were increasingly viewed as at odds with the wider understandings, which informed the increasingly affluent post-War Britain.

1. The Maximum Wage

A. Under-the-Table Payments and European Competition

The abolition of the maximum wage was initiated not by the players but, ironically, by the chairmen themselves. From the mid-1950s, it became apparent that it was not uncommon practice for the chairmen of professional football clubs to breach the maximum wage regulation informally by making under-the-table payments to their better players to induce them to stay at the club and to perform at their best. The extent of these illegal payments was revealed with particular clarity in 1957. In that year, the Football League charged six Sunderland players with accepting illegal payments which breached the maximum wage (rule 60 in the League's handbook). The players were threatened with expulsion from professional football. In an attempt to prevent this punishment, Jimmy Hill, who had just been voted chairman of the

footballers' union, visited clubs across the country in order to obtain as many signatures as possible from other professional footballers, admitting that they, too, had accepted illegal payments (Hill 1961:14-15, Harding 1991:270-3, Wagg 184:104-5). In the end, Hill collected 250 signatures in just under a week (Hill 1961:15) and he presented these to the League. The revelation of the widespread abuse of Rule 60 rendered any punishment which the League might mete out to the six Sunderland players unjust since it was indefensible to prosecute only six individuals when the League had knowledge of more than two hundred others, guilty of the same crime. The case of the Sunderland Six demonstrated the contradictory (if not hypocritical) position of the chairmen and ultimately undermined the position which they adopted against the players' union. As Matt Busby, the famous manager of Manchester United, noted, the illegal payments by chairmen to players made a mockery of the wage system in the late 1950s (Douglas 1973:59) ¹.

In addition to under-the-table payments, the maximum wage was threatened by the development of a European transfer market. European clubs, and particularly large Italian clubs, looked to the English Football League for potential signings. These Italian clubs had far more money than their English counterparts and the substantially larger wages which they could promise were a serious threat to English football clubs from the late 1950s ; John Charles was a notable signing in the 1950s. If English clubs were to retain their players, the chairmen (and the Football League authorities overseeing the game) had to counter this potentially serious threat from European sides. The maximum wage became increasingly untenable in the light of the English chairmen's desire for success and the competition for players which they increasingly faced from other European leagues (Jimmy Hill, personal interview: 13/3/94). The

breaching of the maximum wage by the chairman and the threat posed by the European transfer market was crucial to its eventual abolition because it added crucial weight to Hill's conjunctural discourse.

B. Jimmy Hill and the Discourses of 'Affluence'

The abolition of the maximum wage was finally predicated on the general, though not complete, acceptance that this rule was incompatible with the understandings which were current within the increasing affluence of the Keynesian welfare state. The fundamental, organic changes which British society had undergone in the post-War years rendered the maximum wage anomalous ; it had become, in short, an anachronism (Wagg 1984:71, Walvin 1986:32).

In conducting the players' opposition to the maximum wage, the historical anomalousness of the maximum wage was a central tenet in the argument which Hill skilfully publicised in the press. It is worth considering Hill's arguments in some detail as he was the chairman of the PFA and was widely regarded at the time as being responsible for the successful campaign waged on the players' behalf.

Professional footballers, who were, by and large drawn from working class backgrounds, had traditionally earned a little more than other members of that class. Yet this wage was small enough to ensure that players remained as well known and respected local figures, living in the same neighbourhoods as supporters. The professional footballers' larger wage-packet was seen as legitimate, in the light of the manifest skill of the footballer and the fact that his employment was extremely uncertain, entirely dependent on form and fitness.

By the mid-1950s, the professional players' earnings began to slip below those of the average worker. The average player in the pre-abolition era, earned £8 a week which was £2 less than the average industrial wage (Harding 1991:256). The long boom of the post-War period and the growth of markets for American mass produced consumer goods, combined with the Keynesian commonsense that workers had to be encouraged to consume, had brought about a rise in workers' wages, which had, in turn, dramatically increased the affluence of the working class from the late 1950s. This new affluence of the workers left professional footballers anachronistically underpaid.

The increased wages of the working class under the post-War settlement was a central feature in Hill's argument against the maximum wage. Hill argued that professional footballers had effectively subsidised the game for the working class for many years by facilitating the persistence of low admission prices through their acceptance of the maximum wage (Hill 1961:129). However, since the average industrial wage was £14 in the late-fifties whereas it had been only £3 before the War, Hill argued that admission prices should be increased to three shillings to support an increase in players' wages ; no one could complain about paying three shillings a fortnight when they earned £14², reasoned Hill (1961:129).

In all fairness, just think a moment and work out how much your football costs you on a Saturday afternoon. I know how much you might pay on London Transport or local Corporation transport going to the ground. If you call in at the local on the way to the match and you've got two or three pals with you, it's going to cost you a few shillings. (Hill 1961:129)

Hill concludes:

if you are honest you will admit that the three shillings which you pay to stand on the terracing represents only a small part of the amount of money you spend in connection with attending a football match. (Hill 1961:130)

The new affluence of the working class rendered the maximum wage anomalous in Hill's eyes because they could now afford to pay more and, indeed, these individuals were quite willing to pay more for other indulgences such as beer, travel and food. In other words, Hill's argument for the abolition for the maximum wage was that football had become a commodity like any other. Since the working class had become wealthy enough to afford other luxury commodities, the price of football should be brought into line with other prices.

However, Hill did not merely want better salaries which would bring footballers back into line with the affluence of the new working class. On the contrary, Hill envisaged a new position for the footballer in English culture which was related to Hill's notion of the type of commodity which football had become in post-War Britain. Hill insisted that the footballer was an entertainer and football was part of the entertainment business, whose market equals were television, cinema and theatre. As an entertainer, producing commodities whose price accorded with the rest of the entertainment industry, Hill suggested that the footballer should not only be far better paid than they were under the maximum wage, but that they should be accorded the respect which was due to other entertainers as professionals.

In his argument for the reform of players' conditions, Hill was always quick to stress that the players were not after an 'extra tuppence a week' (1961:25) but, rather, that the PFA was attempting to establish principles. Hill argued that the players were pursuing two basic freedoms (1961:36). The appeal to principles was partially a rhetorical tactic which served to legitimate the player's claims; they would gain little public sympathy if they were seen as merely pursuing more money. However, in the

light of the fact that Hill complained bitterly about the status of football players (e.g. Hill 1961:126, 136), this appeal to principles can be interpreted as more than a mere rhetorical trope. Rather, it revealed that Hill envisaged a new position for footballers in British society, which was related to the fact that he regarded football as part of the entertainment business. Through the appeal to have their labour relations mediated by principles, Hill sought a relationship between player and club which conformed much more closely to the conditions of employment which operated for the professional classes than to the working class. Clearly, Hill and the players did want better pay but they wanted better pay as recognition of the fact that they were no longer workers but professional entertainers, who both produced and were commodities. As commodities and commodity producers, their salaries (and status) should be set by their value on the market in comparison with the other commodities of the economy. For Hill, then, the maximum wage graded against the conditions under which most of the working class existed under the Keynesian welfare state and the new affluence which American Fordism was said to be bringing. But, more importantly, Hill posited a new position for football in this new social formation ; rather than being a mere site of local solidarity, in which local class relations were mediated, Hill regarded the proper position of football to be alongside the broader entertainment industry. Football should operate according to the norms which were applied within that industry.

C. Parliament, the Press and Public Opinion

In order for a conjunctural discourse to effect a social reformation, it is necessary that, firstly, its recommendations are in line with the general direction of organic developments and, secondly, that it gains wide social acceptance. Of course,

the social acceptance of a discourse is related to its relevance to organic developments since a discourse is more likely to be accepted if it is regarded as reflecting contemporary social experience. In other words, if a discourse articulates the half-conscious and emergent understandings and experiences of a nascent social formation and organic development, then it is likely to be accepted

In the first section of this discussion of the maximum wage (1.A), I suggested that Hill's discourse was assisted by the fact it attacked a rule, already superseded within football ; chairmen informally ignored the maximum wage. The foundation of his discourse in these organic transformations crucially assisted in its reception across the wider social formation, which would determine its successful implementation or its relegation to history.

In particular, if the union was to be successful in abolishing the maximum wage, then the acceptance of Hill's argument in Parliament and the press (Jimmy Hill, personal interview 13/3/94) was critical. These institutions have a privileged defining position³ in British society and are able to exert a substantial influence over public opinion. If the PFA could mobilise wide (though nebulous) public opinion behind their arguments, then the chairmen would be placed under very serious political and moral pressure.

There is significant evidence of the wide social acceptance of Hill's argument by Parliament, the press and the public. Mr Goodhart, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Beckenham, spoke out against the maximum wage in the House of Commons;

Footballers are bound to their employers by contractual conditions that would have been rejected by a snort of contempt by any intelligent young apprentice in the Middle Ages. (*The Times* 22/11/60:4f)

The Times then supported the discursive line which Hill (and Goodhart) traversed ; the maximum wage was anachronistic in relation to the contemporary organisation of industry and its labour relations.

Finally, although there is no documentary evidence of the informal discussions, in which public opinion is expressed and it is a quite standard rhetorical tactic to appeal to an assumed 'public opinion' to legitimate arguments which are far from widely held, it is possible to discern some acceptance of Hill's discourse across the wider social formation. Hill, himself, proposed that it would have been impossible for the players' to have won their dispute without the support of the public (whom he argued had been influenced by the press) (Jimmy Hill, personal interview 13/3/94). Hill made the same point in his own written account of the dispute (1961:167). Furthermore Alan Hardaker, the Secretary of the League from 1957-79, certainly was adamant that the PFA had only won because they had been able to manipulate public opinion in their support (Harding 1991:277) ⁵.

By drawing on the social experience and understandings which framed Keynesian Britain, the players had been able to highlight the anachronism of the maximum wage and successfully communicate this anomaly to the wider social formation. Individuals and groups at critical sites in British society concurred with the players' interpretation of the rule. Under this discursive pressure, allied with the serious threat of the strike organised by Hill for January 21st 1961, the chairman finally agreed to the Professional Footballers' Association's demands and rescinded Rule 60, the maximum wage. On 19th January 1961, the Football League agreed to

abolish the maximum wage. This abolition was formally entered into the Football League handbook at the AGM on 3rd June 1961.

2. George Eastham and the Retention System

Although the maximum wage was abolished in 1961, this was only one of the 'two freedoms' which Hill had demanded in order to bring the labour relations in professional football into line with those in other industries in affluent post-War Britain and, as I suggested above, to transform the status of the football player in a quite radical fashion. The retention system, which tied players to clubs against their will and gave them no say in their destinations if they were transferred, was not overturned.

The failure of the PFA to force the chairman to reform the retention system by negotiation compelled the union to challenge Rules 26 and 62 by the law. In order to challenge the rule legally, the PFA required a test case. Conveniently, at the time of the disputes, Newcastle United had invoked the retention clause against George Eastham. At the end of the 1959-60 season, Eastham notified the club that he wanted a transfer to a London club. Newcastle refused to let him go and, according to the retention system, effectively prevented him playing football ; Eastham was on Newcastle's registration list and could, therefore, play for no one else. Eastham refused to be retained and spent some months working in the business of a friend in London. On 18th November 1960, Newcastle conceded and passed Eastham's transfer to Arsenal.

The PFA seized the opportunity which Eastham's case presented and, although the dispute had been settled, the rule which had caused the dispute was still in force.

Furthermore, the PFA could justify the case on the grounds that Eastham had lost earnings as a result of the dispute. Eastham was the 'innocent victim', as Hill put it (Personal interview, 13/3/94), of the PFA's legal attempt to reform the retention system and, as such, the PFA paid Eastham's legal costs and took the risk that if the case was lost, it was the PFA who stood to lose face (Jimmy Hill, personal interview 13/3/94).

Eastham's case against Newcastle United was eventually brought in 1963 and, after five days of hearings, Judge Wilberforce ruled that the retention system amounted to an illegal restraint of trade. For the most part, Wilberforce's argument was concerned only with logically answering the five ; (a) were the rules in restraint of trade? (b) if so were the restraints more than was reasonably necessary for the protection of the FA, the Football League and the clubs? (c) had the court jurisdiction to declare the system invalid? (d) if so should the court exercise this jurisdiction? (e) did Eastham have a right to damages (*The Times* 5/7/63:9)? Although Wilberforce proceeded cautiously throughout, precise in his logic and his care to consider all the interests concerned, his judgement had to refer to contemporary practices in order to make a ruling. Wilberforce's ruling finally referred, in line with the other conjunctural discursive interventions, to the understandings now prevalent in the wider social formation.

It was said that this system, the combined system of registration, retention and transfer fees, or something like it, is operated in all professional leagues and has been so operated for a long time. This is claimed as evidence that those who know best consider it to be in the general interest of the game. I do not accept this line of argument. The system is an employers' system, set up in an industry where the employers have succeeded in establishing a monolithic front all over the world. (*All England Law Reports* 1963:150)

The crucial word in this passage is 'monolithic' for in using that word, Wilberforce brings to the fore a whole set of connotations about antiquity and about the attitude of employers to their workers which was out of kilter with the principles of the Keynesian welfare state. In short, Wilberforce affirmed Hill's ⁶ arguments of the anachronism of the players' conditions.

Following Judge Wilberforce's ruling, the Football League and the PFA reached a full agreement on the new form of the retention system on 26th March 1964. The retention system operated from this date so that at the end of the first period of a contract between a player and his club, the club had the right to an option to renew the contract for a period not exceeding the initial period. At the end of the second period the club had the right to make an offer to renew the player's contract at not less than the same terms and conditions existing previously unless it was mutually agreed otherwise. Furthermore, the player was now given the right to appeal to the Football League Management Committee, if he was dissatisfied with his contract and wanted a transfer against the club's wishes (*The Times* 26/3/64:4d), Football League Handbook 1964-5, rule 60: 102-6).

This system was an improvement on the excessive restrictiveness of the original retention system but it was, at the same time, a long way from what Hill envisaged as the second of his two freedoms. The clubs still had the upper hand over the players' employment contract. The full freedom of contract would only come into existence some fourteen years later. In 1974, the Heath government commissioned a report into football by the Commission of Industrial Relations, which recommended the complete reformation of the retention system. This reformation was not instituted

until 1978, when the transfer system was also reformed and 'freedom of contract' for professional players was achieved.

3. The Transfer System

The debate over the transfer system, on whose resolution the final abolition of the retention system rested, was fundamentally concerned with whether to adopt a multiplier or free market method of calculating transfer fees. The multiplier system was proposed by the PFA and was designed to limit inflation within the game ; it valued players according to age, wage, division and standing (Inglis 1988:279). The problem with the multiplier system was that it could not always be depended upon to calculate a satisfactory compensation fee ; a young prospect from Halifax might be undervalued while a Manchester United reserve player might be overvalued (Inglis 1988:279).

These potential mis-calculations discouraged the chairmen from supporting the multiplier system, since it threatened to undervalue their own assets, while overvaluing those of other clubs, whose registrations they might wish to purchase. Consequently, the clubs voted against the multiplier system. At the EGM of the Football League in March 1978, the retention system was formally abolished and a transfer system with its compensatory fees was finally agreed upon (Inglis 1988:282). If a player was transferred during his term of contract then a fee must be paid which was agreed upon by both clubs. At the end of a contract the player could also be transferred, with a compensation fee paid in the same manner, or the player could be re-signed at the same or better terms. If the terms were worse the player was entitled to a free transfer. Any dispute over transfer fees between clubs was referred to

the League's Appeal Committee (Inglis 1988:282). These rules were eventually ratified on 13th April 1978, thus introducing freedom of contract into football (Harding 1991:315).

The significance of freedom of contract, with its free market system of transfer fees, was twofold. Firstly, 'freedom of contract' was achieved by relating the practices in football to those which were interpreted as normal across the wider formation of British society and was generally regarded as bringing football into line with contemporary social relations.

freedom of contract gave him [the footballer] the same rights as any other professional employee after 80 years of waiting. (Inglis 1988:283)

English football, as a ritual through which individuals express understandings and negotiate social relations, finally communicated notions of labour relations which were appropriate to contemporary Britain.

Secondly, the basis of this new freedom of contract (with its market-determined transfer fees) augmented by the already spiralling wages after the abolition of the maximum wage hugely escalated costs within football and stimulated rapid and debilitating inflation. The steeply rising cost of football did not affect, however, the clubs of the Football League equally. On the contrary, the smaller clubs were particularly disadvantaged by both the rise in transfer fees and wages. It was noted in the definition of the transfer fee at the start of this chapter, that the purpose of this fee was to compensate smaller clubs for the potential loss of players to bigger clubs and thereby limit potential inequalities between clubs in the League. However, the Chester Report of 1968 demonstrated that, despite the logic of this argument, transfer fees did not, in fact, flow down the League as they were originally intended but rather, by the 1960s, they tended to flow between the biggest clubs (Dept of Education and Science

1968:79). The smaller clubs did not substantially benefit by having young players bought from them, while they did suffer the general inflation of fees. Similarly, the inexorable rise of wages differentially affected the small and bigger clubs, for, although the labour costs of the big city clubs were, of course, larger than those of the smaller clubs, those labour costs were proportionally smaller for the big clubs than the smaller clubs. The financial problems (and, indeed, crisis) which the abolition of the maximum wage and freedom of contract would introduce into football was not lost on even those players who benefited from the earlier reform :

Freedom of contract and the abolition of maximum wages are twin evils. Wage ceilings could have been raised considerably without taking the roof off and freedom of contract was crazy and just added to the problems. (Danny Blanchflower quoted in Rippon 1982:102)

Derek Dougan, the PFA chairman at the time of the introduction of freedom of contract, was vitriolic in his criticism of the free market transfer system, arguing that it was the root of all the financial problems in football (1981:25-6).

The profound financial pressure which the abolition of the maximum wage and freedom of contract exerted *differentially* on the Football League and, of which Blanchflower complained, is demonstrated by statistical evidence. Chester's *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Structure and Finance* (1983) recorded that whereas the wages of the First Division clubs amounted to 56.4 per cent of those top clubs' gate receipts, the wage bill of the Third and Fourth Division clubs exceeded their gate receipts ⁷.

The freedom of contract in 1978 facilitated the development of a more open and flexible transfer market and players began to move from club to club with a greater regularity than had formerly been the case. Since there were more transfers and

the competitive chairmen freely bid for the players that became available (often through the temptation of higher salaries), there was rapid inflation in the transfer market from 1978 to the early 1980s. The inflation which the free market of transfer fees introduced into football was temporarily halted by a collapse in the transfer market in 1982-3 (Rippon 1982:149) but this halt was only brief and transfers have risen inexorably since that date so that in January 1995, Manchester United paid £6 million (along with the exchange of a player worth an estimated £1m) for Newcastle's Andy Cole and during the close season in 1995, Stan Collymore was transferred from Nottingham Forest to Liverpool for £8 million.

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to analyse the conjunctural moments in the early 1960s and (more briefly) in the mid-1970s when football was set upon a particular political economic trajectory which eventually created conditions for the revolution of the game between 1985 and 1995. I have argued that this trajectory was established as the result of particular discursive interventions which related football to the wider social formation in the early 1960s. This discursive articulation was effective because it successfully communicated the inappropriateness of labour relations in football to wider public opinion, partly by means of the mediating institutions of Parliament and the press.

Interestingly, not only did the conjunctural moments align football with the wider social formation but, this alignment, had political economic effects within football which paralleled those taking place in that wider social formation. Just as the decades from the 1960s to the 1980s were characterised by a gradual attrition of

smaller companies, with a concomitant decline of employment and the relegation of a fraction of society to the margins, so the Football League and its players underwent a similar process ; as wages have risen, the number of professional players has increasingly declined. Those that are still fully professional are better-off than ever but many have been forced to go part-time ; the core is more secure than ever, while the periphery has been marginalised. Similarly, although the ritual appeal of the football club has softened market forces - banks have been loathe to foreclose and businessmen keen to invest - clubs have begun to be forced out of business in the 1990s (e.g. Aldershot) and have not been replaced by other clubs. Furthermore, it seems highly likely that most second and third division clubs will have to employ only part-time professionals by the end of the century if they are to avoid complete liquidation.

Informed by the same understandings which were central to the social formation of post-War Keynesian Britain, football has followed an organic political economic trajectory which has paralleled that wider formation. As we saw in the last chapter, the Keynesian consensus collapsed in the 1970s to be replaced by a post-Fordist social formation, which was substantially created through Thatcherism. The collapse of post-War football would occur in 1985, nearly a decade after its counterpart in wider society and, just as football's organic trajectory up to that collapse had paralleled wider social developments, so would its renewal follow the post-Fordism and Thatcherite path, already being generally pursued in many social spheres by the mid-1980s. However, before we can go on to analyse that transformation, it is necessary to discuss some further aspects of the pre-history of the Premier League.

NOTES:

1 See also Eamonn Dunphy's *A Strange Kind of Glory: Matt Busby and Manchester United* where he describes how it was impossible for a manager, of even Matt Busby's standing, to avoid being drawn into under the table payments.

2 There is a slight anomaly here between Harding and Hill's figures. Harding suggests that the average wage was £10, whereas Hill suggests it was £14. The precise figures are not so important as the fact that due to the transformation in working class living standards professional footballers felt themselves to have dropped behind in terms of pay.

3 Hall et al. argue that certain individuals are positioned (by the media) in privileged positions and are called upon with disproportionate regularity for their interpretation of events. Consequently, these individuals are able to frame the understanding of these events and to influence the agenda in response to that event (Hall et al. 1978:57-59)

4 Due to the availability of resources, I was only able to examine *The Times'* reports on the abolition of the maximum wage. This would clearly be inadequate if this chapter was purely concerned with media representations of the debate. However, this section ('Parliament, the Press and Public Opinion') is intended only as a sketch to demonstrate that Hill's discourse gained wide acceptance.

5 There is some evidence that public opinion was not always entirely supportive of the players. Eastham wrote in his autobiography that his wife 'sat in the buses and heard strangers saying, "That bloody Eastham who does he think he is?" ' (1964:67).

6 Wilberforce supported the transfer system as he felt it assisted small clubs (*All England Law Reports* 1963:149)

7 Harding cites Dabscheck's findings to argue that the maximum wage and freedom of contract did not have any demonstrable effect on the finances of League clubs. According to Harding, Dabscheck has revealed that players' wages for the years 1981, 1982 and 1983 represented only 48 per cent, 46 per cent and 43 per cent of club expenditure respectively, while earlier research concerning the seasons 1955-6, 1965-6 and 1980-1 put the share at 43 per cent, 43 per cent and 49 per cent respectively (Harding 1991:336). Despite the obvious counter intuitiveness of these claims, there are several serious doubts about the figures which Harding attributes to Dabscheck. Firstly, Harding gives no precise reference for these figures. Of the two works by Dabscheck cited in Harding's bibliography, I have been only able to find one ('Defensive Manchester', 1979) which contains no such figures. Furthermore, the title of the other piece, 'A Man or Puppet, the FA's Attempt to Destroy the AFPU' (1990), does not look promising. Also, the figures directly contradict both those cited by the Chester Report (1983:21) and Inglis (1988:306-7). Finally, one of the later figures, supposedly showing the economic irrelevance of the freedom of contract is itself irrelevant to this argument as it is a figure from 1980, after the developments whose effects are the issue. In the light of these points, I would suggest that Harding's figures are incorrect. Perhaps, the fact that his work is intended as a celebration of the players' union has made him slightly over-enthusiastic in his defence of the players' demands for higher wages and improved contracts.

CHAPTER 4

SPONSORSHIP

By the late 1970s, the combined effects of the abolition of the maximum wage, the eventual establishment of freedom of contract and the free market in transfer fees was putting football clubs in England under serious financial pressure. Sponsorship became one of the means by which clubs could alleviate some of the worst effects of these new financial pressures but the effects of sponsorship extended beyond a mere alleviation of this pressure. Economically, sponsorship (like the abolition of the maximum wage) had a differential financial impact on the clubs of the English Football League, benefiting the big clubs much more than the lower league sides. This differential economic effect has worsened the small clubs' financial position in relation to the big clubs through the mechanism of the transfer system. In addition, the introduction of sponsorship was an important symbolic moment in football, linking football explicitly with the wider development of post-Fordism in Britain and thereby transforming the meaning of the sport.

If sponsorship was a conjunctural solution to an organic political economic crisis, but one which then played into the very organic developments it was partially designed to alleviate, it is necessary to consider the nature of these political economic changes which precipitated the adoption of sponsorship. In the last chapter, one crucial element in this organic process was discussed - the transformation of labour relations in football - but from the 1960s, there was also a decline and re-distribution of attendances at League games. This change in the pattern of attendance constituted a

second organic political economic strand which was both crucial to the eventual transformation of the game and to the introduction of sponsorship.

1. The Declining Attendance of League Football

The 1948-9 season constituted the high water mark in attendance at Football League games - 41.3 million fans watched football that season - but from then until 1986, excepting a slight bulge after 1966-7, when England won the World Cup, attendances fell steadily so that in the 1985-6 season attendances were only 16.5 million (Football Trust 1991:9). This decline in attendance, as might be expected, was not uniform across the League. Rather, the Third and Fourth division teams bore the brunt of this decline in patronage. From 1960 to 1974, there was a decline of 11 per cent in attendance at First Division games but in the Second, the decline was 27 per cent, in the Third 42 per cent and in the fourth 49 per cent (CIR 1974:7). Thus by 1974, the average attendance in the First Division (28,290) was seven times that of the Fourth Division (3,918). Other statistics tell a similar story. During the 1960s, attendances for the top two divisions rose by 15 per cent and 7.8 per cent respectively, whereas, the Third and Fourth Division both showed a decline, of 11.7 and 24.5 per cent respectively (Chester 1983:14). During the 1980-1 season, the average attendances of the Divisions stood at 52 per cent (11.4 million) for the First, 24 per cent (5.2 million) for the Second 17 per cent (3.6 million) for the Third, and 8 per cent (1.7 million) for the Fourth out of a total attendance of 21.9 million. During the 1980s, the difference between the attendance of the First and Second Division declined so that, by 1990-1 season, the First Division had 44 per cent of total attendances while the Second Division claimed 32 per cent. However, the two lower

divisions' attendances did not significantly improve and in 1990-1, they recorded attendances of 14 and 9 per cent respectively (The Football Trust 1991:9).

The decline of attendance within the League, particularly within the Fourth Division, has been offset by the increase in admission prices but this compensatory device has again inevitably been of less effect in the lower divisions, as they have had smaller and smaller attendances from which to extract raised admission prices (Chester 1983:14). For example, the gross receipts of League games of ten First Division clubs, which the Chester Report of 1983 analysed, had risen by a factor of eleven between 1958-59 and 1981-82, whereas the ten Fourth Division clubs which the report analysed had risen by less than three and a half times (Chester 1983:16). Thus the average receipts from the home League matches of the ten First Division clubs during the 1981-82 season was twenty-one times that of the ten Fourth Division clubs (Chester 1983:16).

It is, perhaps, worth speculating as to why attendances have fallen at League matches and why, in particular, these attendances have affected the lower divisions disproportionately. The extraordinarily high attendances which were recorded in the 1940s are certainly partly explicable by the lack of any other leisure amenities for the working class. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, this austerity began to be swept away as the affluence of American Fordism became available in Britain from the late 1950s. The new leisure pursuits which Fordism offered, many of which were situated in the luxury of new homes, began to make the terrace unattractive as a Saturday afternoon pursuit. However, what seems crucial in the decline and bias in attendance was the gradual enfranchisement of the population with the car.

The effect of the car and new roads which facilitated easy and rapid travel to football clubs has been noted by Sloane (1980) and Bale (1989). Sloane argues that the opening of a new motorway in Lancashire (the M6) in 1973 changed the proportion of supporters watching matches involving the two Manchester and two Liverpool clubs so that more fans came from the wider Lancashire area. The road facilitated the development of support from a wider geographical area for the big teams, while draining support away from local town teams (Sloane 1980:27). Bale confirms the point (Bale 1989:93). In 1951, there were 7 million supporters in Lancashire of whom 40 per cent watched the 'Big Four' - Manchester City and United, Everton and Liverpool. In 1961, there were 6 million supporters but 50 per cent now watched the big clubs and by 1971, a full 66 per cent of Lancashire's 5.5 million supporters watched these four clubs (Bale 1989:96).

Television's concentration on the top clubs (Dept of Education and Science 1968:123) has dovetailed with the developing use of the car because the television provided the opportunity of the big clubs to establish identifying links with individuals across the country, while the car provided those individuals with the means of attending the big city grounds rather than their local club (Chester 1983:4-5). The car offered fans the choice of a day at a glamorous event of national importance, shared with tens of thousands, or an afternoon at the bleak and half empty grounds of a local town team.

2. The Sponsorship Debate

A. Discourses for Reform

As I have suggested in the previous chapter, the economic climate in which football operated had been radically transformed by the late 1970s. That transformation rendered the commonsensical understanding of the proper form of football's economic practice inadequate. Football could simply no longer support itself through its traditional means of the gate. I want to examine three particular discursive moments articulated by important figures in the late 1970s and early 1980s which exemplify the arguments for the reformation of the economic practice in football.

When Derek Dougan, the former PFA chairman and Kettering Town manager, took the important historical step of introducing shirt advertisements into football, he was also impelled to make the first discursive appeals for the need for a new commonsense in football. He recorded some of his arguments in a book which he later wrote, outlining his criticisms of football (Dougan 1981).

I knew how sports in other countries had benefited from sponsorship schemes, while deep-seated Puritanism and suspicion had prevented similar schemes being embraced in Britain. Die-hards were still insisting that commerce and sport should not mix, that if sport became dependent on commercial involvements it would lose its independence. My own view was that if it remained aloof and tried to go it 'alone', it would lose its lifeblood. (1981:47)

Dougan continued

It seemed to be good sense to attract sponsors, thereby guaranteeing funds when the turnstiles cannot click enough to wipe out overdrafts and debts. (1981:47)

Significantly Dougan attempted to de-legitimise the FA's stance on shirt advertisements by arguing that their attitude was anachronistic (thereby employing a

similar rhetorical device which was noted in the analysis of the Hill's arguments against the maximum wage). For Dougan, then, the game's administrators were out of touch with contemporary economic conditions within football; their ideas were illogically, irrationally and incompetently rooted in the past.

Furthermore, the English League was out of line with the rest of European sport by not having sponsorship. This appeal to Europe was significant because, as I discussed in Chapter 3, the English League clubs were being brought into ever closer competition and contact with the European clubs with the internationalisation of the transfer market. If these clubs were to be competed with, then, in large part, their economic practices had to be adopted. Finally, football simply required sponsorship to sustain itself in the post-abolition period. However, behind this claim lay a more radical implication that football needed to transform itself as a business by re-assessing its sources of finance. According to Dougan, the gate could no longer sustain football as it once did. Responding to certain organic economic developments (the decline of attendance and rising labour costs), Dougan proposed new sources of revenue for football which actually implied a quite radical transformation of the consumption of football, away from its original position as a site of local solidarity between the bourgeoisie and working class.

Dougan initiated this discourse, directed at the reformation of the old commonsense - that football's only legitimate source of revenue was the gate. The initial force of the arguments for reform was augmented by the support which Dougan's argument received from other prominent figures. In August 1976, Don Revie, then the England manager argued at a lunch in London that :

the quicker we realise sponsorship is the answer the better it will be for the game (*The Times* 20/8/76:10g)

As Hall et al. have argued (1978:57-60), the articulation of arguments by individuals in sites invested with importance or expertise have a disproportionate effect on the public perception of problems. As far as the argument is concerned here, it is possible to follow Hall et al. and say that individuals in privileged positions, 'primary definers', who are able to define issues and outline interpretations which are likely to be regarded as more legitimate, are also those who are most capable of redefining commonsense. Since they were both prominent figures in the late 1970s, Dougan's and Revie's opposition to the administrators' ruling against sponsorship, and more particularly the set of understandings behind it, was given more relevance and legitimacy than might have otherwise been the case.

Crucially, the chairmen of the big city clubs of the League supported the position adopted by Dougan and Revie. The representatives of these clubs were in an exceptionally privileged position of primary definition because not only were they prominent figures, whose discourse was likely to gain publicity and receive attention, but they could back this discourse up with economic influence. These clubs had a substantial influence over the League since the League was significantly dependent on these clubs for its revenue. Significantly, therefore, the very organic developments which raised the need for sponsorship, also privileged those groups who were most forceful proponents of that development. For instance, John (later Sir John) Smith, the chairman of Liverpool, was particular vocal in his promotion of sponsorship. After Liverpool had signed a sponsorship contract with Hitachi, he commented :

We felt somebody had to show initiative over this. Football is hard-up as an industry. From an income of £2,400,000 last season we showed a meagre profit of only £17,000. (*The Times* 25/7/79:35a)

The importance of these discourses lies in the fact that they address certain organic developments and, in successfully highlighting these developments, these discourses were more likely to be widely accepted across the social formation. However, crucially these discourses were successful not simply because they were obviously correct but they were articulated by bodies, which had enough political economic leverage, to force the League to accept them.

B. Arguments against Sponsorship

A line of discursive resistance was drawn up by those involved in the administration of the game, and to a lesser extent, by certain quarters of the press (e.g. Geoffrey Green, *The Times* 15/10/76:15a) against Dougan et alia's articulation of a new economic commonsense in football. This line of resistance called upon atavistic notions of the meaning of football. Those who opposed the introduction of sponsorship viewed the game as a traditional working class leisure activity which should be witnessed from the terraces. Consequently, the gate revenue was seen as the most important, if not the only legitimate, form of revenue, which had to be protected from the threat of new forms of consumption ; notably the television. Rather than look to new means of raising revenue, these individuals built up reactionary discursive defences around an old, 'authentic' source of revenue.

These reactionary notions of authenticity informed the administrators' reaction to Dougan et alia's proposal of sponsorship. In 1977, a critical debate took place about the size of manufacturers' emblems on football shirts. The FA effectively put itself in a contradictory position because it allowed the England tracksuit to have its manufacturer 'Admiral' in clear view but opposed clubs having shirt advertisements.

Ted Croker, the FA's Secretary, argued that the presence of Admiral's logo on the England tracksuit and Kettering Town's shirt advertisement were as different as chalk and cheese. He explained that it was like Borg using a racket with the manufacturer's name on but not being able to wear SAS on his shirt (*The Times* 10/9/76:10b). Croker was also concerned about football becoming too dependent on sponsorship, which would only be interested in televised matches (*The Times* 10/9/76:10b).

Both Croker's arguments were founded on his notions of football as an authentic sport. His opposition to shirt advertisements was grounded in his perception of the tastefulness of shirt advertisement. Harold Thompson, the FA's chairman confirmed this view of the shirt advertisement as untasteful;

Nothing can be worn that may be regarded as distasteful or morally unethical.
(*The Times* 4/6/77:17c)

Croker and Thompson opposed shirt advertisements on the grounds that their size made them tasteless but this appeal to taste itself presupposed a whole set of value judgements. In particular, Croker and Thompson's aesthetic judgement was itself founded upon a deeper notion of what constituted authentic football. It was their notion of authenticity which was under assault from Dougan et alia who wanted to institute a meaning to football which was more in line with contemporary economic practices and understandings ; these new meanings and commercial practices offended Croker's and Thompson's tastes . Despite the opposition of the FA to sponsorship, the demands of the big clubs finally had to be met. In 1983, a group of big city clubs threatened a breakaway, if the League did not approve shirt advertisements. Since the League's television revenue was almost solely based on the attraction of these clubs, the League had to capitulate, allowing 32 square inch advertisements on team shirts (*The Times* 6/7/83:1b).

The success of the big city clubs in forcing the introduction of sponsorship is significant because that success depended on the political economic position which these clubs had attained as a result of the organic developments initiated by the abolition of the maximum wage. The organic developments of the long durée informed the conjunctural discursive moment, privileging certain groups and their discourses which had been consistently favoured by the organic trajectory the broader society itself was taking. The conjunctural moment of the debate over the introduction of sponsorship, consequently, played dialectically into the organic, promoting the very course of development, which had given rise to the conjunctural in the first place. In the context of football in the mid-1980s, this meant that the introduction of sponsorship furthered the financial independence of the top clubs at the expense of the lower leagues.

2. The Political Economic Effects of Sponsorship

The crucial effect of sponsorship was that the big city clubs have been able to capture sponsorship contracts far in excess of the clubs from the lower leagues. For instance, Liverpool and Everton's sponsorship deals were worth some £50,000 in the early 1980s (*The Times* 15/3/80:23c). By 1993, Liverpool's sponsorship as a whole, including royalties and ground advertising, was worth some £3.2 million (Liverpool FC Annual Report 1993:11). Their shirt sponsorship alone was worth £200,000. The big city clubs have received proportionately far more money than the smaller clubs. In 1988, the First Division clubs made £12.8 million on shirt advertisements, in deals which ranged between £90,000 and £1.5 million, while the Second made £2.8 million, the Third £1.6 million and the Fourth £900,000 (*The Times* 8/11/88:48c).

We have noted the role of the television in foregrounding the big city clubs in the public consciousness and, with the aid of the car, focussing interest and support on these clubs. Television played a second and equally crucial role in the political economic division of the League. Since the television concentrated on the big clubs ¹, the latter delivered a bigger audience to their sponsors and could consequently demand more money from their sponsor. The favourable coverage which television gave to the big clubs, especially during the 1980s, made those clubs more valuable to their sponsors ². The television coverage, therefore, added momentum to the big clubs' drift away from the lower leagues which sponsorship, in itself, assisted.

However, the nefarious effect of sponsorship on the lower leagues did not simply amount to the fact that the top sides attracted bigger contracts, although that was significant. The point was that the inflation of the top clubs' revenues led to the inflation of transfer fees, which affected the lower league sides even though they did not enjoy the compensatory benefit of substantially larger revenue. As the Chester Report of 1968 demonstrated, money has not flowed down the League by means of the transfer fees but rather *between* the big clubs (Dept of Education and Science 1968:79). The inflation of transfer fees has worked itself right down through the League, so that the smaller clubs have paid proportionately more for lesser players than the big ones because the smaller clubs have been less able to pay these fees.

Sponsorship merely assisted the big clubs to cope with the continued inflation of transfer fees which had an increasingly nefarious effect on smaller clubs. Furthermore, the fact that Kettering Town initiated the sponsorship debate was something of an anomaly as, by and large, sponsorship generally trickled down the League ; the big clubs were able to get sponsors far more quickly than the smaller

town clubs and were the beneficiaries of much larger contracts. The introduction of sponsorship into the League, then, has meant that the smaller clubs have effectively had to run only to fall ever further behind the big clubs. The appeals which Dougan himself made for clubs to be free to make money were in line with the developing commonsense of post-Fordist Britain, in which the free market was looked to as a remedy to the inefficiencies of the post-War settlement. Yet, these appeals to freedom have ultimately improved the position of the big clubs in relation to the small and thereby ensured that the organic trajectory of the league has replicated that which has been typical of wider society; the concentration of capital into the core, with a concomitant marginalisation of the periphery. In this way, the development of the big city clubs has paralleled the employment profile of professional footballers ; just as freedom of contract had improved the position of the best players but forced many other lesser ones into part-time, marginal employment, the freedom of the big city clubs to make money has improved their financial standing while jeopardising smaller town clubs' survival.

The development of sponsorship has, therefore, exacerbated a process which was already under way from the sixties in which the big city clubs were becoming increasingly differentiated from the League. This economic division made the creation of the Premier League both possible and logical because the economic division separated the interests to the top clubs from the rest of the League so that a breakaway might be beneficial to them. Moreover, the growing economic independence of the big clubs, and the perception that the lower leagues were a mere impediment in the new financial climate, provided the big clubs with a growing

political influence in Football League meetings and a reason for exploiting that influence.

3. The Symbolism of Sponsorship

In the previous sections of this chapter, it was argued that sponsorship was partially a response to the declining attendances at football matches, and more specifically, the declining attendance of the local working class communities who lived near the grounds. In line with the argument made in Chapter 1 that football was a ritualistic arena, I want to suggest here that sponsorship has not only relieved the pressures of the new political economy of football but sponsorship has also symbolically articulated the new identities which were emerging across the nascent post-Fordist social formation in Britain. In particular, sponsorship has played into a newly emergent sense of local identity, which has paralleled the geographical dispersal of the football crowd.

The hermeneutic aspect of sponsorship and the role it has played in the creation of a new sense of locale is revealed if we examine Table 1. Firstly, it is significant that most sponsors, especially of the bigger clubs, are those which manufacture the goods and services which have been typical of post-Fordist flexible specialisation. Table 1 shows that nine teams are sponsored by computer or electrical firms, three by automobile companies, including one petrol company and four by breweries. These commodities are either post-Fordist in origin or their production and retail has been transformed in line with post-Fordist practices.

Secondly, it is noticeable that there is a spectrum of firms sponsoring football from small and local companies to large multinational corporations. There is a distinct

Table 1. The F.A Premier League : 1993-4 Season Shirt Sponsors

ARSENAL	JVC
ASTON VILLA	MITA COPIERS
BLACKBURN	McEWANS
CHELSEA	COMMODORE COMPUTERS
COVENTRY CITY	PEUGEOT
EVERTON	NEC
IPSWICH	FISONS
LEEDS UNITED	THISTLE HOTEL
LIVERPOOL	CARLSBERG
MANCHESTER CITY	BROTHER
MANCHESTER UNITED	SHARP
NEWCASTLE UNITED	NEWCASTLE BREWERIES LTD
NORWICH CITY	N/WICH & P/BR BLDG SOCIETY
OLDHAM ATHLETIC	JD SPORTS
QUEENS PARK RANGERS	CSF COMPUTERS
SHEFFIELD UNITED	LAVER (BUILDING MERCHANTS)
SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY	SANDERSONS
SOUTHAMPTON	DIMPLEX
SWINDON TOWN	BURMAH PETROLEUM FUELS LTD
TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR	HOLSTEN
WEST HAM UNITED	DAGENHAM MOTORS
WIMBLEDON	LBC

Source : The F.A.

trend that the bigger the club, the larger the capitalist interest which sponsors it. Thus Sheffield United is sponsored by Lavers - a very local timber company - while Manchester United and Arsenal are sponsored by two of the bigger electrical multinationals, Sharp and JVC respectively. In between these extremes, teams like Newcastle are sponsored by businesses which, although locally based, are increasingly operating in global markets. Nevertheless, despite the spectrum of sponsors, all these companies operate in the post-Fordist economy and most produce and sell post-Fordist commodities and services. Thus even the most local sponsors, such as Lavers, play into the recreation of a new sense of identity, while the sponsors of the biggest clubs perform this role of renegotiating this sense of the locale in a more radical fashion.

Sponsorship has not obliterated the 'traditional' local identity which is created by the club, however, but rather it has played into the reinvention of this localism in an imagined community of supporters, who may be spatially dispersed but share affectual proximity through their support for a club. Through the introduction of sponsorship, therefore, fans have been asked to mediate their sense of local identity by a consideration of the wider post-Fordist economy. Sponsorship, then, is part of this imagined localism which is central to the crucial post-Fordist social relation between the consumer and the capitalist company and, in particular, at the biggest clubs to the multinational.

The creation of a tangible relation between corporations and consumers through their sense of local identity has been crucial to multinational corporations as commodities have to be meaningful to consumers if those commodities are going to be attractive ; in the fragmented and competitive market of the post-Fordist economy, the

commodity has to appeal to the consumers' specific notion of themselves. The sponsorship of sport provides an efficient means by which the commodity is identified. The sponsoring corporation does not, of course, become synonymous with the football club but it is able to endow its products with some of the ambience of the club and to relate it to consumers by that local connection. In this way, sponsorship has both mediated the fans' sense of identity and endowed the commodity with a meaningfulness to consumers which is crucial to its marketability.

Newcastle Breweries' sponsorship of Newcastle United has been typical of this post-Fordist re-creation of the local and the identification of the product through the use of the local. Newcastle Brown Ale, the chief product of the Breweries, is able to compete in the international market for beer because of its imaginary attachment to a mythic locality. This endows the product with a particularly strong identity and, therefore, a greater ability to find a niche in the market. At the same time, as endowing Newcastle Brown Ale with an authentic identity, the sponsorship of Newcastle United by the brewery has actually transformed the sense of local identity at Newcastle because that identity is now mediated by the sense of the city (and the clubs' position) with regard to the wider post-Fordist global economy. Appeals to local identity in post-Fordist Britain may draw on the (invented) notion of a traditional community but that local identity is a very different set of self-understandings than those which were actually in existence at the time when working men went from the factory to the game on a Saturday afternoon. This new sense of localism has been crucial to the reproduction of social relations (between consumers and capitalist companies) in the new post-Fordist global economy.

At the end of the last chapter, I argued that the organic rise of the big clubs has paralleled the centralisation of capital which has been a characteristic trajectory in wider society ; just as the big city clubs have increasingly dominated the League, both in terms of success and financial resources, so have major capitalist multinationals taken over more and more of the markets in which they operate. Sponsorship has played into football's organic reflection of post-Fordist developments by expediting the financial position of the big clubs but, significantly, sponsorship has also symbolically articulated this connection between wider capitalist interests and football clubs. The big city clubs are usually sponsored by major multinationals and thus they are symbolically connected to those companies ; the big city club becomes symbolic of the multinational and through the imagined community by which the fans establish a relationship with the club, they also give birth to new social relations with post-Fordist multinational corporations.

Conclusion

The primary argument of this chapter is that sponsorship was introduced to football as a discursive intervention by privileged parties in response to the organic political economic developments which football had undergone since 1960. Furthermore, the introduction of sponsorship played dialectically into the very developments which have justified its introduction ; in particular, it has benefited the big city clubs, who had been increasingly favoured by the new post-maximum wage economic environment, and whose discourses were privileged by their financial importance.

In addition, sponsorship expedited the organic trajectory which football was set upon symbolically. Sponsorship has articulated the new social relations which comprise post-Fordist Britain ; sponsorship symbolises the relationship between the consumer and the corporation through the crucial mediating element of the consumer's identity and, in particular, the newly imagined sense of locale. Through this symbolic expression, sponsorship has assisted in highlighting the latent and nascent social formations which are part of British post-Fordism and it has therefore dialectically played into the establishment of this social formation at a symbolic level.

NOTES :

1 John Bromley, ITV's head of sport in the 1980s, confirmed the widely held view that the television companies did indeed favour the big clubs as a matter of policy since the latter delivered better audiences (Personal Interview, 23/6/94).

2 The connection between television coverage and the lucrativeness of sponsorship deals is highlighted by the attempts of Liverpool's sponsor, Carlsberg, to reduce the value of their sponsorship as a result of the BSkyB deal with the Premier League, which threatened to and, indeed, did reduce Liverpool's coverage on television (*Marketing* 11/2/93:7)

CHAPTER 5

THE BIG FIVE

In the previous two chapters, an attempt was made to sketch out the transformation of the political economy of football, which created a horizon of possibility for the emergence of the Premier League. In particular, it was suggested throughout that the political economic changes expedited the situation of the big city clubs, while increasingly jeopardising the financial viability of those clubs in the lower leagues. This long-term and organic division of the once unified body of the League was recognised very early. The CIR report of 1974 argued that a 'superleague' had already come into *de facto* existence in the post-war. In the twenty-eight seasons from 1946-7 to 1973-4, certain clubs dominated the championship ; Manchester United and Liverpool had won the championship four times each, Arsenal and Wolves three times each and four other clubs twice each (CIR 1974:8). There was an informal distinction between the top (and biggest) clubs and the rest of the League. It will be suggested here that this informal distinction was formalised in the 1980s and became the basis of many disputes within the Football League. The Premier League, it will be argued, emerged out of these debates in response to the increasingly irresistible demands of the top clubs for what these clubs regarded as an acceptable share of the television revenue.

Theoretically, then, this chapter repeats the approach of the last two. This chapter examines the moment of conjunctural change, when organic developments of a long duree (in this case the emergence of the financial distinctiveness of the biggest city clubs) stimulate discourses which demand the transformation of relations. The organic

developments not only open up the opportunity for self-conscious discourse, demanding the re-negotiation of relations, but those organic developments privilege certain discourses. In the case of the political economic discourses of the 1980s within the Football League, the long-established bias towards the biggest clubs favoured their position in the debates about the transformation of the game and the redistribution of revenue.

The biggest clubs which emerged as a distinct interest group in the 1980s - as a result of the political economic developments which we discussed in the previous chapters - came to be known as 'The Big Five' and consisted of Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United and Tottenham. It is important to avoid the hypostasis encouraged by the slightly grandiloquent term, 'The Big Five'. The term 'The Big Five' is historically specific to the 1980s when the success of these clubs on the pitch or in terms of popularity - evinced by the attendances which they commanded - endowed them with pre-eminence. The five clubs in question commanded the best attendance figures in the First Division by some few thousands; for example, of the five clubs, Tottenham had the lowest average attendance of the five during the 1980s with 26,157 but this figure was more than five thousand more than the Big Five's nearest rival, Aston Villa. The Big Five were also established on the grounds of their success; Aston Villa was the only non-Big Five club to win a Championship between 1980-1 and 1990-1. The two Cup competitions, the League and FA Cups, did offer non-Big Five clubs the chance to break the oligopoly of the Big Five but even then the Big Five clubs featured heavily in the honours lists. Of the ten FA Cup finals, between 1981 and

1990, Big Five clubs won seven of them and featured in every single one, and five League Cup finals were won by Big Five clubs.

Yet the distinctiveness of the Big Five lay not only in their financial and footballing pre-eminence but, rather, it was crucially established by both the print and television media. The newspapers themselves coined the term the 'Big Five', and in that sense, established them in public consciousness as separate to the rest of the League ; the earliest reference to the Big Five, which I have located, was in *The Times* on April 9, 1983. The informal division of interests which the political economic transformations which we have discussed had effected within the Football League was formalised and realised (in the sense that clubs now saw their relationships with each other differently and accordingly behaved differently) by the press' naming of this division, and was extended by the television's response to this division of the League. Throughout the 1980s, both television companies focussed very heavily on the five clubs. This favourable television coverage furthered the divide between the rest ; financially, the top clubs were best rewarded, but they also came to demand more and more of the television revenue as it was they who delivered the best audiences. The unerring presence of the Big Five on television throughout the 1980s was in that sense something of a self-fulfilling prophecy ; these clubs were favoured by the television companies *because* they delivered the best audience but because of their regular coverage they came to be seen as the most important clubs and therefore commanded the most national interest.

Alongside, and substantially as a reaction to the Big Five, a second interest group of Football League clubs arose in the 1980s. This group consisted principally of

those clubs in the First and Second Divisions which were not part of the Big Five coalition but could command substantial attendances and would win the occasional trophy. For several reasons, this coalition was much more nebulous than the Big Five. Since it was a bigger group, its interests were never as unified as the Big Five's. Furthermore, certain clubs within this group dropped out of the Second and into the Third Division or the more successful of these clubs sporadically aligned themselves with the Big Five. Finally, this group did not have the benefit of being named and, thereby, of establishing an identity which would have provided these clubs with a sense of distinction and unity. Their alliance as an interest group remained patchy and only partly conscious.

Since the 1980s, however, this group has been named (partly because they established a distinctive set of interests in their negotiations with the Big Five over the development of the Premier League in 1991-2) and it is convenient to use this name here, with the important proviso that the use of this name is not intended to hypostasise their interests and identity as a group. I will use Fynn and Guest's term - the 'Bates-Noades axis' (Fynn and Guest 1994:25,53) ¹ - to describe this amorphous group of big clubs throughout the 1980s and up until the establishment of the Premier League.

By reference to these two loose coalitions of clubs - the Big Five and the Bates-Noades axis - this chapter will attempt to trace the sometimes convoluted path which led to the development of the Premier League. The complexity of this path to the Premiership was due to the fact that changes to the League's rules and structures had to be voted for by a democratic majority of three-quarters of the League's full and

associate members; each of the clubs in the top two division had the status of full members of the League and therefore, had a single vote, while those clubs from the lower leagues, who were only associate members, were represented by four votes for both divisions. Any decision which came before the League was voted upon and implemented if that reform attained three quarters of the fifty possible votes at a meeting of the League's members.

The democratic principles of the League informed the course of developments during the 1980s because the votes of the members were decided by the members referring to their short-term financial self-interest² and by the fact that, although the Big Five were in the dominant political economic position, it was the Bates-Noades axis which actually held the balance of the vote. The creation of the Premier League, although desirable for the Big Five clubs, could not be brought into existence by the fiat of these clubs but rather the potential voting block of the Bates-Noades axis had to be obviated by appealing to the self-interest of those clubs. The history of the Football League in the 1980s and the development of the Premier League, at one level at least, is the history of the political economic compromises between the Big Five and the Bates-Noades axis.

The principal reforms with which this chapter will be concerned are the debates and votes over the television deals in the 1980s ; in particular, the television deals of 1986 and 1988, when the Big Five were able to wring substantial concessions out of the League and create the conditions for a breakaway. The examination of these debates and reforms will culminate in a discussion in the final section of the chapter of the creation of the Premier League by the vote of the First Division. It is important to

consider this conjunctural moment in which organic developments necessitated the re-negotiation of relations through discourse because the institutional transformation of the Football League and the creation of the Premier League was critical to the transformation of the consumption of the game. The redistribution and increase of the revenue of the top clubs as a result of the debates of the 1980s and the creation of the Premier League facilitated the transformation of the consumption of football by financing the renovation of grounds and, thereby, of the perception and cultural position of the sport.

1. The Rejection of the 1983 Chester Report

In the early 1980s, the FA and the Football League commissioned Sir Norman Chester, who had previously presided over the Department of Education and Science's report into football in 1968, to produce a second report which would recommend reforms in the League structure and finance which would improve the League's economic viability in the face of the transformations which we have discussed above. Chester's second report echoed much of what had already been recommended not only in his first report but in four other policy documents ; Hardaker's 'Pattern for Football'³ (1963), PEP's *Professional Football* (1966), CIR's report (1974) and the Football League Management Committee's own report (1981).

Chester's second report situated its recommendations, like the first, within the context of political economic developments since the 1960s. Consequently, the report argued that the emergence of a distinctive group of clubs at the top of the League was both well-established (1983:28) and had to inform any recommendation of policy,

although Chester deprecated the use of the term 'superleague'. Chester's report supported the interests of the big clubs since they were best able to cope and thrive in the difficult political economic environment of the 1980s. Chester demonstrated the logic of strengthening the already strong when the report discussed the re-allocation of pools money.

Thus the purpose of the pools payments has never been to make the presently poor clubs financially viable. They have helped to keep such clubs in existence irrespective of the reason for their penury. Is this a good enough reason for directing money from other clubs? (Chester 1983:38)

In the context of these broader organic economic developments and the poor financial management of the lower division teams - which Chester implies in the barbed reference to the reason for these clubs' penury (i.e. incompetence) - the Report suggested that it would be better to divert funds to those clubs which are best able to use it and who would therefore further the interests of English football generally. Consequently, Chester recommended a reduction in the size of the First Division from twenty-two to twenty clubs (Chester 1983:29), a return to a regionalised lower league⁴ and an end to the sharing of home gates with visiting clubs. This last recommendation was in line with the general tone of the Chester report which regarded the strengthening of the strong clubs as the most logical solution to football's ills. For instance, if Manchester United were to play Coventry at Highfield Road twenty-one times, United would receive £60,000 but if Coventry played United at Old Trafford the same number of times, Coventry would receive £250,000 (*The Times* 10/2/83:17f). In other words, as this theoretical example reveals, the League's redistributive rules effectively meant that the bigger clubs were subsidising the rest of the clubs in their

division and in the League as a whole through the redistribution of television revenue. The Chester Report was against this cross-subsidisation as it weakened the strongest clubs and supported those clubs which were weak, principally because they were poorly managed.

Yet, despite the financial superiority of the Big Five, and the League's dependence on these clubs as a major source of revenue, the balance of any vote lay with the Bates-Noades axis. Consulting their immediate self-interest, they opposed Chester's recommendations. In response to the Bates-Noades axis' opposition to Chester's recommendations, the Big Five similarly consulted their own self-interest and, determined to implement what they saw to be highly beneficial recommendations for them, they threatened a breakaway from the League (*The Times* 27/4/83:28a)⁵. This threat carried some weight because even by 1983, it was becoming apparent that the Big Five's ability to command television audiences rendered the League significantly dependent on them.

The result of this difference of interest, mediated by the realisation of the dependence of the Bates-Noades axis on the Big Five for redistributed television revenue, was the eventual rejection of all of the Chester report's recommendations, except for the end to the redistribution of the home gate. The Bates-Noades axis was forced to concede this point for the greater good of preventing a breakaway (*The Times* 27/4/83:28a) and thus the Bates-Noades axis grudgingly contributed to the gradual autarky of the Big Five.

2. Television Deals

The spiralling autarky of the Big Five was crucially played out in the debates over the television deals and the distribution of television revenue between the clubs in the 1980s. During that period, there were four television deals, which ran from 1983 to 1985, from January 1986 to the end of the season, from 1986 to 1988 and then from 1988 to 1992. I will concentrate on the two final deals, made in the 1986 and 1988, as it was in the debates over these deals that the Big Five were able to bring their threats of breakaway to bear most effectively. Crucially, the debates originated in the division of interests between the Big Five and the Bates-Noades axis and the television deals which were eventually struck were invariably compromises between these two interest groups, compromises which favoured the organically given superiority of the Big Five.

A. 1986: Heathrow and the Ten-Point Plan

The immediate origins of the Heathrow meeting and the Ten-Point Plan lay in the autumn of 1985, when football was not televised as a result of a seemingly intractable dispute between the television companies and the League. This put the Big Five under particular stress as their sponsorship deals were heavily reliant on their regular television appearances. The Big Five's impatience was reflected in some of the comments of the chairmen of those clubs.

The big clubs are very, very impatient for many reasons. We are suffering financial hardship because there is no television agreement, we are not in Europe, gates are declining and altogether the state of our national game is in disarray. (John Smith, chairman of Liverpool FC, quoted in *The Times* 16/10/85:25a)

We cannot continue forever and a day to divide our money among 92 clubs. Under the new format we must concentrate on the senior clubs. The third and

fourth divisions will be concerned about the situation. We are starting on a long road of change and there will be financial problems for some clubs. (Philip Carter, Chairman of Everton , quoted in *The Times* 12/11/85:33a)

Pressed by these economic concerns, the Big Five pushed for reformations of the structure and distribution of revenue within the League.

Consequently, a committee of ten leading figures in football was appointed and, in December 1985, a ten-point plan was submitted to the clubs for their consideration. The major points of the ten point plan were that the first division should be reduced to twenty clubs by 1988, there should be play-off for the final promotion place in the lower divisions, the First Division should receive 50 per cent of the rewards to be gained from television and sponsorship, the Second 25 per cent and the lower leagues 25 per cent between them, the League's levy of 4 per cent on the gate for redistribution across the League should be reduced to 3 per cent and there should be reform of the voting system⁶ (*The Times* 29/4/86:4a).

The proposals which this committee suggested were backed by the serious threat of a breakaway by the top clubs if they were not accepted by an Extraordinary General Meeting in February 1986 (*The Times* 19/12/85:22a).

If we [the Big Five] do not get the support then the First Division clubs will have to look at their future again. We hate bringing out the idea of a Super League or a breakaway . But if things stay the same there is no way the major clubs will allow themselves to be dragged down into obscurity. (Philip Carter, quoted in *The Times* 18/2/86:26a)

Following Carter's ill-concealed threat, the clubs of the First Division met at Villa Park in March to agree that unless the ten-point plan was approved at the AGM in April they would breakaway (*The Times* 25/3/86:1b).

Make no mistake, the big bang will happen unless the rest of the league give us their backing. (Martin Edwards, Chairman of Manchester United, quoted in *The Times* 25/3/86:1b)

I argued that the Bates-Noades axis was an unstable alignment because it was possible and entirely logical for the big clubs who could be part of that axis to side with the Big Five. In order to ratify the ten-point plan, the Big Five had to overcome the potential blocking vote of the Bates-Noades axis and they could effectively undermine that axis by appealing to the interests of a sufficient number of clubs, who would put in their lot with the Big Five, and simultaneously obviate the difficulty of the Bates-Noades blocking vote. By drawing on the convenient distinctiveness of the First Division, the Big Five endowed their threat of a superleague with some bite. The use of the First Division as a means of obviating the problems presented by the voting structure of the League, as we will see below, was a strategy which was re-deployed in the eventual creation of the Premier League in 1991. At the Heathrow AGM in April 1986, the ten-point plan was ratified by a vote of the full and associate members of the League and with it the position of the top clubs expedited.

B. The 1988 Television Deal

The concessions which the Big Five forced from the League at the Heathrow meeting in April 1986 temporarily satisfied their financial needs but when the television deal was up for re-negotiation in 1988, the League again returned to a state of undeclared war between its two principal factions, as each attempted to gain the greatest proportion of the television revenue on offer.

The BBC and ITV had operated an uneasy cartel since the late 1960s when they had shared the coverage of League football ; BBC had broadcast *Match of the Day* on Saturday nights, while ITV had screened *The Big Match* for the Sunday afternoon audience. That cartel eventually broke down in 1988, as a result of the growing competitiveness in television for ratings. With regard to football, there were two essential developments which made the ITV's final dissolution of the cartel necessary.

Firstly, from the end of the 1970s there was a substantial decline in the audience for recorded football. In the first twenty years of television coverage of football, recorded highlights had been able to deliver very good audiences. In the late 1970s and early 1980s , in other words, at exactly the same time that industries were generally finding that they could no longer rely on static mass markets but had to respond to newly fragmenting markets and segment their production accordingly, the BBC and ITV found that the interest in recorded football was dwindling. From 1983, the two companies had insisted on incorporating some live television in their contracts with football. This desire for live football partly informed ITV's breach of its cartel with the BBC. Within the cartel, ITV had to share the coverage of live football with the BBC but in the light of the fact that it was live football which delivered the audiences, this restriction became more and more intolerable.

Secondly, the development of satellite networks threatened the viability of the cartel as a strategy for the BBC and ITV. In 1988, the newly established British Satellite Broadcasting set out to revolutionise football coverage by taking over the BBC and ITV's exclusive rights to League football (*The Times* 14/5/88:41b). The

threat which BSB posed rendered the cartel between ITV and the BBC obsolete.

There was little point operating in a cartel of two when there was a third party involved in negotiations who might monopolise coverage. In the face of the heightened competition from BSB, ITV did not join the BBC in the initial rounds of negotiations as it had done when the cartel had been in operation but talked directly to the Big Five.

In this way, the ITV precipitated another confrontation within the League between the Big Five and the Bates-Noades axis. The Big Five made an alliance with five other clubs to form a potential superleague which would be exclusively televised by ITV in return for £32 million to share equally between them over four seasons, (*The Financial Times* 16/7/88:xxg, *The Daily Telegraph* 11/7/88). Meanwhile, BSB, now allied to the BBC, offered the whole League £35.8 million for four seasons coverage (*The Guardian* 14/7/88:1). This offer was recommended by the Football League Management Committee but, since they were concerned by the Big Five's threat of a breakaway, which would realistically leave them without a television deal since it was the top clubs which were the focus of interest for any television company, they suggested a further amendment to the redistribution of television money. The Football League Management Committee proposed that the First Division should get 80 per cent of the BSB-BBC deal (compared with 50 per cent from the previous deal), while the Second Division should get 10 per cent and the lower leagues 10 per cent between them (*The Financial Times* 16/7/88:4h). The final decision on the television deal would be made at the AGM on 8th August. By that time, BSB had withdrawn from further proceedings on the grounds that they did not like the way that the football clubs operated ⁷ (*The Times* 3/8/88:40a). Despite its eventual failure, the BSB offer had

broken the cartel between the BBC and ITV and it also raised the price of football, as the BSB's counter-bids eventually raised ITV's deal to £44 million.

In order to prevent the Big Five and their five allies from creating a superleague which had an exclusive contract with ITV, the League, prompted by the Bates-Noades axis, for whom it was essential that the Big Five did not breakaway, offered the First Division as a whole 75 per cent of the £44 million which ITV had offered for four season's coverage ; the Second would receive 12.5 per cent and the lower League 12.5 per cent between them (*The Financial Times* 9/8/88:16a).

This offer was substantially less than what the Big Five and their five allies had been offered directly from ITV (although it was more than these clubs were offered when the BSB-BBC deal was on the table) but they accepted this compromise at the meeting on August 8th 1988. There is no record in the newspapers as to why the Big Five accepted this compromise, which was substantially less lucrative than their initial negotiations with ITV suggested but it is possible to make some informed speculations as to why the Big Five withdrew from the grand plan which they suggested in the high summer of 1988 to an acceptance of nothing more than a greater proportion of the television revenue.

There seem to have been three potential reasons for this retreat. Firstly, the Big Five's proposal of a superleague was purely strategic. These clubs had no real intention of breaking away from the League, but merely used the threat, as they had done throughout the 1980s to promote their own interests over that of the Bates-Noades axis. Once that axis had conceded a sufficient proportion of the television revenue, the Big Five were content to sweep their threats under the carpet. Secondly,

that the so-called Big Ten had doubts about the viability of a ten club League when they were actually faced with the prospect of this development ; the establishment of such a league was actually fraught with uncertainty. In the light of this uncertainty, it was rational for the Big Five to opt to stay within the security of the League but to demand a greater proportion of the television revenue ; this solution was the one which offered the least line of resistance, maximised returns but minimised the risks. This course of action may have especially attractive because, it can, perhaps, be assumed that the Big Five knew before they eventually agreed to the television deal that they would feature almost exclusively on the ITV's new Sunday programme, *The Match*, for the next four years with all the benefits that provided in terms of sponsorship and appearance money. Finally, the Big Five might have abandoned their attempts at a Superleague in 1988 because they simply could not obviate the blocking vote of the Bates-Noades axis with the votes of only ten clubs. As I pointed out in the previous section, the most successful strategy for the Big Five was to create an alliance with the whole of the First Division and thereby undermine the potential obstruction of a majority vote for the Bates-Noades axis. The Big Five followed one or, perhaps, even all of these potential lines of reasoning and decided to remain within the structure of the League for another four years.

Whatever the particular reasons for the Big Five's acceptance of this very substantial proportion of the television revenue the importance of the 1988 television deal as far as this thesis is concerned is that its outcome was informed by the growing dominance of the Big Five and reinforced that dominance, improving the Big Five's

political economic position yet further and thereby precipitating a move to the Premier League.

3. The Premier League

Throughout this chapter, we have noted how the debates between the Big Five and the Bates-Noades axis were principally directed at the distribution of television revenue and that in the 1980s, the appeals to a superleague were invariably made as the League was about to or was in the process of negotiating a new television deal. The ITV deal ended in 1992, so that it was no surprise that the rumblings of a Premier League began in the previous year.

As with every other 'attempt' at a breakaway, the object of the Big Five's demands for the creation of the Premier League in 1991 was to maximise their income from television. This desire and need to maximise their television income had been stimulated by the deal with ITV since 1988. At the outset of this chapter, I argued that within the context of certain organic political economic developments, the movement to a Premier League was self-propelling, although its course was tortuous. The organic political economic developments which we discussed in the previous chapters put the big clubs into a position of autarky over the rest of the League. Consequently, these clubs could demand concessions but with each political economic concession, their autarky was furthered and so a spiral of division was set in progress. We saw above how the autarky of the Big Five enabled them to improve their share of the television revenue in 1988. These clubs could only want a further improvement of that share when the 1992 deal came around.

Since ITV substantially favoured the Big Five, whatever their actual League position, broadcasting these clubs almost exclusively⁸, then any redistribution of television revenue to the smaller clubs of the League under the 1988 deal, in which the First Division received 75 per cent of the monies, became intolerable. ITV's coverage since 1988 had augmented the Big Five's sense of distinction and autarky from the rest of the League. Furthermore, the 1988 deal provided the Big Five with the experience of how to initiate a division of the League; that deal demonstrated to the Big Five the need to take the whole of the First Division along with them, if they were to gain sufficient votes for a breakaway. Consequently, by the early 1990s, the Big Five were in a position where they could realistically, rather than merely rhetorically propose a Premier League.

Throughout this chapter, the obstructiveness of the League's voting system to the implementation of reform has been emphasised. In the light of the anarchy of self-interest which the League's voting system created, the move to the Premier League had practically to be carried out under the auspices of an overarching administrative structure. It was conceivable that the First Division, spurred on by the Big Five, could have turned their back on the League and established themselves independently but without at least some nominal organisation to bring some order to the potential anarchy of the clubs, such a venture was fraught with risks. The debates between the Big Five and the Bates-Noades axis over the distribution of revenue and the patent inadequacy of the League's structure to contemporary political economic circumstances which had established the autarky of the top clubs, impelled the two administrative bodies of the game, the Football League and the FA, to propose

schemes by which the superseded League structure could be reformed. These administrative bodies had always operated distinctly and, indeed, had often been in open confrontation. The debates over the reform of the League brought these confrontations to a head because the body which failed to establish itself at the head of any new structure which might emerge to organise the biggest clubs was doomed to marginalisation.

In the early 1990s, both bodies published blueprints, which effectively staked their respective claims to the leadership of the game. The Football League published *One Game, One Team, One Voice* in October 1990, while the FA published *The Blueprint for the Future of Football* in June 1991. Both documents argued for much the same things ; both suggested a smaller, more autonomous Premier League administered by a unified body, comprising elements of the Football League and the Football Association. Of course, each blueprint had a different notion of which body should be senior within the proposed unified administration of the national game.

The details of the blueprints are not relevant here because they were never implemented but the declaration by the FA that they would administer a Premier League was important to the eventual creation of that institution. The Big Five could scarcely look to the Football League to administer a new League, whose whole point was to separate itself from the inconvenience of having to support lower league sides, so the FA's announcement that they would oversee a breakaway acted as the final stimulus for the new league ; it provided the necessary precaution against the potential risks of a new league.

The FA initially wanted to create an eighteen club Premier League (*The Daily Telegraph* 6/4/91:36) but in the end, the whole of the First Division had to be separated from the rest of the League. If the FA tried to take only eighteen clubs, then those clubs in the bottom half of the First Division would have logically voted against the Premier League's development as it was likely that they would be excluded from the new league. The initial development of the Premier League had to follow the course which had proved successful for the Big Five throughout the 1980s ; the whole of the First Division had to be included, thereby obviating a blocking vote.

During the summer of 1991, this inclusion of the whole of the First Division in the breakaway, expedited the Premier League, which was brought into existence very quickly. The FA's Blueprint was unveiled on 19 June 1991 (*The Daily Telegraph* 20/6/91:32), although the clubs already knew of the contents of that document. On 28th June, fifteen of the First Division clubs resigned from the League and the seven remaining ones were expected to follow (*The Daily Telegraph* 29/6/91:36). The Football League appealed to the High Court that this departure from the League was unlawful and was against the Football League's regulation 10 (*The Daily Telegraph* 1/8/91:30). Justice Ross ruled against the League, declaring that the Football League's regulation did not operate over the FA (*The Daily Telegraph* 1/8/91:30). In response to this ruling, the twenty-two clubs of the First Division formally left the League on 16th August 1991 (*The Daily Telegraph* 17/8/91:1). The Premier League then held its inaugural meeting on 10th October 1991 (*The Daily Telegraph* 10/10/91:32).

Despite it being more logical for the lesser clubs of the First Division to vote for a twenty-two club Premier League, whereas they would reject an eighteen club

league as the risk of their not being part of it was too high, there was a substantial risk in voting for even the twenty-two club Premier League ; there was a high probability of getting relegated from even this larger league, in which case the relegated clubs had effectively voted against their self-interest. Three clubs, whose chairmen I interviewed, did exactly this ; they voted for the Premier League and were either relegated the season before the League was established (West Ham) or in following seasons (Oldham and Sheffield United). Ian Stott, the chairman of Oldham, and Peter Storrie, West Ham's managing director, revealed the logic behind their apparently irrational decisions to vote for the new league.

Obviously, as one suspected all the commercial income and the TV income went that way - all the big income - so, therefore, you couldn't be outside that division. As a general basis now, you would have to say that the difference between a Premier Division side and a Division One side is at least £2 million a season. (Peter Storrie, managing director, WHUFC, personal interview 25/7/94)

Not one of the people in the First Division volunteered not to be in the Premier League. Now you can't blame them. There was great heart-searching for me because I have great allegiance to other Divisions really but how can I tell my players or my supporters that we going to stay down a league for a principle? It wasn't that strong a principle, it can't be because you've got to give your players and supporters the opportunity to be in the top league. So we went for it. (Ian Stott, Chairman Oldham Athletic FC, personal interview 21/6/94)

Storrie's comments demonstrate quite clearly the logic of the lesser teams within the First Division in voting for the Premier League. Despite the potential risk of falling off the Big Five's gravy train, they could not merely stand at the platform edge and allow that train to depart, especially since their place would simply be taken by another club. Stott is rather more oblique about Oldham's decision to join the Big Five but, although we must assume that he was being sincere in his concern for the players and fans, it

seems impossible that Stott was uninfluenced by the revenue which the Premier League promised, especially since he realised that all the other clubs decided to join the Premier League, principally on the grounds of self-interest. In the face of a situation in which Stott could either vote for the Premier League, from which Oldham would benefit financially, or voluntarily renounce these benefits (which would be enjoyed by a club which would take Oldham's place), it was ultimately impossible for Stott to do anything but vote for the Premier League, despite his own affection for the lower leagues.

Conclusion

This chapter draws to an end the first empirical part of this thesis. Throughout Part II, I have tried to demonstrate how certain organic political economic changes created a horizon of possibility in the 1980s for the development of a breakaway league, by creating both autarky among the top clubs and also exerting increasing financial pressure on those clubs so that they sought to use that autarky to wring ever greater concessions from the rest of the League.

However, although I have argued that the development of the Premier League can only be understood by appreciating certain organic developments of a long durée, the conjunctural moment when relations between the clubs were re-negotiated in the light of long-term transformations must be foregrounded. In particular, the particular course which the development of the Premier League followed crucially involved the Bates-Noades axis, which held the balance of the votes.

Part II has examined the organic political economic development of the League but attempted to show that the course of that organic development crucially comprised conjunctural moments, where relations were self-consciously re-negotiated through discourse. However, since the organic developments privileged certain discourses (the Big Five in the 1980s), the conjunctural moments finally dialectically played into the organic development of professional football - in admittedly complex ways.

This examination of the development of the Premier League accounts for the development of the new league as a political economic institution. However, although this transformation is relevant in itself, the real importance of this institutional change lies in the fact that the new redistribution of revenue, with which the Premier League is concerned, has facilitated the transformation of football as a site of consumption in the 1990s. The Premier League has crucially improved the finances of the biggest clubs, allowing them to renovate their grounds and therefore, the means of the consumption of football. Furthermore, as the development of the Premier League as a political economic institution has improved the cultural position of the game ; the new stadia have improved media and public perceptions of the game.

So the development of the Premier League as a political economic institution has provided the framework in which the transformation of the consumption of the game in the 1990s has been possible. As I will argue in Part IV, the new consumption of football has involved the expression of new class relations and social understandings which are related to British post-Fordism. However, the very political economic transformation - the development of the Premier League - which facilitated this new consumption is itself meaningful and expressive. As I argued in the last chapter, the

emergence of the biggest clubs as the focus of national attention in a number of metropolitan sites is symbolically isomorphic with the development of multinational corporations as the key economic institutions in the global post-Fordist order. Furthermore, not only do these clubs represent multinationals through the latter's sponsorship of football but the clubs play a crucial role in relating the consumer to the abstract and distant multinational ; through the newly invented localism of the big city clubs, the fans are able to construct an identity for themselves which relates to the global economy. The political economic transformations which we have discussed in the last three chapters and which gave rise to the Premier League were, then, substantially informed by social understandings and discourses, and were themselves finally meaningful. The Premier League was not simply the political economic framework which facilitated the new consumption of football but it was itself part of this new consumption of football, articulating new identities and social relations.

NOTES :

1 Ken Bates is the chairman of Chelsea ; Ron Noades the chairman of Crystal Palace. Both team have a substantial support but they will never be capable of commanding the attendances or the success of the likes of Manchester United and Liverpool.

2 The fact that clubs vote according to their self-interest is revealed by Storrie and Stott's statements in the fourth part of this chapter where they argue that they could not countenance not being part of the Premier League.

3 Alan Hardaker was Secretary of the League from 1956-79.

4 From the 1920s until 1955, the two lower Leagues were divided into two regional divisions ; The Third Division, North and South.

5 The Big Five also threatened a breakaway because of the Football League's opposition to shirt sponsorship.

6 Up until the ten-point plan, the voting structure of the League consisted of forty six full member ballots (one vote for each club in the First and Second Division) and four associate member ballots (which represented the interests of the two lower leagues). Any rule change required three-quarters of the vote (thirty seven votes). The Ten-point plan sought to obviate the blocking vote of the Bates-Noades axis by recommending that the First Division should have two votes each and that the decisive majority should be reduced from three-quarters of the vote to two-thirds. The Bates-Noades axis rejected the doubling of the First Division's votes but Jimmy Hill proposed a compromise of one-and-a-half votes for each of the First Division clubs which was accepted (*The Times* 18/4/86:4a, 40h).

7 In fact, BSB's withdrawal was almost certainly to cover the real reason for their withdrawal ; that they were not yet capable of broadcasting anything (Chippendale and Franks 1992).

8 In a personal interview, John Bromley, Head of ITV Sport throughout the 1980s, revealed that the ITV did indeed concentrate their coverage on the biggest clubs because they delivered the best audiences.

There are only about eight teams in the First Division which are attractive to the nation (John Bromley, personal interview, 23/6/94).

Since ITV could only cover relatively few matches a season, they could only afford to televise those clubs which commanded the best audiences, especially since much of the television audiences were comprised not of the committed fans of one team but by individuals with much looser affiliations to the game ; these viewers preferred to see the famous teams and players in action, even though a single game between two minor clubs might actually produce the best football. Whatever their League position, the Big Five clubs invariably promised the required audiences. Furthermore, as I argued at the

outset of this chapter, although individual clubs within the Big Five might have a poor season, the top positions of the League were dominated by these five clubs and, indeed, throughout the 1980s by Liverpool in particular.

PART III
DISCOURSES OF REFORM

CHAPTER 6

THATCHERISM, AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE CRISIS OF 1985

The political economic transformations which I have discussed up to now were central to the creation of the Premier League and the emergence of this institution constituted a crucial framework which facilitated the new consumption of football in the 1990s. However, the connection between the organic political economic developments which gave rise to the Premier League and the new consumption of football were not direct or simple. The new consumption of football only came into existence, I will argue, insofar as football was highlighted as an area of concern by the government, the media and the judiciary. The agencies specified a set of reforms, although their reforms were not unified or coherent, which I will argue in the next three chapters, crucially informed the new consumption of football. Despite the complexity of the arguments which were proposed at these different sites, there were dominant themes in their discourses, which these chapters are designed to highlight, and which were important to the transformation of the consumption of football.

These discourses emerged in response to the inadequacy of the organisation of football to its own political economic and organic development. The discourses which were articulated by these agencies then were the conjunctural responses to organic developments and which demanded reform in the light of those organic transformations. In particular, the discourses of these agencies connected football to

wider social developments - their critiques of football were informed by the agencies' understandings of the contemporary state of post-Fordism in Britain. These discourses contextualised football specifically against the background of post-Fordism in order to point up the inadequacy of football in the light of wider developments. The importance of these conjunctural discourses was that they prescribed the particular transformation of consumption practices for football in the 1990. Significantly, these discourses insisted that football be transformed in line with other changes which British society was undergoing as it moved towards its own peculiar style of post-Fordism.

Although I want to emphasise the strands of coherence between the various discourses which I examine in the next three chapters, it is important to remember the actual complexity of the social process ; it is heuristically necessary to simplify and abbreviate for reasons of clarity but that does not imply a theoretical affiliation on my part to uni-directional change. In practice, the discourses of these three agencies were shifting, overlapping and even in open contradiction or opposition. Furthermore, the peculiar framework of understandings which inform British post-Fordism and on which these discourses draw was itself not monolithic. Rather, British post-Fordism consists of a complex set of overlapping discourses which themselves inform different sets of social relations and practices. British post-Fordism is a recognisable phenomenon ; many social relations have been altered in ways which are definable in similar ways. Nevertheless, although it is possible to operate with a general concept of British post-Fordism, each transformation of a particular set of social relations and practices has been specific to itself and partially idiosyncratic.

By highlighting the incompatibility of football to the transformations which British society was more widely undergoing in its move to post-Fordism, these

discourses pointed up both the need for football to reform itself and suggested the directions which those reforms should take. In this, the discourses of reform comprised a crucial moment of articulation because they opened up an opportunity in which an emergent fragment of the capitalist class, the 'new business class', could look upon football as a potential opportunity for its wider entrepreneurial project. Furthermore, these discourses of reform appealed not only to this class fraction but also to members of the service class and the white collar-workforce ; the discourses of reform suggested a new position for football in British society by endowing it with a new meaningfulness. The discourses of reform were, therefore, crucial in re-positioning football away from its constituency among new working class and lumpenproletariat white males to a new social and gender order. The discourses of reform suggested that a very different community could be imagined in football than the aggressively masculine one which had been consistently re-invented on Saturday afternoons from the mid-1960s.

Although the discourses of reform had been sporadically articulated by the media, government and the judiciary since the 1960s, their real significance to the new consumption of football only came in the mid- to late-1980s when football was in the midst of its crisis, precipitated by a series of disasters of football. In this and the following two chapters, I will try to unravel the main strands of these discourses and relate them to the transformation of the game in the 1990s.

1. The Disasters

The moral panic about the behaviour of young male fans at football grounds had been articulated in the media since the mid-1960s when hooliganism became a regular feature of an English Saturday afternoon (see Ingham ed. (1978)). However, this panic came to a head with the disasters of 1985. On 11th May 1985, the main stand at Bradford City's Valley Parade ground was incinerated during the course of the last home game of the season ; fifty-five people died. On the same afternoon, there was a riot at the game between Birmingham City and Leeds United, in which one innocent teenage boy was fatally crushed by a falling wall. On 29th May, before the European Cup Final at the Heysel Stadium in Belgium, thirty nine Juventus fans were killed when Liverpool fans charged them. They were crushed to death when a wall collapsed.

The interpretation of these disasters could not be objective - especially since they evoked genuine outrage - and, as I will try to demonstrate responses to these events were crucially informed by wider understandings which were becoming increasingly 'commonsensical' as Britain reformed itself along post-Fordist lines. That the special quality of the disasters of 1985 was not inherent to those events but rather endowed to them by subsequent interpretations is evinced by a brief consideration of other disasters that occurred within a few years of May 1985.

During the mid-1980s, it seemed that Britain was a society plagued by disaster ; the footballing tragedies at Valley Parade and the Heysel were only two among several other equally fatal accidents. Within a few years of these disasters, there was a fatal fire at Kings Cross underground station, and a serious crash at Clapham Junction during the rush hour, while on the water, the Herald of Free Enterprise capsized while leaving Zeebrugge, drowning hundreds of passengers, the Piper Alpha

oil-rig exploded and the Marchioness, a Thames pleasure boat, was rammed and sunk by a larger boat coming up stream, killing many young people. Furthermore, a plane, taking off from Manchester Airport caught fire causing substantial loss of life. None of these disasters, which in terms of loss of life, were far more serious than those of May 1985 spawned nearly as much commentary, criticism and approbrium as the footballing tragedies.

The special treatment for which the football disasters were singled out cannot be taken as somehow natural. Rather, the extraordinary level of coverage which the disasters received both in the media and in Parliamentary discussions was due to the social perception of football. In their work, *Policing the Crisis*, Hall et al. examined the statistical evidence which would explain the moral panic about mugging in the early 1970s. The statistical evidence of the occurrence of street crime suggested that no such panic was justified. Consequently, Hall et al. suggested that the moral panic about mugging was in fact the articulation of anxiety about recent changes in British society. Hall et al. asked the rhetorical question which is relevant to my analysis of the crisis of football in 1985 ;

Could it be possible that a societal reaction to crime could precede the appearance of a pattern of crime? (Hall et al. 1978:182)

In relation to the disaster of 1985, it is worth asking the same question ; in the light of the more measured reactions to the equally horrible and quantitatively more fatal disasters at Kings' Cross, Zeebrugge, on the Thames and the North Sea, it seems that the crisis in which football found itself in 1985 was due to the perception of the game before that date. In other words, the media and political interpretations of the game were such that any disaster would have been attributed a special significance.

The special significance of football and therefore, the special outrage which was saved for it seems to have been attributable to two related issues. Firstly, as I argued in Chapter 1, football is a ritual ; it provides a charged arena in which meanings and values are debated and relations re-negotiated. Although often described as 'the national game', the relationship between football is more complex than the direct co-extensiveness which this phrase implies. Rather, as a ritual in which a community is imagined, football is a shifting and partial phenomenon which is related to different classes and class fractions in society at different times. Furthermore, football is also intimately related to notions of gender and, therefore, is differentially related to the gender order of British society at different historical periods. Nevertheless, football interpellates¹ a large section of British society, appealing to and providing a focus for a wide imagined community. The importance with which football has been endowed by large sections of society, as a principal site of identity and meaning, ensured that the disasters of Bradford and Heysel were not merely incidents of fatality but rather these disasters brought into question the whole imagined community and the values by which relations were mediated in that community.

However, the disasters of 1985 did not provoke outrage simply because they offended against the sacred site of the imagined community ; the disasters at Bolton in 1946 and Ibrox in 1971 did not stimulate nearly the same reactions. Rather, the peculiar outrage which Bradford and Heysel stimulated, can only be explained by the fact that football was increasingly coming to be regarded among certain agencies (the media, government and judiciary) as anachronistic. It had failed to implement the (post-Fordist) reforms which under Thatcher's leadership, were being widely instituted across social relations and institutions in Britain. Whereas, the other disasters were

regarded as either freak accidents (The Marchioness) or, more importantly, progressive disasters in which a risk had been taken in the name of modernisation (Piper Alpha), the disasters of 1985 were catastrophes which were the result of backwardness. Since football was an important site of the creation of identity, it was particularly inappropriate that it should communicate an imagined community which operated according to superseded principles. For the discourses of reform, which were articulated in certain sections of the media, the government and the judiciary, it was the fact that outmoded principles had caused the disaster which inspired special horror which Bradford and Heysel connoted, rather than the actual disasters themselves.

In a recent article in defence of the Leicester School's use of Elias' s concept of the 'civilising process' in explaining hooliganism, Dunning (1994) has argued along similar lines to those which I am advancing here. Although Dunning's argument is excessively instrumentalist, proposing too simple a relation between economic conditions, the press and its reportage of hooliganism, it is worth citing. Dunning argues that during the 1970s and 1980s, the media amplified the hooligan problem because they were generally dissatisfied with the state of football and, in particular its poor economic condition. However, during the 1990s, despite the fact that hooliganism was still a feature of football and was actually quite prevalent in the lower leagues, the press has de-amplified the problem by under-reporting it because they are generally much more content with the economic state of football :

The effect of the combined ditching of Part 1 of the Football Spectators Bill, the Government's support for re-entry into Europe and the more optimistic mood regarding the English game seems to have been to make the issue of football hooliganism less newsworthy. As a result, it started to be under-reported, particularly in the national press (Dunning 1994:133).

Dunning goes on to cite examples of football violence in the 1990s, in particular a disturbance at Filbert Street between Leicester City and Newcastle United fans and concludes.

I think it is also reasonable to surmise that, had the moral panic over football hooliganism of the 1970s and 1980s prevailed, at least some of these incidents would have received the 'mindless morons', 'smash the animals and thugs' headline treatment by the national tabloids and that, in that way, the moral panic would have been reinforced. (Dunning 1994:134)

Although somewhat simplified, Dunning's line of argument reflects the position which I laid out at the beginning of this chapter. The discourses of reform were the conjunctural responses to certain organic political economic developments, which had left football's structure inadequate to the level of its developments and to wider social developments. The crisis of the 1980s was then not objectively given by the disasters but rather the disasters exemplified a deeper problem in football. In short, football had not begun to transform itself in the light of emergent post-Fordist realities.

2. The Discourses of Discipline

Although the economic backwardness of football, which was criticised in the discourse of the free market (which I will discuss in the next chapter), stimulated the special outrage which was widely felt and loudly articulated in response to the disasters of 1985, the discourses which predominated after those disasters was primarily authoritarian, arguing for the implementation of greater discipline onto the football crowd. That authoritarian discourse principally involved two essential arguments ; families had to be introduced into football as they were disciplined entities and young male fans (hooligans) had to be controlled, either by surveillance, exclusion or punishment. In particular, I want to focus on Thatcher's demands for reform which

eventually culminated in the ill-fated Football Spectators' Bill, related discourses in the press and the Popplewell Report, which constituted the judicial manifestation of the authoritarian discourse.

In Chapter 2 I discussed Thatcherism at some length, by reference to Hall and Jacques, Jessop et al. and Gamble. I argued there that Thatcherism is best seen as a political and interpretive project which was a central element in the development of a post-Fordism in Britain and that Thatcherism consisted of two essential ideological strands, which informed Thatcher's policies throughout her premiership ; the strong state and the free market. It is important to avoid hypostasy, however, since Thatcher's attitude to football was not monolithic and was informed by her affection for the free market. However, Thatcher's reaction to the disasters of 1985 and her recommendations for the reform of football in consequence, principally drew on her ideological and political commitment to a strong state. Undoubtedly influenced by the media's amplified representation of the hooligan, Thatcher's principal discursive response to the problems of football articulated the authoritarian themes of family discipline and the surveillance, exclusion and punishment of hooligans.

I want to focus on three crucial moments to exemplify Thatcher's response to the disasters of 1985 to sketch the outlines of her discourse of authoritarian reform. After the Heysel disaster, Thatcher made a speech in the House of Commons on 31st May, which highlighted the way in which her notion of the strong state informed her policy decisions as a means of obviating the problems which post-Fordism posed. Speaking of hooliganism, Thatcher argued that ;

These violent people must be isolated from society (*Guardian* 1/6/85:1)

She went on to make very interesting claims about her perception of contemporary post-Fordist British society. She linked the violence of the terraces with two other types of violence in the country, that on the picket line and terrorist violence in Northern Ireland ². She went on to argue that violence in the young was the 'disease of prosperous society' in which the young had more money but less responsibility. Thatcher suggested that the increased movement (presumably both social and geographic) was linked to the increased use of drugs, violence and terrorism (*Guardian* 1/6/85:1). Elsewhere Thatcher made it clear how these individuals whom the affluence and mobility of Fordist and post-Fordist society had created should be dealt with.

There is violence in human nature and there are three ways of trying to deal with it : either persuasion, prevention and punishment. (*Guardian* 4/6/85:4)

It is worth considering Thatcher's statements in a little detail as they highlight her notion of both the individual and the solution to the apparent problem of order which post-Fordism posed for the state. For Thatcher, the affluence of post-Fordism is a threat because it had loosed the constraining boundaries of previous social formations and thereby, in a dual action, both freed individuals from their social bonds and potentially freed the violence (and nameless other vices) which are essential parts of human nature. Much could be made of Thatcher's notion of the individual as it seems to link up with much classical modern political discourse ³ and thereby, demonstrating Thatcher's fundamentally reactionary and modernist framework of thought. I do not want to explore these interesting connections here but only say that, for Thatcher, the only solution to post-Fordist societies' dissolution of the ordered boundaries of modernity was the isolation of those individuals who have succumbed to their instincts. By isolation, I infer, that Thatcher wanted to identify and separate these

individuals from society through imprisonment. By means of the strong state, which Thatcher avowed as a method decontaminating society of these individuals, she hoped to re-inscribe the social boundaries within these individuals which hold back the bestial essences, which conservatism, in general, believes lies in every human being.

However, Thatcher's application of the strong state was not directed at all individuals - not all individuals have succumbed to their bestial human nature. Rather her disciplinary reforms were directed at quite specific groups which were seen to threaten post-Fordist society ; trade union pickets, terrorists, drug-users, hooligans and more generally, the dangerous young. In Chapter 2, I suggested that post-Fordism is characterised by the development of a 'two-thirds, one-third society'. The point about Thatcher's list of the damned is that those individuals who were in need of a dose of state discipline were either from those groups which opposed and threatened Thatcher's post-Fordist project or are part of the one-third who has been excluded from that project's benefits. Of course, both groups were closely related if not interchangeable ; those individuals who picketed in the hope of preserving their jobs in industry have been substantially relegated to the growing lumpenproletariat. Thatcher's response to the disasters of 1985 accorded with her understanding of how British society had to negotiate a passage to a post-Fordist settlement. It was, perhaps, not insignificant that on May 17th 1985, a government White Paper was released (which later became the 1986 Public Order Act), which was designed to curb mob violence on the picket lines and at soccer matches (*The Daily Telegraph* 17/5/85).

In the passage which I have cited above, Thatcher defined what kind of individuals needed to be isolated from society, but she did not clarify what she meant

by society. Her understanding of that latter is implied in a separate statement about football.

We have to have grounds that are safe for our families to go and safe from hooligans. (*The Daily Telegraph* 20/5/85:24)

Hooligans must be separated from 'families' and if we follow Thatcher's syllogism (that hooligans must be isolated from society, and that families should be safe from hooligans), we can infer that for Thatcher, on this occasion, society consisted of families. In other words, for Thatcher, the family constituted a critical site of social control - especially in the potentially dangerous affluence and mobility of post-Fordist society. Consequently, the family as a central disciplinary force had to be upheld and supported by the additional repressive force of the state ; where the family could not impose order, the state had to intervene by isolating those individuals who threatened decency. Thereby the state could leave the field free again for the respectable discipline of the family.

The disasters of 1985 were interpreted by Thatcher as evidence of the absence of familial discipline within football grounds ; they were open to hooligans, who were unconstrained by such discipline. The solution to that absence of discipline had to be the application of repressive state measures which would identify, isolate and punish those individuals, in the hope of re-inscribing those disciplinary codes within them. In this way, the ground would be free for the proper discipline of families encompassed in the security of the wider discipline of the state. As we shall see below, Thatcher's attempt to apply repressive state measures to football failed. However, her argument for the introduction of families as units of disciplined affluent consumption into the game was highly significant and dovetailed with the discourses of free market reform

which, it will be argued, in the next three chapters, were more successfully applied to football.

Before going on to discuss the Popplewell Report, I want to reflect very briefly on some other articulations of the authoritarian discourse to demonstrate that Thatcher's own arguments, although individually important because, as Prime Minister, she held a key position of primary definition, were not idiosyncratic but that they accorded with understandings which had a wider currency in British society. Rather, Thatcher's comments were typical of a wider conservative discourse which was articulated throughout the 1980s. Roger Scruton, the Oxford philosopher, was an important figure in this discourse and insisted on the centrality of the family as a site of social order.

It hardly needs saying, in the light of all that has gone before that the support and protection of this institution [the family] must be central to conservative outlook. (Scruton 1980:144).

It is unnecessary to delve into the depths of Scruton's thought here, as he is cited only to provide evidence for the claim that Thatcher's authoritarian response was in line with conservative thought during the 1980s. The conservative press followed a similar discursive line⁴, although there is not room here to examine those particular articulations more closely. The point is that at certain key points of definition, in the press and in government, social control by means of the state and the family was highlighted as the solution to the football's backwardness.

It should be added that although this authoritarian discourse was extensive, it was in no way universal. For instance, (and unsurprisingly) *The Guardian's* analysis of the Bradford fire brought Thatcher's appeal to authoritarian solutions into question.

In the spirit of humility, the government must recognise that the easy rhetoric which it has recently showered on football crowds and clubs is an opportunist

game which sacrifices public safety on the altar of public order. (*The Guardian* 13/5/85:12)

By this, *The Guardian* referred to the certainty that had the government's demands for more fencing in the grounds been realised, the scale of casualties at Bradford would have been exponentially worse ; as it was, with apparently easy access to the pitch, fifty-five people still died. The opposition stance of *The Guardian* should not be overstated, however, for, after Heysel, so difficult did the paper find it to defend the Liverpool fans that they themselves slipped into language close to Thatcher's own discourse of discipline. After the horror of the evening of 29th May, David Lacey, the football correspondent, wrote :

But would this [withdrawing from European competition] have any effect on the sort of boozed-up cretins who helped to bring about this tragedy? (*The Guardian* 31/5/85:22)

The term 'boozed-up cretins' is reminiscent of those individuals who form the foundation of the conservative arguments of Thatcher, Scruton et alia about the need for discipline imposed by the state. In the context of *The Guardian*, the phrase is particularly surprising as it breaks with the liberal orthodoxy which characterises the editorial line of that paper.

3. The Popplewell Report

There had been other judicial reports about football since the War⁵, usually following a fatal disaster but the context, a football 'crisis' and the overarching authoritarian response to that crisis, foregrounded Popplewell's findings and recommendations in a way which had not happened to previous reports. Furthermore, Popplewell, as I hope to show below, was heavily informed by the domineering authoritarian arguments which were current at the time and his recommendations

added weight to the discourse which argued for a disciplinarian solution to football's ills.

The disciplinarian framework of the Popplewell Report was apparent even in the very form of its commission by the government ; after the disasters of 11th May at Bradford and Birmingham, Thatcher ordered a single judicial inquiry into both of these quite separate and very different events. This decision to examine these events within the context of the same inquiry initiated a confusion which assisted the disciplinarian discourse to gain ground ; namely, the conflation of safety and control. There can be no doubting that the two are closely interrelated at a football ground as a poorly controlled or violent crowd is necessarily dangerous and therefore a threat to public safety. Yet, as the fire at Bradford demonstrated, the issues could be quite separate, where a perfectly well-behaved crowd might be in a situation of danger because of the negligent management of the ground. The debates about football in the 1990s were substantially concerned with making the grounds safe both in terms of their architectural features and the control of the crowd. The crucial point was that after the disaster of May 1985 and (with dwindling effect) up until the Hillsborough disaster of April 1989, the disciplinarian discourse, which was dominant, foregrounded the repressive control of the crowd above the architectural safety of the ground. It could, perhaps, be argued that this discourse was only finally discredited by the deaths of 96 individuals at Hillsborough, when it became obvious that the caging and constriction of the crowd which the disciplinarian discourse demanded was potentially and actually fatal.

The conflation of the issues of safety and control which informed the decision to commission a report which dealt with the two very different disasters continued to

feature as a central interpretive motif in the Popplewell report itself. After the fire at Bradford, there was quite extensive debate in various newspapers about the cause of the fire. Significantly, many accounts blamed the fire not on criminal negligence of the club, although the evidence for such neglect was overwhelming, but on certain male fans on the terraces at the ground. Furthermore, newspapers continued with these unfounded accusations even after they were in possession of the real reasons for the fire. Initially, the cause of the Bradford was widely believed to be a smokebomb which had been thrown into the stand from the adjacent terrace. Assistant Chief Inspector Domaille claimed that the fire had been started by a smokebomb (*Sunday Telegraph* 12/5/85:1) and by 14 May, the police had still not 'ruled out the possibility that a smokebomb may have been lobbed from a nearby terrace' (*The Daily Telegraph* 14/5/85:1). In order to denote hooliganism as the central issue on 11 May and to establish the disciplinary discourse as the interpretive framework, newspaper articles reinforced the simplistic notion of the relationship between safety and control as one of the mere restraint of hooligans ; each highlighting the dangerousness of the hooligan and the connection between the hooligan and fire. Thus *The Daily Telegraph* contained an article about smoke-bombs as part of the hooligan's armoury (14/5/85:3) and thereby foregrounded the connection of safety and control, hooligan and fire as primary to the understanding of Bradford.

This connection was made elsewhere when the paper foregrounded arson at football grounds as a issue of national concern. For instance, *The Daily Telegraph* reported the attempted arson of a stand at Fareham Football Ground (*The Daily Telegraph* 16/5/85:1). Normally, an event of such minimal interest would never have featured in the pages of the national press but the dominance of the disciplinary

discourse in 1985 in the light of Bradford, rendered this bungled arson meaningful ; it seemed to confirm that since certain individuals, described in the *Telegraph* piece as 'mindless morons', were capable of burning down a stand in Hampshire so it was also conceivable that these individuals could also have been responsible for a similar (but more successful) conflagration some three hundred miles north in Bradford.

The dominance of the disciplinarian discourse as the interpretive framework for football in the middle years of the last decade is most acutely evinced by the fact that discussions of smokebombs and hooligans continued even after the real cause of the fire was known. So deeply inscribed was the connection between safety and control, hooliganism and fire that the various definers of the issues could not relinquish this equation even when it was proved specious. On the 14 May 1985, the newspapers were already in possession of the real reason for the Bradford fire ; the build-up of combustible material due to decades of club negligence about the potential danger which this material constituted. For instance, *The Daily Telegraph* published extracts of letters which had been sent to Mr Terence Newman, Bradford City FC's Secretary, by the council concerning this potentially dangerous accumulation of detritus beneath the seats of the stand on 11th July, 18th July 1984 and 30th April 1985 (*The Daily Telegraph* 14/5/85:3). Tragically, the latter informed the club that a visit by the fire safety inspectors had been arranged for the week following the disaster. However, despite the fact that *The Daily Telegraph* knew the reason behind the fire, that reason was subordinated (on page three) below the titled theme of hooliganism.

The relevance of this survey of the newspapers' disciplinarian equation of safety-control-hooliganism-fire is that the Popplewell Report, itself, operated within

this substantially unmodified schema. The first task of the Report was to identify the cause of the fire, which it did with efficiency and accuracy.

1.35 The answer to the question of how the fire started, is that it was due to the accidental lighting of debris below the floor boards in rows I or J between the seats 141 to 143. (Popplewell 1985:6)

Justice Popplewell surmised that an individual (who subsequently died in the fire) had dropped a match or cigarette through the floor-boards onto the debris below.

Furthermore, not only had Popplewell identified the immediate cause of the fire but he was also fully aware of the quite staggering level of negligence at the club. The club failed to reply to a letter dated 18th July 1984, which pointed to the hazardous build-up of waste below the main stand. Only when the club gained promotion to the Second Division at the end of the 1984-5 season, did they arrange a meeting with the County Council's safety inspectors for the 15th May 1985 - because the higher division required better facilities (Popplewell 1985:20-21).

However, despite Popplewell's identification of both long-term and immediate causes of the fire and the fact that they had nothing to do with hooliganism, one of the principal recommendations of his findings at Bradford was that the police should have greater freedom to search crowds entering a football ground and that the possession of a smokebomb in the ground should be outlawed.

(3.41) I am minded to recommend, therefore, that in England and Wales the police be given unfettered right of search before entry to football grounds by Statute.

3.42 Smoke bombs may do no actual damage but the panic which they are likely to engender among spectators is very great. I recommend that consideration be given to making it a criminal offence in England and Wales to have a smoke bomb or similar device at sports grounds. (Popplewell 1985:16)

Despite the fact that his report demonstrated that smokebombs (and therefore hooliganism) had nothing whatsoever to do with the Bradford fire, one of

Popplewell's recommendations was to ban smokebombs. In other words, Popplewell's judicial expertise was focussed on an issue which had not claimed the life of one person at any Football League ground in the history of professional English football and had nothing to do with Bradford, thereby, deflecting his expertise away from the real causes of a event which had actually killed fifty-five individuals. Such a distortion of judicial insightfulness can only be explained by reference to the wider frame of understanding that was current at the time. As I tried to show above, the discourse of discipline was the dominant interpretive frame by which football was understood in the mid-1980s. Popplewell's judicial crusade against the mirage of the *smokebomb only* makes sense within the context of this wider dominant interpretative framework, in which the equation of safety-control-hooliganism-fire was paramount, for within the bounds of the evidence of the report his discussion of smokebombs is itself no more than a diversionary smokescreen.

Beyond the abolition of the smokebombs, Popplewell's report did little more than re-emphasise the rulings of the Green Guide, which had been instituted after Wheatley's report into the Ibrox disaster in 1971. Popplewell's analysis of the Bradford fire fell unwittingly back onto the disciplinary discourse which was dominant at the time but his examination of the Birmingham riot consciously and knowingly foregrounded the repressive measures, which Thatcher espoused so enthusiastically.

6.2 There seem to me to be four ways, apart from abolishing football altogether, in which hooliganism can be prevented at football grounds. They are :

1. Physically preventing hooligans who are in the ground from disturbing football matches.
2. If that is not possible , to prevent them attending football matches.
3. When they do behave like hooligans, to identify them.
4. When they are identified, to apprehend and punish them severely. (Popplewell 1985:41)

Popplewell's identification and isolation of the hooligan from football and society more generally echoes Thatcher's own ideas on how the hooligan had to be combated. His recommendations of repressive techniques accorded with Thatcher's project of the application of a strong state over those individuals who threatened her post-Fordist project of re-constructing Britain.

Popplewell goes on to consider the methods which might be employed to identify and exclude the hooligan. Significantly, he discussed the merits of all-seater stadia (Popplewell 1985:42, 6.16) but dismissed them on the grounds that hooligans wanted to stand and would use the seat as a weapon. Instead, Popplewell looked to more obviously restrictive measures of control. Firstly in order to prevent the admission of hooligans into the ground, Popplewell recommended a membership scheme (Popplewell 1985:46, 6.48). This membership scheme would exclude away fans and (therefore) necessarily hooligans as well from the ground. Popplewell accepted the marketing loss that this membership scheme would inflict on football.

6.42 It [the membership scheme] has, of course, obvious disadvantages for the club. Firstly, all gates are made up to some extent of visiting supporters ; numbers vary from match to match and from club to club, but on average they amount to some 10 per cent of the gate. Most clubs, I would suspect, would be willing to lose the revenue from that 10 per cent if they could have a violence-free game.

6.43 Membership will also effectively prevent the man or woman who on the spur of the moment wishes to go along to a match, the 'casual' visitor from so doing. That, in my view, is a price which the public and the club have to pay to reduce football violence. (Popplewell 1985:45)

In addition to excluding the hooligan, Popplewell had to recommend measures by which they might be identified. His principal means of identifying the hooligan was to recommend the introduction of close-circuit television at League grounds (Popplewell 1985:46, 6.54). In addition, Popplewell made several recommendations, which were

differentially significant ; the hurling of physical objects and obscene or racist abuse were both recommended as punishable criminal offences (Popplewell 1985:47-48, 6.57, 6.67). Finally, Popplewell endorsed the presence of perimeter fences as a means of control.

6.63 In Scotland, they [fences] are uncommon. At Birmingham they proved no obstacle. There is no doubt a limit to the amount of fortification which a club can reasonably introduce. But a standard, efficient perimeter fence with proper exits should not be difficult to design and provide. I therefore recommend that consideration be given to the design of a standard, efficient perimeter fence with proper exits. (Popplewell 1985:48)

That disciplinary endorsement for the control of the crowd by means of physical restriction was to be revealed as fatally flawed on 15th April 1989.

4. The Football Spectators' Bill

The disciplinary orientation of the Popplewell Report can be substantially attributed to the cultural context in which it was created. A central element of that culture, as I tried to argue in Chapter 2, was the project of Thatcherism. The Popplewell Report was, then, informed by Thatcherite notions of the need for a strong state, which was also articulated in various sections of the media, but the Report itself played into both the Thatcherite disciplinary discourse and the application of that discourse into policy measures.

Drawing on the Popplewell Report, the Thatcher government made many of his recommendations law in the form of the new Public Order Act of 1986 (*The Times* 1/1/87:3a). After much negotiation, the government ruled under the new Public Order Act that, from the beginning of the 1987-88 season, all clubs should have a membership scheme which covered at least half of their home support (*The Times* 9/8/87:1h, Crick and Smith 1990:164). This membership scheme was a temporary

measure which announced a much grander scheme of controlling entry into football grounds. After Heysel, Thatcher was determined to create a national identity card scheme in which every single supporter would have to have an identity card which they would present on admission to the ground. Of course, hooligan offenders would have their cards rescinded and would, therefore, be excluded from the ground - theoretically at least.

Thatcher gave Colin Moynihan the job of instituting this membership scheme. The debate over the national identity card scheme raged from the moment the temporary measure was brought in, until the publication of the Taylor Report in January 1990. The government formally announced the national membership scheme on 6 July 1988 and tried to introduce it as part of the Football Spectators' Bill, the White Paper of which would be proposed in the autumn of 1988 (*The Times* 17/6/88:1a). Significantly, the national membership scheme put Thatcher's focus on the control of the individual into practice, for the scheme operated around the premise of isolating violent individuals from each other and from law-abiding fans so that they could be excluded from the ground and punished by the law.

The introduction of a national identity scheme, under the Football Spectators' Bill, was to be the first and one of the few major defeats which Thatcher suffered throughout her Premiership. Although her belief in a strong state had articulated the sentiments of many sections of British society, the application of repressive measures onto football in the form of a national identity scheme was regarded by many as inappropriate and even counterproductive. Thus, the police opposed its introduction on the grounds that it would only delay entry into the grounds, thereby exacerbating tension and providing fans with a greater opportunity for confrontation outside the

grounds. All the clubs, the FA and the Football League were unanimously opposed to the scheme because it seriously threatened their revenue and did not promise to remove hooliganism anyway. Furthermore, the Labour Party, championed by the Wednesdayite, Roy Hattersley, and all vocal football fans were equally opposed to the scheme which they regarded as a threat to football's finances, as a potential infringement of their civil rights and as potentially ineffective anyway. Thatcherism did receive some support, however, notably from Murdoch's *Times* which regarded the imposition of identity cards as necessary.

Despite the overwhelming opposition which the Bill received from very diverse sections of British society, it was only Lord Justice Taylor's report into the Hillsborough disaster which finally tipped the balance against the national membership scheme. Thatcher could not be seen to dismiss a (highly regarded and detailed) report into the deaths of ninety-five supporters, especially since this report did not dismiss the scheme on the grounds of political rights (which Thatcher had ignored throughout her premiership) but simply because the scheme was finally impractical ; it was likely to create more problems than it solved and it was likely to be most easily circumvented by the very individuals whom the scheme was set up to exclude - the criminal hooligan (Taylor, P 1990:72-3).

Conclusion

The Taylor Report, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 8, was a centrally significant moment in the re-creation of English football in the 1990s because it effectively undercut the Thatcherite disciplinary discourse which had informed understandings of football since the early 1980s. Taylor articulated a different

interpretive framework which informed the reformation of football. In place of disciplinary solutions which suggested repressive statist methods of exclusion, control and punishment by the law and its officers, the Taylor Report presented an opportunity for the free market discourse to become the interpretive framework by which football should be transformed. Taylor himself did not, as I will argue below, envisage that he was releasing the waters of the free market into football, which had been dammed up behind the disciplinary discourse but, in the context of Thatcherite Britain, his vision of football could not be instituted except by means of the application of market forces and sales techniques, which had been successful in reformulating certain areas of the British economy by a very specific group of financial entrepreneurs.

Yet, the defeat of the first part of Football Spectators' Act should not be read as the annihilation of the discourse of discipline ; rather, as I will argue, it constituted merely a repositioning of repressive state measures in the project of Thatcherism and the development of post-Fordism in Britain more widely. Although the free market became the dominant framework of understanding, the discourse of the strong state constituted an important subtext in that encompassing framework ; close circuit television and more advanced police methods and longer prison sentences have all been introduced into football on the back of the discourse of discipline.

NOTES :

1 I derive the term 'interpellates' from Althusser, who uses it to describe the way in which ideologies appeal to certain individuals within the social structure. The word means to 'call out to' and Althusser suggests that individuals respond to ideologies which seem to reflect the experience of their position in the social structure (Althusser 1971:162-164).

2 This speech substantially repeated the themes of Thatcher's famous 'Barrier of Steel' speech in 1979. See Clarke, A, Taylor, I and Wren Lewis, J in Robbins, D (ed.) (1982) *Rethinking Social Inequalities* for an analysis of that speech.

3 In *Leviathan*, Hobbes famously argues that in nature humanity lived in a state of 'warre', 'of everyman against everyman'. The social contract operated by everyone agreeing to give up this basic and natural selfishness and concede to one indisputable authority.

4 See Peregrine Worsthorne's 'How to bring the mobs to order' (*Sunday Telegraph* 9/6/85), Gordon Brook-Shepherd's 'When the mood of a nation changes' (*Sunday Telegraph* 2/6/85:18) and Richard West's 'From great port to piggery' (*Spectator* 8/6/85:15-16).

5 There were seven post-War reports into football before the Popplewell Report ; the Moelwyn Hughes Report, 1946, (Bolton), the Chester Report (1968), the Harrington Report (1968), the Lang Report (1969) (both hooliganism), the Wheatley Report (1971) (Ibrox), the McElhone Report (1977), an Official Working Group on Football Spectator Violence (1984)

CHAPTER 7

FREE MARKET DISCOURSES

Although the authoritarian discourse was an important moment in the transformation of football and its recommendations did inform the new means of consuming football in the 1990s, that discourse was superseded (though not negated) by a free market discourse which argued that football had to be transformed by the application of certain market principles. The free market discourse consisted of three main arguments. Firstly, it argued that the Football League should be subject to the forces of the market like any other business ; the attrition of football clubs, which were poorly run or simply economically unviable, was necessary. Secondly, football clubs should adopt management practices in line with those of successful contemporary businesses ; in particular, the individuals who managed the finances of football clubs should demonstrate similar abilities and outlook as the new entrepreneurial business class, which was emergent in the 1980s. Finally, football should establish a relationship with its fans which accorded with that found in other businesses ; football fans had to become 'customers' while football clubs became leisure services which had to compete for these customers' patronage like any other business.

The free market discourse, which demanded these three reforms of the game, was related to other discourses, which were informed by the fundamental transformation of social relations as British society moved towards its peculiar form of post-Fordism. Thatcherism was a central element in the post-Fordist transformation of Britain and, as I outlined in Chapter 2, the free market was one of the guiding ideological principles of her political project. Thus, the application of free market discourses to football and the eventual adoption of the recommendations of this

discourse can be seen as part of the Britain's wider post-Fordist transformation.

Throughout the 1980s, the free market increasingly became the dominant commonsensical understanding of the way in which Britain should overcome the post-War settlement. The free market was successfully established as the dominant guiding principle because it was a method which seemed to promise to transform British society in line with the demands of the post-Fordist global economy, while at the same time preserving as much of the affluence which had been achieved under the Keynesian welfare state as possible.

However, as I argued in Chapter 1, post-Fordism is not a monolithic template which was always already in place in the 1980s and was simply applied to particular social milieus. Rather, certain ideas, such as the free market, were drawn upon to reformulate social relations as a potential solution to the collapse of the post-War settlement. The success of these reformulations in certain social spheres gradually established certain discourses as dominant and certain social formations as the appropriate form for British society in the post-Fordist global order. Thus, although it is possible to look back in the 1990s and see that these outlines constituted a fundamental shift, which reflected wider global developments, it would grossly simplify the transition to suggest that British post-Fordism somehow existed in abstract before it had come into being in specific social formations. In fact, the abstract, global concept of post-Fordism actually arrived after there had been substantial social transformation. The transformation of football from 1985 to 1995 was typical of this post-Fordist transformation. I am trying to argue that football was not consciously made 'post-Fordist' but rather it was reformed through discursive intervention in a way which corresponded with developments which were taking place

across the social formation, which have subsequently been called post-Fordist. This concept clarifies the developments with which we are concerned but we should avoid hypostatizing an analytical term so that it attains determination over the social processes which we are studying.

Although, the free market discourse was related to wider social developments and drew much of its force from its wider acceptance across the social formation of 1980s Britain, this discourse was not directly applied to football. On the contrary, the application of the free market was only achieved through substantial contestation and negotiation between agents in certain crucial and privileged sites of definition and those in subordinate positions. It is necessary to consider the social and temporal location of the free market discourse before going on to analyse its content, since that location reveals why the discourse was able to attain dominance as the interpretive framework for football's crisis.

1. The Social Location of the Free Market Discourse

In Chapter 4, I discussed Hall et al.'s concept of primary and secondary definition (1978:58-9). Hall et al. argue that the interpretation of social issues is central to the reproduction of social relations and they argue that certain agents have a greater influence over which interpretation is accepted because of their occupation of positions of authority. Hall et al argue that the media are central to this creation of an interpretive framework as the media communicate to the wider social formation. Thus Hall et al argue that the media hold a defining position in society but, they suggest, that this position is only one of secondary definition. The media foreground experts, to

whom they defer opinion, and it is these experts which hold positions of primary definition.

It is not at all certain that Hall et al. can sustain this numerical ordering of definition (Hall et al. 1978:58-9). The media do, indeed, articulate the views of those individuals and groups whom the media regard as significant but the media then both interpret these views and, crucially, choose whose views are regarded as relevant in the first place. The media, therefore, does not have the passive defining role which Hall et al imply in the term 'secondary definition' but rather the media are always active, although never entirely independent, in the creation of interpretive frameworks. In the light of this, it is perhaps worth dispensing entirely with Hall et al.'s numerical ordering and simply say that certain agencies attain a position of privileged definition in society. The notion of privileged definition is useful as it provides a degree of analytical flexibility, implying the fact that the role of definition is not permanent, but is constantly negotiated and changing according to social developments.

In this chapter I want to analyse the way in which certain broadsheet newspapers (*The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*) played a crucial role in interpreting the disasters of 1985 and the crisis of football more generally. The relevance of these newspapers to the transformation of football is that they hold a position of privileged definition - although the extent of that privilege varies. This position of privileged definition ensured that their interpretation of football's crisis and their remedy to it would be more likely to gain acceptance. Before we go onto consider the specific ways in which the press articulated the three elements of the free market discourse, it is necessary to

consider why these institutions felt impelled to articulate this particular discourse in the first place.

As I have argued, football is a ritual in which the values which inform relations and practices across the social formation are expressed and negotiated. In the 1980s, it was becoming increasingly intolerable that football should express values and ideas which were incompatible with the new social practices and new social relations as a society underwent historical change. In particular, the gulf between the way in which football organised itself and the methods which other institutions were adopting under Thatcherism was becoming increasingly wide. In the 1980s, the British press itself had undergone this transformation to post-Fordism, which was most vividly demonstrated in Murdoch's re-location of the New International titles (*The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sun* and *The News of the World*) from Fleet Street to Wapping. Thus, in the light of the reformation of the political economy of the press and the right-wing press's commitment to the Thatcherite programme of post-Fordist transformation, the increasing incongruousness of football was particularly galling.

It is important here to avoid exaggerating either the internal coherence within single newspapers themselves or the consensus between newspapers (such as *The Times* and *The Guardian*). For instance, the sports journalists on the newspapers were likely to have different views of particular events (such as the disasters of 1985 and of Hillsborough) than the news journalists and editors¹. This account of the press's role in establishing the free market discourse as the dominant interpretive framework for the reform of football acknowledges the discursive disunity of the press, even within the same publication, and that the establishment of this framework within the press was consequently, the result of substantial contestation. Nevertheless, since this

chapter is concerned only with the articulation of the free market discourse in the press, the elements of discord and incoherence in press accounts are not explored. This is a heuristic rather than theoretical decision. However, having said that, it is maintained that, despite moments of opposition in elements of the press, the free market discourse became the dominant means of understanding the crisis of football in the 1980s and that the editors who espoused the market headlined this discourse in the papers' responses to football's crisis. Thus the press played a crucial role in establishing the free market as the dominant discourse which would inform the new consumption of football in the 1990s.

A major reason for this headlining of the free market was that newspapers (and particularly the editors who were directly responsible to their capitalist employers, the title's owners) did not want to organise a substantial part of their publication around a subject which communicated values, which sat uneasily with the newspapers' understanding of themselves, their relationships to their readership and their notion of British society. As Lash and Urry would argue (1994); the newspapers sold sign values for consumption ; they communicated understandings which informed and expressed individuals' identities. Football was an important sign value for the newspapers and, indeed, among the tabloids it was critical. Consequently, it was especially important to the newspapers that football communicated the 'correct' understandings i.e. the ones by which the now vast media multinationals, of which the newspapers were a part, operated and by which social relations should now be informed. British national newspapers did not only decry football's condition simply because it was plainly in contradiction with the development of society as a whole but also because the sign value of football was increasingly at odds with the papers'

images of themselves. As the discussion of the variety of disasters which afflicted Britain in the 1980s demonstrated, there was a host of anomalies in British society, to which the papers could have devoted endless column inches. Instead football was a principal focus of the press's gaze ; that intense regard can only be explained by the symbolic position of football in British society, its fundamental role in the symbolic value of newspapers and its incompatibility with the understandings by which the papers operated and therefore attempted to communicate to its readership.

The press does not communicate a universal message across the whole social formation but rather the capitalist conglomerates, which now own the press, consciously market themselves to specific social groups. Crudely, the broadsheets are generally directed at and read by the service and capitalist classes. There is a notable divide here between the public sector service class, on the one hand, and private sector service class and the capitalist class, on the other, for whereas the public sector professionals have a strong affiliation to *The Guardian*, the private sector professionals typically read *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* and *The Financial Times* (among a specialised section of the service and capitalist class).

Due to the availability of certain research resources, my analysis of the press's articulation of the free market discourse is limited to these four broadsheets. The importance of the tabloid newspapers is not questioned but, my focus on the broadsheets, is justified because the transformation of football was effected by a certain entrepreneurial section of the capitalist class and it is, consequently, essential to understand how this class fragment - the new business class - became involved in football and initiated a project of reformation in the game. I want to suggest that the newspapers were a central element in this process since they both pointed up football

as requiring reform and these publications suggested reforms, which might transform the game into a profitable part of the leisure industry.

2. The Temporal Location of the Free Market Discourse

Although the free market discourse had been articulated subtextually in the newspapers from the 1960s and had featured more openly in official reports on the finances of the sport and in a sporadic academic discussion of the finances of football ², the significant conjunctural moment in which the free market discourse was most forcefully promoted and in which it was most likely to meet with wide acceptance across the social formation (and among the service and capitalist classes in particular), was in the period between 1985 and 1989 : the crisis of football.

However, as I have suggested in the previous chapter, this crisis was in no way self-evident but substantially informed by the press's perception of *the game*. In particular, the press had since the 1960s increasingly regarded the financial organisation of the Football League to be inappropriate to emerging political economic realities ³. Consequently, the disasters of 1985 were interpreted with a long history of growing dissatisfaction about football on the part of the press, especially since football was a central symbolic value by which the newspapers sold themselves. The conjunctural moment of 1985-89, when the press insisted on the application of the free market to football, therefore, was not given by the events themselves but by the disposition of the press, which was determined by their changed understanding of both themselves and of wider British society.

3. The Free Market Discourse

A. Attrition

Following the fire at Bradford and the riot at Birmingham, *The Daily Telegraph* was the first paper to apply the free market idea of attrition to the Football League as a means of bringing the game into line with the understandings and practices which were by the mid-1980s establishing themselves as typical in emergent British post-Fordist society.

The time is fast approaching when only a handful of big clubs, such as Tottenham, Liverpool, Everton and Manchester United will earn sufficient money to cope with renovation and replacement. (*The Daily Telegraph* 13/5/85:21)

Significantly, the (conjunctural) free market discourse promoted exactly those clubs which organic developments since the 1960s had privileged.

However, the definitive (conjunctural) statement of the necessity of the attrition of the weaker League clubs and the privileging of the big city clubs was provided by *The Sunday Times* in a renowned leader, entitled 'Putting the Boot In' a week after the Bradford fire.

Reassessment should start from the fairly obvious fact that it [football] must stand or fall on its popularity. If people do not want to watch a match then there is no reason in the world why 22 men should be paid to play it. Football, like any other professional entertainment, is nothing if it does not draw crowds on its own merits. Subsidising entertainment is a contradiction in terms. (*The Sunday Times* 19/5/85:16a)

Clubs should confront the full force of the market and those which were incapable of sustaining themselves on their own merits, should be allowed to go out of business.

The leader continued in this free market vein, prescribing a role for the state which was typical in Thatcherite ideology and discourse.

The perception of the game's health goes very well with what should be the government's important but narrow role. When all the necessary inquiries have been made, the government should lay down strict requirements for the security of all football grounds, from fire to safety to violence. Clubs should be given a minimum period of time to meet those requirements. Those that fail should be closed down. Since improvements are likely to be expensive only those clubs that can attract large gates will be likely to afford them. The rest will go. This would be no bad thing; most of England's 92 'first class' clubs are, in fact, distinctly third rate.

Articulating a central tenet of Thatcherism, the leader regarded the state's duty as being no more than to create the boundaries in which the market forces would then be free to operate. In this case those boundaries were to be a set of stadium standards. The significance of these stadium standards, and their enforcement by the strong state, is that they would accelerate the process of free market attrition ; only those clubs which were financially viable would be able to afford the necessary renovations. So by releasing the free market into the game and enforcing the regulations of the strong state, the leader sought to reform the League.

The leader concluded with a final argument against protecting the smaller clubs from the forces of the free market.

Subsidy will do no more than help keep football miserably alive, like a clapped-out Victorian factory producing a product nobody wants to buy. After Bradford, such an approach would be unforgivable.

The leader's conclusion is particularly significant because it extended the terms of reference from the advocacy of a free market in football to a more general project of reform of the whole of Britain in the face of the challenge of post-Fordism. Just as the (Thatcherite) post-Fordist project in Britain has allowed the inefficient sections of industry to wither away unprotected by the state from market forces, so should poor football clubs be similarly sacrificed. The leader's argument then draws a direct analogy between inefficient British industry and the badly run English football

club ; it is perhaps significant that the two are often situated in the same northern towns. Consequently, the leader demonstrates the symbolic role of the clubs - they are supposed to communicate the values which are current within the wider society. The poorer clubs fail to communicate those values because they have failed to adapt to the new political economic conditions. Furthermore, as I argued in the discussion of sponsorship in Chapter 4, the growing independence of the big city clubs was itself symbolic of wider transformations because these big clubs were metonymic of the growing concentration of capital in the form of multinational corporations. The big clubs became symbolic of the necessity of the concentration of capital in the face of market competition.

The dominance of the free market discourse as the interpretive framework is revealed by the fact that *The Guardian*, the broadsheet which is most typically opposed to Thatcherism as a central programme of post-Fordist reform, responded to the crisis of football in a manner which closely echoes that of the other sections or the press and even *The Sunday Times*' 'Putting the Boot In'.

Terraces on our big grounds pack in more spectators than the seated areas where no surges can occur. Scrapping the terraces, installing all seats, would cost money. So what? The clubs gripped by market forces have never struck a balance between transfer fees and civilised facilities for the millions whose five pounds a time make them possible. (*The Guardian* 7/4/89:18)

The Guardian's account of Hillsborough (which falsely attributes to the disaster to surges on large terraces rather than to fencing) demands the renovation of the grounds, whatever the cost. *The Guardian* implies that the clubs should be forced to spend money, which they have traditionally reserved for players, on the safety of the ground. The clubs should pay for the renovation of the grounds themselves (out of money used for transfers). Furthermore, the phrase, 'so what?', stresses that the

potential financial hardship which these renovations might cost were not significant ; if clubs went out of business as a result of these necessary transformations, then that has to be accepted.

The Guardian's outrage at the negligence of clubs, which have been content with dangerous grounds, was justified ; it was a travesty that clubs had risked the lives of their patrons to save money. However, the way in which this article expressed that outrage accorded closely with a free market discourse which both implied and, as we shall see, assisted in setting football on a line of development, which *The Guardian's* more typical editorial line would oppose. In short, *The Guardian* in this moment of outrage espoused a course of reformation which implied the attrition of smaller league teams, with the concomitant redundancies for professional footballers which that would incur.

B. Management Practices

The second strand of the free market discourse was the call for the institution of proper management practice in football clubs. The demand for the introduction of management practices, which were in line with contemporary business, was, of course, related to the demand that clubs should be unprotected from the force of the market, for, in the free market, only those businesses which were run properly had any chance of survival.

football clubs will flirt with bankruptcy so long as their financing continues to be unconventional by business standards (*The Financial Times* 7/1/84:15f).

However, the way in which the press articulated the demand for the introduction of the modern management practices - principally financial stringency - carried with it socially significant implications.

The call for new management practices actually called for a quite explicit transformation in the personnel who inhabited the directors' box at football grounds. In particular, various sections of the press looked to the emergent entrepreneurial fragment of the capitalist class as the necessary successors to the provincial businessmen who generally comprised the Boards of clubs in the early 1980s. The financial incompetence and complacency of these 'traditional' directors, which will be discussed in chapter 10, was highlighted in various press accounts as a fundamental precipitating factor in both the disasters of 1985 specifically and the more general crisis of football. *The Sunday Times* responded to Heysel with a leader which echoed 'Putting the Boot in'.

Stern action against violence has been resisted for the same reason that stadiums have been allowed to remain as tinder-boxes : it might hurt the pockets of those who do well out the sport. As long as local worthies in sheepskin coats can sip their gin-and-tonic in the director's box at half-time and gain a bit of status and profit in the process what does it matter what is happening among the masses on the terraces? (*The Sunday Times* 2/6/85:15-16)

The Sunday Times sneered at the 'traditional' directors of football clubs, implying that they were pompous - 'worthies' who relished only status - but, more importantly, that they were essentially incompetent and amateurish. They are not interested in establishing football on a properly business-like and profitable basis.

Newspapers suggested individuals who might introduce the correct business practices into football and thereby prevent any repetitions of Bradford, Heysel and

Hillsborough. Those chairmen who conformed to the newspapers' notion of the kind of businessmen which football required were singled out for praise.

The time-honoured characteristics that have marked the way European's great soccer clubs have been run - mindless conservatism and pompous megalomania - have been swept away on a tide of money. As a result, the motley crew of minor entrepreneurs which controlled these clubs is being squeezed out by the captains of multi-national commerce. (*The Financial Times* 5/1/91:xxvii)

The Financial Times is quite specific then about the social location of the individuals whom football required for its reformation. In place of the provincial and backward businessmen, football needed members of the capitalist class, who are aware of the workings of the post-Fordist global economy.

The Financial Times implies that it might have found the kind of figure which it outlined in the article cited above, when the paper published a profile of Martin Edwards, the chairman of Manchester United, some months later.

He [Edwards] has run the club full-time and looks more like a sober northern businessman than a football manqué : not for him the coiffed hair, Riviera tan and tendency to call women 'sweetheart'. (*The Financial Times* 22/4/91:26d)

The press, therefore, highlighted a particular class fraction - provincial businessmen with small capital interests - as being responsible for the malaise in football. At the same time, the press specified the replacement for these individuals, laying the ground for the emergence of an entrepreneurial capitalist class fragment who operated at the level of the global economy.

C. Creating the Customer

I have argued that the first strand of the free market discourse was the advocacy of the attrition of those football clubs which could not withstand the

competitive pressures of the free market. The press, which argued for the release of the free market into football, suggested that clubs would have to adopt proper management practices into football. Thus the competitive free market would not only sweep away financially weak clubs but would also rid football of those amateurish and provincial businessmen who controlled those clubs. For the press, then, the free market provided two potential and important benefits which would assist in aligning football with the emergent post-Fordist social formation.

However, if we return to the quotations in section 1.A, it will be noted that the press's support for the free market was linked to another programme of reform. The crucial role, for which the free market was promoted by the press, was to force clubs to transform their facilities in line with the norms and standards of other parts of the leisure industry which competed with football in the competitive post-Fordist market.

the government should lay down strict requirements for the security of all football grounds, from fire to safety to violence. (*The Sunday Times* 19/5/85:16a)

The application of strict stadium requirements to football would serve a dual purpose because it would weed out those clubs which were financially weak and who could not meet the (strong) state's requirements but, more importantly, the improvement of the stadia was seen as a strategy which would improve the market position of football. As the *Sunday Times* leader argued 'football must stand or fall on its popularity' ; the point of the implementation of the stadium requirements was that they would improve the popularity of the game - more people would be attracted to the game, knowing that they did not have to suffer the dangers and indignities of standing on a terrace.

This renovation of the grounds would, therefore, transform the relation between the club and the fans ; through the provision of better facilities the club would

begin to create a closer relationship with the fan, whose needs the club would try to service. In other words, the reformation of the stadia, implied that the relationship between the fans and clubs would accord to that more widely found in the leisure industry ; the fans were to become customers.

In the discourses which followed Bradford and Heysel in 1985, the transformation of the fan into a customer was muted by the vehement attacks on the 'traditional' directors and on the need for the attrition of clubs. After Hillsborough, in 1989, however, this transformation of the grounds and the concomitant transformation of the relationship between the club and the fan was foregrounded.

All-seater stadiums and fewer all-professional clubs may be part of the answer but it is definitely time for the spectator to be treated as a paying customer and not as a dangerous nuisance. (*The Financial Times* 17/4/89:10)

The Guardian article, which was cited in section 1.A, as evidence of this paper's uncharacteristic espousal of the free market concluded with a sharp sentence which implied the way in which the paper thought that football should reformulate its relationship with the fan :

The paying customer always comes second to a good inside forward. (*The Guardian* 17/4/89:18)

By setting stadium standards and then enforcing them through means of the state and the free market, the papers were essentially proposing a new relationship between fan and club ; the fan was now a customer, the club a service. This apparently minor change actually involved a quite substantial re-negotiation of social relations which will be discussed in Part IV. However, although I want to leave the discussion of these struggles over the creation of the football customer, the press was as specific

about the social characteristics of the new football customer, as they had been about the individuals who should replace the 'traditional' directors.

The social location of the 'customer' was forcefully articulated in the opening sentence of *The Sunday Times*'s leader, 'Putting the Boot In', cited above.

British football is in crisis ; a slum sport played in slum stadiums increasingly watched by slum people, who deter decent folk from turning up. (*The Sunday Times* 19/5/85:16a)

For *The Sunday Times*, the central problem facing English football in the 1980s was that its dilapidated grounds attracted 'slum people'. It must be assumed by this term that *The Sunday Times* meant the lower reaches of the working class and, in particular, the growing lumpenproletariat - that 'one-third' which has been marginalised as Britain has moved towards post-Fordism.

For *The Sunday Times*, then, football was in crisis because it was watched by the wrong social classes, i.e. poor people, (and was administered by the wrong capitalist class fraction as well). This incorrect social location of football's fandom among the lumpenproletariat suggested that the argument for the transformation of football fans into customers was similarly socially specific. From *The Sunday Times*' leader, it can be inferred that the slum people are not customers (because they are poor) and, therefore, the hidden assumption in this discourse is that the difference between the slum people and the new customer is simply one of social position and wealth. The customer is a rhetorical term which refers to the re-marketing of football away from the periphery and back into the core of British post-Fordist society. The renovation of football grounds is not then, in the free market discourse, designed to turn the lumpenproletariat into customers but rather replace these individuals with 'decent folk' ; the respectable members of the white-collar workforce and the service

class. The term 'customer' then refers to those individuals who occupy social locations in which they are willing and able to pay more money for their leisure pursuits.

The social re-location of football into the affluent core of post-Fordist society through the rhetoric of the customer, was made explicit in other commentaries on football's crisis which were made at the time.

the game drifts slowly into the possession of what we are now supposed to call the underclass ; and a whole middle class public grows up without ever dreaming of visiting a Football League ground. (Russell Davies, 'Cockpits of Ignobility', *The Sunday Times* 28/8/83:12g)

By improving the grounds, and thereby turning the football fan into a customer, and bringing football in line with other leisure industries, the game would attract this middle class audience which did not attend games during the 1980s.

The re-location of football into the affluent core of British society, which is implied by the process of turning the football fan into a customer, also crucially involved a feminization of support. In order to broaden football's market and to reduce the level of disorder in the ground, by curbing aggressive masculinity, the free market discourse argued that women and family groups should be encouraged to attend by the renovation of the stadia. The importance of this free market argument for the introduction of women and families (as customers) to football was that it marked the point at which this discourse linked with the authoritarian discourse of the last chapter. The affluent family, socially located within the core of British post-Fordist society, promised to solve football's crisis because the family was a disciplined social unit, which crucially included women⁴ and which would also spend much more money in the ground than the groups of single male supporters. The importance of the introduction of families into the game, to replace the poorer masculine support is

evinced in a number of statements. For instance, Philip Carter, the chairman of Everton and President of the Football League from 1986-88, argued that :

Clubs are already individually helping to bring families and children back to football and the gates are up. (*The Times* 3/12/86:42c)

For Carter then, the re-introduction of families constituted an important and optimistic development for football. In point of fact, the idea that football was 'bringing families back' was incorrect as families had never attended football as units in the past.

Working class men would bring their sons (but rarely other family members) to the game. Nevertheless, this 'invention of tradition' legitimated the clubs' familial strategy and thereby demonstrated the importance with which it was invested by the clubs. If the introduction of families as customers to the game had been of little importance to the clubs they would not have taken the effort to highlight the strategy in discourse and to legitimate it by appeals to tradition. The call for this familiar strategy was articulated by those involved in the administration of the game as well. Graham Kelly, the Secretary of the Football League argued that sixty-seven clubs had family enclosures but that :

these must be enlarged and extended, as all clubs must follow this lead. (*The Times* 2/1/87:23d)

Although the notion of the customer was part of a wider discourse which itself accorded with the understandings and interests of certain class fractions (and legitimated the project of those fractions), this does not somehow imply that the notion of the customer was fictitious - a mere conspiratorial invention. On the contrary, the very force of the free market discourse lay in the fact that it based itself in social experience, as it was widely interpreted in the 1980s. Firstly, the Football League grounds in England of the 1980s *were*, by and large, a disgrace ; they were

unsanitary and dangerous. Secondly, not only were fans provided with poor facilities but they were treated poorly by the club ; ticketing and entrance to games were frequently disorganised - often dangerously so ⁵. Thirdly, there can be no denying the brutishness which often characterised terrace culture. By the mid-1980s, football grounds required thorough refurbishment and the culture of the crowd required some reformation. The success of the free market discourse and especially its argument for the creation of a football customer lay in the fact that it recognised the deficiencies of English football grounds (and its fandom) and, while many liberals still maintained a romantic view of the authenticity of impoverished grounds, the proponents of the free market were, as we have seen, forthright in their condemnations. Since the free market discourse based its arguments on the reality of the experience of football in the 1980s - a reality which was recognised across a wide social formation - it was able to command greater support.

Although the free market discourse was expedited by the fact that it accurately represented the more unsavoury aspects of football in the 1980s, the success of the discourse was also crucially assisted by its connection to wider organic developments. The free market discourse was part of a nascent interpretive framework which was already attaining dominance in British culture by the mid-1980s. The recommendations of the free market discourse paralleled the wider acceptance of the free market as the socially most acceptable solution to the collapse of the post-War settlement. Just as Thatcherism's free market doctrine promised to preserve as much of the affluence gained during the post-War period as possible but, at the same time, reform Britain in line with the new requirements of the post-Fordist global order, so did the free market discourse provide the means of resolving the crisis of football which was most in line

with the organic political economic developments both within the game and wider society. For instance, the demand for the attrition of the financially weak corresponded to the political economic trend which was the substance of Part II. The call for new management practices accorded with wider social and economic developments where the fragmentation of Fordist markets had been exploited by a new entrepreneurial business class, which by the mid-1980s was gaining some solidity. Finally, the demand for the transformation of football fans into customers was the simplest strategy for improving the finances of football since, as I have shown, the call for the introduction of relations in football which were typical of other leisure industries actually amounted to a demand for the social re-location of football to the core of post-Fordist society. This was the simplest method of improving the finances of football, since the new fans which the customer ethic promised to attract were more wealthy than the young, male supporters who had comprised the majority of any club's support since the 1960s.

D. Resistance to the Free Market Discourse

Despite the forcefulness of the free market discourse and its strong connection to organic developments, it was not monolithic ; there were other interpretations of the crisis of football even within newspapers, where the sports journalists' views sometimes differed markedly from the more general editorial line. For instance, although I have argued that *The Guardian* aligned itself to the Thatcherite discourse of the free market, that publication also expressed sporadic opposition to the programme of reform which the free market discourse proposed, which was more consistent with its typically oppositional stance to the direction of Britain's post-Fordist transformation. That oppositional stance was most clearly articulated after

Hillsborough in a piece by Jeremy Seabrook, the left-wing intellectual. There, Seabrook turned the free market discourse on its head, arguing that the free market was not the solution to the crisis of football and the means of preventing future catastrophes (as 'Putting the Boot in' had maintained) but rather, that the free market was the cause of the disaster itself. Seabrook argued that football was :

no longer a Saturday afternoon pastime but part of a remorseless machine for making money : how fitting that the advertising hoardings had to serve in place of absent stretchers. (*The Guardian* 17/4/89:19).

The opposition to the free market discourse was sporadic within the press throughout the 1980s and, although this opposition position was adopted by large sections of the masculine fandom, it has remained a subordinate discourse into the 1990s⁶.

The subordination of this discourse is to be explained by both the organic development of British society and the positions of privileged definition which were held by those who promoted the free market discourse. The free market discourse accorded most closely with the developing understandings which informed the transformation of social relations which was well under way in 1980s Britain ; crucially those discourses linked with and were supported by Thatcherism. Furthermore, the discourse was articulated from key sites of communication by members of the service and capitalist classes. In the case of the broadsheet newspapers the free market discourse was communicated to other sections of the service and capitalist class, which had the effect of establishing the free market as a commonsense across the dominant social classes. Opposition discourses, therefore, faced a very difficult struggle as they had to resist a discourse which was articulated by nascent class fragments. Furthermore, since these nascent class fragments and the discourse by which they expressed their dominance were actually the outgrowth of much wider social

transformations - they were part of Britain's wider historical response to the collapse of Fordism - opposition discourses were particularly stretched. As we shall see (in Chapter 11), this did not render those discourses irrelevant but it did limit their effect ; they simply could not command the same level of support across the nascent social formation, of which the free market arguments were capable.

Conclusion

In the following chapters, we will see how the free market discourse was implemented but also resisted in football. I have argued above that the organic development of football and the wider social transformation of Britain assisted in the acceptance of the free market as the dominant interpretive framework for the reformation of the game. However, as I argued in Chapter 1, discourse as part of a conjunctural moment is dialectically related to wider organic developments which give rise to it ; certain discourses are privileged by those developments and promote the very developments of which they were part. The importance of the free market discourse was, then, not only that it arose in a conjunctural moment in the mid-1980s as a result of organic development in football but it assisted in the transformation of the game in line with those developments. In particular, the free market discourse both supported the 'new business class' and recommended that they might usefully and profitably organise the transformation of football. In this way, the free market discourse provided the important role of connecting a project to a social group which was capable of actualising that project. In Chapter 10, we will examine the implementation of this project by the new business class.

NOTES :

1 These differential positions even within a single title were revealed in an interview with Henry Winter, the football correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph* and formerly of *The Independent*.

When you do get big disasters at football, you get non-football journalists making their comments known. Editors who will come in and they will have a non-football perspective on things. Now, lots of the stuff they come out with is pure nonsense. But it immediately broadens the football issues on to a national level and I think when things are discussed in areas outside of football pages and when the government gets involved because they realise it is not a localised issue but a general issue which affects everyone - even the editors and leader writers are getting involved, And of course, editors have an amazing amount of power ; they deal with politicians on a daily basis and they can influence people that way. (Winter, personal interview 16/8/94)

Winter continued ;

I invariably laugh when I see things written on other pages. Because A. they either get facts wrong which is just silly research. B. The things they write about tend to be - they're talking about things which everyone in the game knows has been part of the game for the last year. (Winter, personal interview, 16/8/94)

Winter thus reveals the substantial divide in the administration of the papers between the sports pages and the news and leader columns. Although this divide is acknowledged in this thesis, I do not go into how the free market discourse became dominant in the newspapers in the 1980s for reasons of space. Rather, I have had to limit my account to acknowledging the fact that there was some contestation but focussing on the free market discourse because it was ultimately successful in achieving dominance.

2 The following reports articulated certain free market ideas for the reformation of the game : PEP (1966) , Department of Education and Science (The first Chester report) (1968), Commission of Industrial Relations (1974), Chester (1983). Academic economic studies of football include ; Arnold, A and Beneviste I. (1987), (1987), Beneviste, I (1985), Bird.(1982), Sloane (1969,1971,1980), Skymanski and Smith (1993), Sutherland, R and Haworth, M (1986).

3 See for instance *The Times* (6/12/60:13c, 14/4/61:5f)

4 It is not being argued here that the family necessarily includes a (patriarchal) husband, wife and children. Rather, I am simply suggesting that in the discourses of reform which were articulated in the press and by the new business class, this essentialist notion of the family was envisaged.

5 See Hornby 1994:128-9

6 See Corry, Williamson and Moore(1993)

CHAPTER 8

THE TAYLOR REPORT AND *ITALIA '90*

On 15th April 1989, ninety-five Liverpool fans ¹ were crushed at the Leppings Lane End of Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough Stadium at the start of an FA Cup Semi-Final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest. The particular circumstances of this disaster - the allocation of tickets, the police's administration of the crowd, the inadequate turnstile arrangements - and the removal of critical crush barriers cannot be discussed here. Rather, I want to examine the Taylor Report ², which was commissioned by the government in response to the disaster, to try and highlight the connections between this report, the authoritarian and free market discourses and the transformation of football in the 1990s.

The primary point in any discussion of the Taylor Report was the unexpected breadth and insightfulness of its recommendations. As Lord Justice Taylor himself commented of football :

What is required is the vision and imagination to achieve a new ethos in football. Grounds should be upgraded. Attitudes should be more welcoming. The aim should be to provide more modern and comfortable accommodation, better and more varied facilities, more consultation with the supporters and more positive leadership. (P. Taylor 1990:12)

In his Final Report, Taylor outlined how this 'new ethos' might be created in football. Although Taylor made seventy-six demands (1990:76-82) in all, the report made two fundamental recommendations (both of which were implemented). Firstly and famously, Taylor recommended the introduction of all-seat accommodation at football grounds ;

61. There is no panacea which will achieve total safety and cure all problems of behaviour and crowd control. But I am satisfied that seating does more to achieve those objectives than any other single measure. (P. Taylor 1990:12)

Secondly, Taylor ruled against the national membership scheme which had been proposed in Part I of the Football Spectator's Act (1990:75). In addition to these central recommendations, Taylor simultaneously suggested certain measures for the control of the crowd ; close circuit television should be installed at grounds, that any fencing which did remain should be no more than 2.2 metres high, with sufficient exits; and obscene and racist abuse, the throwing of missiles and pitch invasion should be made offences. The latter was a mediated method of control as the type of chanting and aggressive behaviour which Taylor outlawed was likely to precipitate violence in the ground ; through banning these practices Taylor sought to create an atmosphere in the ground which was less conducive to violence. In addition to these negative measures, Taylor also recommended methods by which better relations might be established with fans ; he suggested that fans might be consulted (1990:23) to 'enlist the goodwill and help of the decent majority' and that membership and family areas be extended (1990:23).

Although I want to argue that the recommendations which Taylor made in his Final Report were related to wider discourses - the demand for all-seater grounds was articulated in all the broadsheets, which I examined in the last chapter, in the aftermath of Hillsborough (*The Times* 17/4/89:1, *The Daily Telegraph* 17/4/89:20, *The Financial Times* 17/4/89, *The Guardian* 17/4/89:18), Taylor cannot be linked straightforwardly to Thatcherite arguments for the free market and the strong state. However, the Taylor Report can be connected in a circumspect way to free market discourse by Taylor's suggestion that football fans should to be treated with the respect due to the consumer in other spheres. Furthermore, despite his rejection of Thatcher's identity card policy, he still espoused certain important disciplinarian

methods of control. Taylor was not Thatcherite, then, but some of his recommendations brought him close to some of the positions which were part of Thatcherite discourse.

1. The Taylor Report

A. Methods of Control

90. I therefore conclude and recommend that designated grounds under the 1975 Act should be required in due course to be converted to all-seating. I do so for the compelling reasons of safety and control already set out. (P. Taylor 1990:16)

Taylor' preference for seating stemmed partly from his belief that a sedentarised crowd was more controllable. Firstly, seating ordered the crowd, so that the spontaneous surges of the terraces could not occur. The control which seating had over the crowd should not be overstated, for as various incidents have demonstrated (e.g. the Luton-Millwall riot in 1985, the Ireland-England friendly in March 1995), hooliganism was possible from seats and it seems that Taylor, himself, was realistic about the control which seating alone could have over determined troublemakers.

Put together with progress towards all-seating, improved accommodation, better facilities, improved arrangements for crowd control, and better training of police and stewards, I believe these measures would give the best chance of eliminating or minimising football hooliganism. (Taylor 1990:75)

For Taylor, seating and these other controlling measures could not be guaranteed to eliminate hooliganism, only that it was the best available option. The most attractive aspect of seating was not that it could physically restrain bad behaviour but that it made the identification of fans much easier, especially with the

installation of CCTV with its 'detection and evidential potential' (Taylor 1990:75), which Taylor recommended alongside seating.

Apart from comfort and safety, seating has distinct advantages in achieving crowd control. It is possible to have disturbances in a seated area and they have occurred, but with the assistance of CCTV the police can immediately zoom in with a camera and pinpoint the seats occupied by the troublemakers as well as the trouble-makers themselves. (Taylor 1990:12)

In addition, to creating a panoptic arena (Foucault 1979) in which offenders could be easily identified, seating offered a second potential means of control because seating was intended to encourage the attendance of disciplined (respectable) families, in place of more violently disposed young males. For example, in discussing family and membership areas, Taylor argued that family and membership schemes.

had the dual advantage of creating areas of reliable good behaviour and offering discounts. (Taylor 1990:23)

The Final Report performed an important service to the authoritarian discourse which was a central current in arguments about the reform of football. Crucially, Taylor's recommendations for the control of the crowd were practically possible ; unlike the national membership scheme.

In the last chapter, I argued that the success of certain discourses in gaining acceptance across the wider social formation lay in the fact that they did address real social problems in a manner which was recognisable to many sections of society. The success of Taylor's recommendations seems to have been very substantially due to the fact that his enlightened and moderate approach appealed to the perceptions and preferences of wide sections of British society. Taylor's particular success was that he hit upon *moderate disciplinary measures which were necessary to curb the serious problem of hooliganism in the 1980s but ones which were, above all, practical.*

B. The New Consumption of Football

In the last chapter, I argued that the free market discourse consisted of three strands - attrition, good management and the creation of the customer. Lord Justice Taylor was not a free marketeer in any explicit sense - he had no ideological commitment to this policy or to Thatcherism more generally, as his rejection of her national membership scheme demonstrated. However, the 'new ethos' which Taylor wanted to see implemented in football and which his report was designed to facilitate drew Taylor close to the third strand of the free market discourse. Taylor's recommendations for the transformation of the game were designed to bring football into line with the standards expected of other leisure industries.

Football spectators are invited by the clubs for entertainment and enjoyment. Often, however, the facilities provided for them have been lamentable. Apart from the discomfort of standing on a terrace exposed to the elements, the ordinary provisions to be expected at a place of entertainment are sometimes not merely basic but squalid. (Taylor 1990:5)

The significance of this passage is that Taylor highlights the anomaly between the ideal that informs the leisure industry more widely and the reality of the football club.

Taylor asserts that the spectator (not the fan, it should be noticed) attends the game for entertainment and enjoyment, as a consumer might attend the cinema or any other facility, at the football ground but they are faced with poor facilities. Crucially, Taylor's notion that football fans attend the game for entertainment and enjoyment simply does not correspond to many fans' understanding of the game and their relationship to it (see Chapter 10, also Hornby 1994:133-5). Taylor's assertion that fans attend in the spirit which is typically found in the ideal of other leisure industries derives then not from fan experience but rather from the interpretation of what fandom

should be, which was typically articulated in the press and, more especially, in the press's argument for the transformation of the football fan into a customer.

The fact that Taylor drew upon an idealised notion of the customer articulated in press discourses about football in the 1980s was further evinced in the following passage.

In most commercial enterprises, including the entertainment industry, knowledge of the customer's needs, his tastes and his dislikes is essential information in deciding policy and planning. But, until recently, very few clubs consulted to any significant extent with the supporters or their organisations. (Taylor 1990:10)

Taylor regarded the football fan as a customer and that football should consequently organise itself along the lines more typical of other commercial operations. Although Taylor applauded the attempts of certain clubs to encourage the attendance of families, principally for the reason that they promote 'good behaviour' (P. Taylor 1990:23) - nowhere did Taylor argue that these families should come from more affluent sections of society, as the free market discourse suggests. On the contrary, throughout his report, Taylor was concerned about the cost of his recommendations and assured the reader in a number of places that the price of tickets would not increase sufficiently enough to exclude fans who have attended the game in the past ; Taylor cites the example of Ibrox where seats are only two pounds more than standing (P. Taylor 1990:13). He therefore positions himself outside the free market discourse.

Throughout the report, then, Taylor was sensitive to the financial constraints of most football supporters and this led him to argue for the public provision of all-seating through local authority sponsorship. We will consider the viability of such suggestions below. The point to stress, here, is that, despite the non-Thatcherite strand running through the Taylor Report and its genuine concern for the democratic

provision of improved facilities, he nevertheless shared some of the assumptions of the free market discourse itself. As I have argued in the previous chapter, in the light of the organic development of football, it was very difficult to propose any other viable alternative than that offered by the free market discourse. This was particularly the case when it came to the implementation of Taylor's recommendations.

C. The Cost of Taylor and the Premier League

Although the implications of Taylor's report drew his position close to both the free market stance, which also encompassed certain authoritarian measures, he himself cannot be easily situated within that discourse. However, the effect of the Report was finally both to establish and realise that discourse in the reformation of the game. Taylor wanted to transform football by the partnership of local and governmental (or quasi-governmental) bodies and League football clubs to improve the provision of public good but, in the context of 1990s Britain, his recommendations were only ever going to be implemented by means of the free market and by the initiatives of entrepreneurs who regarded his report as an opportunity for investment.

The cost of the installation of seats ensured that there was a wide divide between Taylor's intentions and the eventual implementation of his recommendations in the 1990s. As we have noted, Taylor was conscious of the potential cost of his recommendations for both the fans and for the clubs themselves. Taylor opposed the argument of the free market discourse which approved of seating for the very reason that it did raise prices and thereby drew on the greater affluence of the consumer ; rather, Taylor suggested that prices could be suppressed.

Similarly, Taylor proposed a scheme of funding the reconstruction which flew in the face of much free market thinking. Taylor proposed that the Football Trust and the Football Grounds Improvement Trust should assist in the financing of the reconstruction of grounds, as well as recommending a greater percentage of the Pools money, part of the Betting Tax and a levy from transfer fees (P. Taylor 1990:17-19). In addition, Taylor approved of strategies such as those followed by St. Johnstone, which had sold its ground to the supermarket company, ASDA, who had then paid for the construction of the new stadium on the outskirts of the town. Furthermore, Taylor suggested some local authority involvement in the construction of new grounds might be possible, citing the co-operation between Millwall and the London Borough of Lewisham, which agreed to pay £70,000 if the club agreed to make its ground available for various activities beneficial to the local community (P. Taylor 1990:21). At the same time Taylor was realistic about the limitations of local council or government sponsorship within the political context of the late 1980s.

I accept that in the current financial climate and with our different approach to communal funding, local authorities are unlikely to be able to provide subsidies for such stadia. (P. Taylor 1990:21)

Nevertheless, despite Taylor's awareness of the impoverishment of public bodies and the growing role of private corporations in the provision of 'public' goods, a major plank (and, indeed, it might be said, 'the bottom line') of his argument was that the clubs would be able to afford the transformation of grounds and that, despite Taylor's provisos, he looked ultimately to public funds to pay for this renovation. Furthermore, Taylor, as we have noted, did not regard the substantial increase of ticket prices as necessary.

Taylor's proposal for financing ground reconstruction was the gravest weakness in his argument. Moorhouse has highlighted this crucial lacuna in the Taylor Report - a lacuna which would be bridged by the business buccaneers who typified post-Fordist and Thatcherite Britain.

Lord Taylor's idealisation of the Scottish situation is no accident since the flaw in his plan for British soccer is the issue of finance. In his report various European stadiums are held out as examples but Taylor does not indicate how the gap implicit in the different pattern of the ownership of grounds between Britain and the Continent is to be bridged. In most of the rest of Europe the local authority or a sporting federation owns the ground and maintains it. This difference is noted in the Taylor Report but is smuggled out of the limelight since to ruminate upon it too long would bring to the fore the whole problem of football finance and how the facilities which the British Government and UEFA deem necessary are to be paid for. (Moorhouse 1991:215)

Moorhouse goes on to say that the Taylor report suggests that £130 million would be required to renovate all the grounds in the League but that the methods which Taylor suggested were hugely inadequate to that task.

The weakness of Taylor's proposition of public funding was recognised among those who were responsible for implementing (and paying) for Taylor's recommendations. In a personal interview, Ian Stott, the chairman of Oldham Athletic, highlighted the shortcomings of the grants from bodies like the Football Trust and the Football Ground Improvement Trust.

What people do forget you know, when they say, 'Look what we've done for you' and the Football Trust and the government say 'Look what we've done for you'. It's all very well giving somebody 50 or 60 per cent as long as they can afford the other 50 or 40 per cent. I mean there are an awful lot of clubs who can't afford 20 per cent of what they might have to spend on a stand so there's no point giving them 50, 60, 70 or even 80 if they can't find the other. (Ian Stott, personal interview, 21/6/94)

Taylor was wrong to play down the difficulty of raising this £130 million. The public funding which he envisaged could never have nearly covered the costs of the

reconstruction of the grounds. The inevitable inadequacy of the public funds available for this reconstruction left the club with two interrelated strategies by which to raise the necessary capital to implement the Taylor Report. Firstly, as the free market discourse argued, the very point of installing seats was to raise the price of admission and, indeed, as I will discuss in Chapter 10, the ticket prices have increased substantially both to pay for the ground improvement and to improve the clubs' finances. Seat prices have risen substantially more than the £2 which Taylor predicted from the evidence he gathered from Rangers. He may have been deceived by the small differential there because at the time of his research Ibrox was only partially seated. Consequently, Rangers could still rely on high attendances at a cheap cost on the remaining terraces, which effectively subsidised the seats. The complete conversion to seats reduced the size of the gate and therefore, seat prices had to be driven up to compensate that loss of numbers. The cost of installation, the reduction of the gate and the fact that in free market discourse, the very point of seats was to increase revenue meant that, despite his good intentions, Taylor's demand for all-seater stadia had to be, at least partially, borne by the paying spectator.

In Part II, I argued that the transformation of the political economy of football increased the market pressure on clubs but did so differentially so that the big clubs were relatively better off than the lower leagues. That division provided a horizon of possibility in which the top clubs could contemplate a separation from the league to maximise their income. In Chapter 5, I discussed the tortuous route which that eventual separation took, arguing that the formation of the Premier League could be understood within the context of negotiation between clubs within the League. The

Premier League was a political economic compromise between the Big Five and the Bates-Noades axis.

Although the informal division of the top clubs from the rest, which was the essential precondition for a breakaway, was in existence by the mid-1980s, the Taylor Report finally made such a breakaway essential in the early 1990s. The huge costs which the Taylor Report implied constituted the final push which initiated the move to the Premier League. Separated from the rest of the League, this elite would both be in a better bargaining position in relation to the television companies, and would no longer have to redistribute any of its earnings. Such a League would be much more likely to afford the expensive renovations upon which the Taylor Report insisted.

The huge financial burden which the Taylor report imposed upon football encouraged a further development which was critical to the transformation of football in the 1990s - the increasing interest and involvement of entrepreneurs, who had thrived in post-Fordist and Thatcherite Britain by exploiting opportunities for investing in new spheres of consumption of football. For this 'new business class', as I call them in Chapter 10, the Taylor Report offered not only the opportunity to become involved in football because the clubs simply needed their money but the transformation of the grounds offered these entrepreneurs a new site of consumption in which they could invest in the expectation of large returns. The introduction of this entrepreneurial business class into football was central to the transformation of the game as a site of consumption in the 1990s and it was Taylor's recommendation which played a crucial role in creating the circumstances in which football became favourable for financial investment.

2. *Italia '90*

The Taylor Report constituted a vital conjunctural moment in the transformation of the game. Taylor crucially and insightfully recommended methods by which the game might be transformed (through the practical implementation of the authoritarian and free market discourses). Since the Taylor Report's recommendations became legal requirements in 1990, it can be assumed that they would have been implemented and the consumption of football would have been transformed, whether the World Cup, *Italia '90*, had happened or not. However, the huge popularity of this tournament (principally as a television spectacle, partly due to the emotive success of the England team), transformed the perception of what football could be as a ritual and facilitated the acceptance of Taylor and the reforms which he suggested.

Italia '90 had two principal effects on the English game. Firstly, the Italian stadia confirmed both the insights and recommendations of the Taylor Report. English League grounds were an embarrassment in comparison with the magnificent architecture within which the World Cup matches took place. Some of the press highlighted this gulf in facilities. For instance, *The Times* published a letter, which echoed their complaints about English grounds throughout the 1980s.

The World Cup gives us a view of modern Italian sports stadiums which put our facilities to shame. (*The Times* 28/7/99:38a)

The Times confirmed this perception elsewhere :

The stadiums were majestic. (*The Times* 10/7/90:36b)

Italia '90 provided the Taylor Report with momentum because it demonstrated the manifest poverty of English grounds but it also inspired their transformation because the World Cup demonstrated how powerful football could be as a sign-value, if it was

properly organised and marketed. *Italia '90* demonstrated that the transformation of the consumption of football was potentially hugely lucrative if it was aesthetically presented.

The second important task which *Italia '90* achieved was to open up the market for football in Britain and, more particularly, in England. The successful performance of the English team, especially the role played in that success by Paul Gascoigne, attracted very large television audiences. 25.2 million viewers Germany in the United Kingdom (nearly half of whom were women) watched the semi-final between England and West (*The Times* 14/7/90:1d).

However, the importance of *Italia '90* lay not in the fact that it attracted vast television audiences but that it cultivated an interest in football among sections of society which had previously shown little interest in the game. Although many members of the capitalist and service class had always been interested in football, *Italia '90* widened the appeal of the game across these classes. Demonstrating this new interest in the game, *The Sunday Times* described a charity concert held in the ballroom at Buckingham Palace, tickets for which cost £5000, and at which most of those who attended were more interested in the match than the music on offer (8/7/90:1.11a). The point of this humorous article was to demonstrate the shift in the cultural position of football.

This shift seemed to have been particularly successful because of the representation of the World Cup on British television. *Italia '90* had employed Pavarotti's singing of the 'Nessan Dorma' aria from Act 3 of *Turandot* (which included the appropriate words 'Vincero ! Vincero!' - 'I will win') as its anthem and the BBC employed this aria as the theme tune to its own coverage of the World Cup.

In addition, the BBC's introductory footage to its coverage featured an opera stage, the curtain of which then rose to reveal some balletic figures dancing around a football to the Nessun Dorma aria, followed by a series of images from the tournament itself. The significance of the BBC's use of this aria and the operatic images that went with it was that it transformed the connotations of football. Firstly, football was connected with high culture and, therefore, it was being strategically constructed as an appropriate entertainment for classes who were traditionally uninterested in football; the use of the operatic allusions communicated not only that football was aesthetic but also that it was dramatic in the manner of an opera. In a sense, both *Italia '90*'s and the BBC's use of the opera to construct a particular image of football was a typically post-Fordist marketing strategy. By attaching high culture images to a game associated with popular culture, the BBC was effectively marketing the game to a segmented market, making it attractive both to its traditional popular audience while, at the same time, interpellating a new service class audience.

The success of *Italia '90*, and the BBC's coverage of the event, in attracting new audiences to football was evinced in a number of articles in the press. For instance, Laura Thompson, a (non-sports) journalist on *The Times*, wrote a feature on how she, who had had no interest in football before *Italia '90*, had been beguiled by Paul Gascoigne (*The Times* 25/8/90:26f). The particularly significant point about this article was not its content but its timing ; it was published on the opening day of the new season. *The Times*, which sold football as a sign-value, was trying to promote this commodity to as wide an audience as possible by reminding its (female) service class readers of *Italia '90* as the new season began. Confirming this strategy, the well-

known columnist, Julie Welch, wrote a similar article about Gascoigne in the following month, 'A Hero of our Dinner Time' ;

I can hardly believe this but I have just spent an entire evening talking about one footballer. At dinner parties you usually manage to cover the burning issues of the day... (*The Times* 3/9/90:14a)

Anthony Giddens, professor of Sociology at Cambridge, expounded on the same theme in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* (THES 21/12/90:14). These articles addressed a new audience for football among those sections of the professional classes which might not have taken much interest in football before 1990.

Furthermore, various reports confirmed the new popularity which the sport commanded or should command. In an article entitled, 'A Chance not to be missed', David Lacey, *The Guardian's* football correspondent, argued that :

The 1990-1 Football League programme opens today on a strident note of optimism which will quickly become a lost chord if players, managers and coaches, not to mention club chairmen, fail in their duty to catch the public mood. (*The Guardian* 25/8/90:16a)

While Colin Malam wrote.

In the dark days after Bradford, Heysel and Hillsborough, it was hard to imagine that football would ever be greeted with the anticipation which heralds the 102nd League season. (*The Daily Telegraph* 25/8/90:27a)

Italia '90 and its representation on British (and, specifically, English television) was an important moment in the transformation of consumption of the game because it interested a section of society in the game which had formerly shown little interest in football. Significantly, this section was situated within the affluent (and respectable) core of post-Fordist society. In other words, *Italia '90* played a crucial role the realisation of the Taylor Report and the free market discourses more widely ; *Italia '90* attracted the more affluent, familial support to football which these discourses suggested as remedies to both football financial and crowd control crisis.

Despite the fact that *Italia '90* itself and particularly the success of the England football team could not have been planned and was entirely conjunctural to the course of developments in football, the representation of that World Cup was not somehow a matter of luck which happened to feed into the discourses of reform which were articulated from the mid-1980s. On the contrary, the representation of the World Cup was a discursive achievement through the media of the television and the newspapers. In other words, the very agencies which articulated a discourse of reform constructed a World Cup in 1990 which seemed to confirm the veracity of those discourses ; that football could be a valuable commodity, when played in the correct surroundings, which could attract a much more affluent customer than those who attended the game during the 1980s. The understandings of the press, therefore, which informed their discourses of reform and which preceded and actually precipitated the crisis of football from 1985, similarly informed their interpretation of *Italia '90* and facilitated the reception of football among sections of the service class which had previously shown little interest in the game. Of course, the role of the press in the success of *Italia '90* should not be overstated ; the press holds a position of privileged definition and can certainly influence opinion formation but it cannot plant opinions where there was no social predisposition towards those opinions in the first place. For instance, the global scale of the World Cup and its appeal to nationalist identities attracted viewers, who might have little time for League football. Nevertheless, there is no denying the importance of the media, especially since the World Cup was witnessed principally through the television and newspaper reports.

Conclusion

The Taylor Report and *Italia '90* constituted critical conjunctural moments in recent football history. Despite Taylor's own preference for public provision, the transformation of the game which he recommended was in Thatcherite Britain only going to be achieved through private investment. In particular, the reformation of the game depended upon the involvement of the emergent entrepreneurial fragment of the capitalist class, who had developed on the opportunities presented by the segmented post-Fordist market and who had benefited from Thatcher's *laissez-faire* policies. The Taylor Report and *Italia '90* demonstrated to these individuals that football could be a lucrative commodity of a quite different kind than it had been in the last thirty years. The Taylor Report effectively demanded the re-creation of football as a site of consumption and as a commodity, while *Italia '90* demonstrated what that new commodity might look like. The final part of this thesis will be concerned with analysing this new consumption of football. It will examine the way in which the conjunctural discourses that the organic political economic developments gave rise to were finally actualised by the new business class but also contested by the fans.

NOTES:

1 The number of Hillsborough victims rose to 96 in March 1993 when Tony Bland's life support machine was turned off.

2 Taylor wrote an Interim Report which dealt with the specifics of the Hillsborough disaster itself and was published on 1st August 1989 and a Final Report, which was concerned with laying out his wider understandings and was published in January 1990. This chapter concerns itself with the Final Report.

PART IV

THE NEW CONSUMPTION OF FOOTBALL

CHAPTER 9

SKY TELEVISION AND FOOTBALL'S NEW DEAL

This chapter constitutes a nodal point in the thesis where the political economic developments within football, which were the subject of Part II, are connected to the Thatcherite discourses of the free market, which are central to Part III. The development of Sky (later to be called BSkyB), and its successful bid for Premier League football in 1992 connected football to wider post-Fordist transformations because the establishment of satellite television (under Murdoch) embodied Thatcherite policy in the televisual sphere ; Sky television was the result of the implementation of free market discourse into policy. As I have stressed, Thatcherism should be seen as the ideological and political framework which crucially informed Britain's move to post-Fordism. Consequently, since Sky television was part of a wider post-Fordist and Thatcherite strategy, its coverage of football effectively linked the sport to these wider social developments. In particular, football was being taken up by an entrepreneurial multinational corporation which consciously exploited the newly emergent segments of the social formation which constituted the social aspect of British post-Fordism.

It should be emphasised that the relationship between Sky and Thatcherism and, therefore, between football and post-Fordism, was not a simple one. Thatcher's project was not consciously post-Fordist with a pre-established template of necessary reforms ; the concept of post-Fordism only emerged as an analytical term in the late

1980s to describe a project whose outline was only then becoming clear. Post-Fordism was not then always already established as some kind of autonomous norm but rather the social formations and economic practices which emerged in the years of Thatcher began to take on a definable shape in the later years of that decade. Despite the eventual similarity of the reformations across the social formation, those transformations were not inevitable nor were they fully conceptualised before their final achievement. The eventual commonality between various developments in British society was due to the fact that the reforms were informed by a similar set of understandings - the free market and the strong state - which understandings reflected organic shifts in the social and economic structure of Britain ; these organic developments favoured a particular line of development which preserved as much of the affluence which had been won under the post-War settlement as possible, while at the same time reforming Britain in line with the new demands of the emerging post-Fordist global economy.

Therefore, although it was logical that the coverage of football by a satellite network which embodied Britain's post-Fordist strategy, would mean that football would begin to communicate certain post-Fordist understandings, the transformation of the meaning of football was not inevitable ; it had to be achieved and that achievement involved struggle. The purpose of this chapter is to lay out the precise nature of the connections between Murdoch's B SkyB, Thatcherism and post-Fordism to show how football's new deal amounted to a historically significant shift in the meaningfulness of the sport. The first point which must be established is the relationship between Murdoch and Thatcher.

1. The Thatcher-Murdoch axis and the Development of Sky

Before I go on to specify the ideological connections between Thatcher and Murdoch, it is necessary to establish that during the 1980s they did indeed establish a relationship which facilitated the development of Sky television. In November 1978, ITV announced that it had signed the exclusive rights to broadcast football on television (*The Times* 17/11/78:1g). For ten years, the BBC and ITV had operated as a cartel after they had agreed that no company had the right to the exclusive coverage of football. Michael Grade, the Director of London Weekend, had gone to the Football League direct offering £1.5 million a season for Saturday evening coverage, whereas the previous agreement has been worth only £420,000 a season (*The Times* 17/11/78:1g, John Bromley, personal interview 23/6/94). Not surprisingly, the BBC was furious about this 'Mafia deal', as they called it (*The Times* 18/11/78:1c) and served London Weekend Television with a High Court writ. The matter was also referred to the Director General of Fair Trading, Mr Gordon Borrie, who eventually declared the deal void, stating that it did indeed contravene the agreement between the BBC and ITV established ten years earlier and, therefore, was a breach of fair trade.

The failure of LWT's so called 'Snatch of the Day'¹ is relevant in a discussion of the establishment of Sky television because it acts as a distinctive counterpoint to subsequent developments. Whereas, the 'Snatch of the Day' was blocked by the government, all of Murdoch's projects in the 1980s and 1990s however, which, if anything, breached the Monopolies and Mergers Law more seriously than the 'snatch of the day', were uniformly defended by the Thatcher governments (and the Major government continued this support). The support of Thatcher's (and Major's)

governments for Murdoch's media project was especially decisive at four particular moments ; Murdoch's purchase of *The Times*, his establishment of Sky television, the merger of the two satellite companies (in favour of Sky) and, finally, BSkyB's successful bid for the Premier League. A brief survey of these moments will highlight the relationship between Thatcher (and later Major) and Murdoch.

In early 1981, Roy Thomson decided to sell his shares in *The Times* and *Sunday Times*. Although there were several interested parties, Thomson favoured the Australian media mogul, Rupert Murdoch, and in 1981, a deal was closed at £12 million (Evans 1983:110,138). Besides the very substantial holdings of Murdoch's global News Corporation, Murdoch already owned *The Sun* and *The News of the World* through his British subsidiary, News International. The purchase of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* placed Murdoch officially in breach of the Monopolies and Mergers Law, which limited the amount of titles a single individual could legally hold. Under that law, Murdoch's acquisition of the two Thomson broadsheets was certainly illegal. Yet no case was ever brought.

It was known that Mrs Thatcher wanted Murdoch's purchase of these titles to avoid reference to the Monopolies Commission (Evans 1983:141) and despite the demands of the all the other broadsheets that the merger be referred to the Monopolies Commission, John Biffen, the Secretary for State and Trade, refused to sanction this reference. He justified this ignorance of the Monopolies and Mergers Law by arguing that *The Sunday Times* was a loss-maker ; according to Biffen, the paper had lost £600,000 in 1980 (Evans 1983:148). In fact, it had broken even in that year (Evans 1983:148). Furthermore, the paper did in fact turn a profit most of the time (Evans 1983:148). Biffen's waiving of an inquiry by the Monopolies and

Merger's Commission was falsely justified on the grounds that *The Sunday Times* was not a going concern and therefore the willingness of any investor to save the paper must be supported. Consequently, a newspaper merger which was unprecedented in newspaper history, giving a single individual sole control over four major publications and, by 1984, a 30 per cent share in the national circulation (Veljanovski 1990:30), was deemed acceptable by the government within three days.

The second moment in which Thatcher's favour expedited Murdoch's business project was in the establishment of Sky television itself. British Satellite Broadcasting had been established in 1986 but had had difficulty in developing its satellite technology (see Chippendale and Franks 1992). Murdoch saw the opportunity for a satellite network in Britain and established his Sky TV in June 1988, which was launched in the following February, some fourteen months before BSB eventually started broadcasting in February 1989. However, although BSB was certainly poorly managed (see Chippendale and Franks 1992), especially by contrast with Murdoch's ruthless efficiency, Sky television was favoured by the fact that it was unencumbered by government restrictions. Since it broadcast via the Luxembourg-based Astra satellite, Sky did not have to comply to government regulations on the quality of the transmission or programming regulations. The fact that Sky could ignore the IBA's insistence on D-MAC technology and operate with the inferior but tried and tested PAL technology gave Sky a crucial advantage in the race for subscribers. Sky then was unrestricted by state regulations and, more importantly, Thatcher was unwilling to impose these regulations. When Anthony Simmonds-Gooding, BSB's Chief Executive, complained to Thatcher about this governmental bias towards Murdoch.

she curtly instructed him to stop whining and told him he was being 'wet' (Chippendale and Franks 1992:211)

The government's favourable non-application of IBA regulations to Murdoch's Sky expedited the development of this satellite network and crucially advantaged it in the competition for viewers. The PAL technology which Sky was allowed to use enabled it both to launch itself before BSB, with the extra viewers which that entailed, and since the PAL technology was more easily available to the consumer, it was more likely that it rather than D-MAC technology would be purchased.

Nevertheless, despite Sky's favourable treatment, both companies incurred huge losses ; by the end of October 1990, Sky was losing £2.2 million a week to BSB's £8 million (Ekstein and Feist 1992:19). A merger seemed a logical way of cutting losses and this merger was the third moment when the government favoured Murdoch. The merger was, in fact, a take-over and ensured that Murdoch was now in serious contravention of the Monopolies and Mergers law because, in effectively taking over BSB, he had added to his huge share in the national newspapers with a monopoly over satellite television in Britain as well as a substantial share of the future audience for television as a whole. On the 29th October 1990, Murdoch had a private meeting with Thatcher at Downing Street and, as an aside, he informed her of the imminent merger of the two companies. Despite the obvious interest which the Monopolies and Merger's Commission would have had in this information, Thatcher did no more than make a note of the merger (Chippendale and Franks 1992:286). When the merger was finally formally announced on 2nd November 1990, the government acted in accordance with the favouritism which they had displayed towards Murdoch's enterprises throughout the 1980s. They refused to refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and David Mellor, the

Broadcasting Minister, anticipated this non-action when he had declared earlier in the year.

A vast amount of money has gone into getting this thing [SKY] off the ground. These [four] satellite stations are in the public interest and it is not for government to pull the plugs on it. (Chippendale and Franks 1992:286)

Although the IBA had been furious at the news since the DBS licence which they had awarded BSB was not the shareholder's to dispose of, the authority ultimately did nothing except place two independent directors to oversee regulatory requirements by BSkyB (Chippendale and Franks 1992:311-12). The inaction of the IBA may have been partially due to the fact that the government showed little sign of interest in intervening in this merger; in the first week after the merger, government officials let it be known that they had no objection to the merger as David Mellor, the Minister responsible, had decreed that the free market should prevail (Chippendale and Franks 1992:311).

The close relationship between Murdoch and the governing Conservative Party has also been demonstrated under the Major government. As I will discuss more fully below, this consistency between the two governments can be explained by the fact that Major's project was substantially in line with Thatcherism; it, too, was essentially oriented around the principles of the free market and strong state. The only particular area of policy difference, beside the contingent disaster of the Poll Tax, was Major's Europhile attitude - Thatcherism's virulent and vocal opposition to Europe could no longer be countenanced by the mainstream of the Tory party. Thus, it was logical in the light of Major's Thatcherite affection for the free market that governmental assistance for Murdoch should be continued and this continued patronage was crucial to the future viability of BSkyB.

In March 1992, Sky had bought the rights to the cricket World Championship and this had successfully driven sales of dishes (Ekstein and Feist 1992:21). That same year the television contract with football was due for renewal. As we have already, discussed the television companies would no longer be dealing with the Football League but with the newly formed Premier League, administered by the Football Association. In May 1992, the FA invited the companies to make secret offers for exclusive coverage of the new League. The final meeting took place on 23rd May and was surrounded in controversy. It was widely alleged that, during this meeting, Rick Parry informed Alan Sugar, the chairman of Tottenham but also, and crucially, the owner of Amstrad, which made dishes for BSkyB, that ITV had bid £262 million for exclusive coverage. BSkyB had not yet made their final bid but Sugar, concerned that BSkyB would be outbid, rang Murdoch's company and was heard to conclude his conversation with them with the memorable phrase :

'get something down here quickly to blow them out of the water' (Chippendale and Franks 1992:322)

BSkyB (with BBC) subsequently raised their bid to £304 million and were voted for by a majority of clubs. I will examine the particulars of this vote later but here I simply want to emphasise the Government's involvement in assisting BSkyB. ITV was furious about this deal, declaring that it did not accord with the standards of fair trading and threatened to take BSkyB and the Premier League to the High Court. However, David Mellor, the new National Heritage Secretary, rejected calls for an inquiry (Chippendale and Franks 1992:323), arguing that Britain had to accept that commercial satellite broadcasting was here to stay and that there would be no intervention in the BSkyB deal (*The Daily Telegraph* 16/6/92:15).

These four moments demonstrate the favourable disposition of the Conservative Governments under Thatcher and Major towards Murdoch's media project and that relationship is highlighted by the very different outcome of 'Snatch of the Day' in 1978. However, in order to establish the wider connections between football and post-Fordism, it is necessary to consider the nature of this relationship, and, crucially, the understandings which informed it, more closely.

2. Ideology and Interests

The consistent alliance between Murdoch and Tory governments throughout the 1980s and early 1990s might be explained by mutual self-interest. Ever since Thatcher's election in 1979, she was crucially indebted to Murdoch's media empire and *The Sun*, in particular, in sustaining her support among the electorally crucial new affluent working class groups which were to be found principally in the South East of England. Likewise, it could be argued that Murdoch's support for Thatcher was no more than a rational calculation aimed at maximising his self-interest. By assisting in bringing a party to power and then in cultivating that party's allegiance, Murdoch could create a very useful political ally which would and, as I have shown above, did assist Murdoch in his project of expanding his global media empire.

Although there have been historical cases of alliances based on short-term self-interest, most political relations (especially those of a durable nature) are founded on the fact that the project of each allying party is similar ; both agents operate within the same interpretive framework and are concerned with the achievement of similar goals. The relationship between Thatcher and Murdoch was an alliance of the latter kind.

Both parties shared similar interpretive frameworks and their projects were dialectically interrelated. Through the implementation of policies informed by the notions of the strong state and free market, Thatcherism sought to reform social relations and economic practice after the collapse of the post-War settlement. Murdoch, as a principal representative of the new business class, enacted this project. However, Murdoch was especially useful as an example of the reforms which Thatcher was determined to implement since his media industry was involved with the creation and communication of knowledge and opinion. Consequently, he owned the means by which British society created a conception of itself. Since this communication of knowledge and opinion was crucial to the reproduction and reformation of social relations, Murdoch's media empire was particularly useful to Thatcher ; it could communicate a new notion of British social relations.

Murdoch's Sky TV (and his newspapers) assisted in communicating this new Thatcherite image of social relations. At the most instrumental level, the creation of Sky gave businesses more opportunity to advertise themselves on television. Thus, Sky acted as a switchpoint in contemporary Britain for those capitalist institutions (which produced and sold post-Fordist commodities) ; these businesses could announce their existence across wider society and thereby transform individuals' notion of the society in which they lived. Thus Sky assisted in establishing the central position which multi-national corporations increasingly held in society.

However, Murdoch's BSkyB was itself part of his own global News Corporation empire and crucially Sky did not only announce the presence of other multinationals but critically it announced its own presence as a major interest in global business. Thus, not only did a major new television network communicate the

presence of institutions which held a central position in British society but the very means by which those consumers received their information communicated the new values of the emergent British post-Fordist society. Whereas the duopoly of the BBC and ITV had conformed to the wider organisation of British society during the decades of the post-War consensus - it involved a balance between the state (who enforced the licence fee) and business (who supported commercial television) - Sky television symbolised a new social formation, which involved the relationship of consumers in new class formations to multinational corporations. The very means of communication under satellite television, therefore, announced new economic practice and new social relations.

The connection between Sky television and nascent British post-Fordism is revealed by the similarity between Thatcherite ideology of the free market - which informed the reformulation of British social relations after the collapse of the post-war settlement - and Murdoch's own understanding of his project. This connection was demonstrated in the publication of the government plans for broadcasting, *Broadcasting in the 90s: Competition, Choice and Quality*. The central argument of this document was that government should do no more than create the situation in which a free market in communications could develop and, thereby, extend choice.

It [government] should enable, not dictate, choice (Home Office, 1988:5)

The document went on to argue that the only way to extend viewer choice was to open up the broadcasting market by breaking the duopoly of the BBC and ITV (Home Office 1988:11). The government intended to break this duopoly by the

introduction of legislation which would de-regulate broadcasting, giving other companies, principally satellite stations, the chance to operate.

Government does not seek to lay down a blueprint. It seeks to create a flexible framework allowing entrepreneurs and viewers subject to minimum necessary regulation to decide the market place in which technologies should play the most significant roles (Home Office 1988:19)

By entrepreneurs, the government no doubt had individuals like Murdoch in mind.

The de-regulation of the market was consciously intended to benefit his project since it would allow him to put his foot in a door which was once kept shut by the duopoly of the BBC and ITV.

Significantly, Sky Television and, later, BSkyB drew on this Thatcherite notion of the free market as code of practice. When Sky Television was launched on 5th February 1989, the new station announced itself in significant terms.

This is the television revolution! A revolution in quality! A revolution in quality and choice! (Chippendale and Franks 1992:96)

BSkyB's concern with consumer choice was confirmed by Vic Wakeling, the Head of Sport at BSkyB, in a personal interview.

Sky television is all about choice. It's about people who want to tune in and watch the news whenever they get in during the day or night. It's about people who want to watch a selection of movies. People who want to watch you know how many channels are there out there now? I've lost track of how many channels there are on the Astra satellite English channels. We're responsible for six of them but there's probably about another ten out there as well when you look at them all. So, yes, it is all about choice. (Vic Wakeling, personal interview 24/5/94)

Murdoch himself was quite consciously operating according to these free market notions of government non-intervention and the extension of consumer choice. He made his attachment to this interpretive frame explicit in his McTaggart Lecture, 'Freedom in Broadcasting', in August 1989. He declared that his satellite station was

informed by the same notions of choice and the free market which were widely influencing the transformation of social relations and economic practice in Britain more widely and which were signally articulated in Thatcherism.

The idea of the free market and the extension of choice was designed to undermine the duopoly of the BBC and ITV which had been the appropriate means of communication during the affluence of the post-War settlement. With the collapse of that settlement, British society needed to reorganise itself - principally multinationals had to establish a relationship with consumers in segmented markets. Satellite television offered the multinationals the televisual advertising space with which to do this. Moreover, however, satellite television was itself symbolic of this nascent culture ; satellite television was itself an adaptation to the segmented television market. It aimed to create close relationships with consumers and provide them niched programmes and channels. Instead of the licence fee, by which the viewer had a mediated connection with the television company, the subscription which consumers paid under satellite television established a closer relationship with the consumer, allowing the station to niche channels for particular tastes ; only those consumers which were interested in that particular channel would pay for the privilege to watch it. Satellite television sought to be more responsive to the segmented market of post-Fordism.

Murdoch's Sky and later BSkyB was symbolic of this new economic context but BSkyB also sought to transform the social relations through the type of television programmes which it communicated. BSkyB aimed at broadcasting programmes which were more in accord with the post-Fordist social formation and, in particular, in line with new class relations and class cultures. Thus the rhetoric of the free market

and the extension of choice was not simply about breaking down the duopoly of the ITV and BBC but also - in realising the transformation of social relations from the formations over which that duopoly both presided and symbolised - Murdoch argued that much contemporary British television involved a nostalgic appeal to a superseded class society. For instance, in the McTaggart Lecture, Murdoch attacked the ITV and BBC duopoly for producing :

costume soap operas in which strangulated English accents dominate, dramas which are played out in rigid class structured settings. (Murdoch, quoted in Chippendale and Franks 1992:209)

This extension of choice for Murdoch was significant because it was a method by which he could exploit the potential market of the affluent new working class (and unemployed lumpenproletariat - for whom 'wall-to-wall' television was potentially attractive) ; in place of a public service which was consciously created by and for the middle classes and which condescended to the working class, Murdoch sought to develop a network which explicitly appealed to this huge audience who inhabited the lower echelons of the service industries. He was talking about the extension of a very particular type of choice, which might not be recognised as such by the service class ².

The creation of BSkyB was intimately bound up with the project of Thatcherism - it was part of Thatcher's project of reform - and thus its eventual contract for the coverage of football was a moment of great historical significance because it meant that football was communicated in a style which was appropriate to the nascent post-Fordist social formations which Thatcher had been instrumental in bringing about. Sky television both announced and exemplified the central importance of global multinationals to the social formation and, similarly, it both appealed to and articulated the nascent understandings of emergent social relations ; in particular,

satellite television was especially sensitive to shifts in class formations and culture and was specifically oriented to appeal to the affluent lower echelons of the service industry.

BSkyB both expressed and symbolised a new social formation and economic practice and simply through its televisual ownership of football, the sport had to begin to connote some of these new meanings. However, the satellite station's contribution to the transformation of the game, through its connection to wider post-Fordist developments, was also achieved in a second more tangible way. The BSkyB contract was crucial to the new consumption of football because it provided an important source of revenue for the renovation of the stadia. Since these stadia renovations were substantially informed by the notions of control and the free market which I discussed in Part III, BSkyB's financing of football was crucial to the post-Fordist transformation of the game. It is worth exploring how BSkyB achieved its contract with the Premier League and how it both financed the new stadia and the meanings which those grounds now articulated.

3. The Vote for BSkyB

The Premier League had been created to prevent the debilitating loss of income to the lower leagues which the top clubs had found increasingly intolerable throughout the 1980s but the League was also established to maximise the bargaining position of the top clubs in their re-negotiation of a new television contract which was due in 1992. As I argued in Chapter 5, however, although the move to a Premier League was ultimately initiated and demanded by the Big Five, that League was in the end a compromise between 'the Big Five' and the Bates-Noades axis.

The choice of the BSkyB bid over the ITV bid was finally the decision of the Bates-Noades axis as they enjoyed the balance of the votes. Fourteen clubs voted for BSkyB, two abstained and six voted for the ITV³. The six clubs which voted for the ITV were Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United (i.e. the Big Five clubs, except for Tottenham), Aston Villa and Leeds. These clubs favoured the ITV deal as the terrestrial company, following previous practice, promised to concentrate on them, and so these clubs would therefore make the most money from the ITV deal since they would receive the bulk of the substantial appearance money and would benefit from the increased coverage which they would deliver their sponsor. Tottenham voted for the BSkyB deal because Alan Sugar, the club's chairman, stood to gain, since BSkyB used his satellite dishes. He declared his interest at the meeting but the Bates-Noades axis which wanted his crucial vote, which would give them the necessary majority, voted in favour of letting him vote. The Bates-Noades axis was finally successful then in its choice of television contract and there were two principal and interrelated reasons for their choice of BSkyB coverage.

Firstly, the Bates-Noades axis was resentful of the way in which the 1988 deal had been negotiated. ITV had consulted only the Big Five, who had then been able to wring political economic concessions from the rest of the League as a result of this collusion. Ian Stott, the chairman of Oldham Athletic, revealed the bitterness with which the Bates Noades axis viewed this deal and the fact that it had partially motivated the vote for BSkyB.

It was certainly to their [the Big Five's] benefit when the television deal [with ITV in 1988] was done, of course. That scandalous television, side-letter deal was done with the Big Five, so-called, - because they probably didn't justify it and that was totally contrary. And one of the reasons why, in my view, ITV stood very little chance of getting the later contract - nobody trusted the fellow from ITV [Greg Dyke]. (Ian Stott, Chairman of Oldham Athletic, personal interview, 21/6/94)

The Bates-Noades axis' choice of the BSkyB contract was not, however, motivated out of a blind sense of vindictiveness. The ITV deal and the subsequent coverage had robbed these clubs of a significant amount of revenue.

The vote for BSkyB was an attempt to redress that loss of revenue and this brings us to the second reason for the choice of the BSkyB offer. The vast increase in television revenue which BSkyB offered was the critical factor in the support for their bid.

As soon as the small clubs knew that 50 per cent of Sky receipts were to be shared equally between all the Premier League clubs, the deal was irresistible. (*The Guardian* 24/5/92: Section 1 12-13)

The more equitable distribution of both revenue and coverage promised by BSkyB ensured that the satellite company gained the support of the financially weaker clubs of the Bates-Noades axis. BSkyB's strategy of promising the same down-payment to all the clubs and to provide at least some coverage for the lesser teams was a conscious plan designed to obviate the potential problems of gaining a balance of the votes in the light of the division between the Big Five and the Bates-Noades axis.

We think their strategy was wrong. They were guilty as ITV have been in the past of getting the contract and concentrating perhaps on the big five or six clubs and only giving coverage to those clubs. A lot of the other clubs in the old First Division didn't trust ITV. They thought it might be the same again - look after the big clubs. Their strategy was to woo the big clubs and hope that they would carry all the clubs. Our strategy was not that. We negotiated direct with the chief executive of the Premier League, Rick Parry, and we made certain promises, guarantees that we would share the coverage around. (Vic Wakeling, BSkyB, Head of Sport, personal interview 24/5/94)

As I have argued, the BSkyB contract was essential to the new consumption of football and therefore to the transformation of the game in line with wider post-Fordist

developments because the new contract provided an important and large source of finance.

The money which we put into football meant that the stadium improvements which were demanded by the Taylor Report - nothing to do with us - have been undertaken and the price of tickets, for the real fans who want to go to the game, has not gone through the roof. The clubs have been able to contain the price of all that development as well as paying wages and signing stars and stopping too many people going to Italy or wherever because they've used our money. If you were the bad old days of the BBC and ITV the money would not have gone up to the £304 million that has been quoted and the fans would be paying for all these improvements. Where else would they get the money from?(Vic Wakeling, personal interview 24/5/94)

Through providing a substantial part of the finances by which stadia have been rebuilt BSKyB have assisted in transforming the game but satellite television has also played a crucial part in announcing this transformation across the social formation.

BSkyB's coverage has broadcast the new stadia to a wide football audience.

What we have done by our coverage is to show that stadia are safer, more comfortable places to go to on a Saturday afternoon or a Sunday afternoon or a Monday night. (Vic Wakeling, personal interview, 24/5/94)

Thereby, BSKyB has both played into the improvement of the perception and market position of football but also through its coverage of the grounds, BSKyB simultaneously communicates the meanings which informed the renovation of the stadia. Thus the coverage of football on satellite television has been a crucial symbolic moment because BSKyB is itself a Thatcherite and post-Fordist operation, while it now broadcasts football which is played in a league and in grounds whose developments have themselves been intimately linked to Thatcherism and to post-Fordist transformations⁴.

Conclusion

The BSkyB contract was a crucial moment in football because it linked the game to post-Fordist developments in two ways. Firstly, the satellite station itself was dialectically related to Thatcherism ; it was only possible because of the support which Murdoch received from Thatcher but at the same time, his project embodied her ideological and political strategy and confirmed that strategy as a central orienting principle in the transformation of Britain. Secondly, the new contract was a central means by which the renovation of the grounds was financed. Since these renovations were heavily informed by Thatcherism, BSkyB, therefore, assisted in the re-creation of football so that it conformed with understandings which were becoming central to the emergent post-Fordist social formation. Furthermore, BSkyB then communicated these new meanings through its week-long coverage of the game ⁵.

NOTES :

1 As John Bromley revealed in a personal interview, the 'Snatch of the Day' was partially successful for ITV because the BBC had to compromise its Saturday evening 'Match of the Day' programme, sharing that crucial viewing time with ITV (John Bromley, ex head of ITV sport, 23/6/94).

2 The choice which satellite television promised was a problematic one. Firstly, the extension of choice only existed for those who could afford subscriptions to BSkyB. Secondly, the real extension of choice must involve the production of new programmes, appealing to new tastes. There is little evidence that satellite television has promoted new programmes since, by and large, it has merely broadcast programmes and films which it has bought (often cheaply) from the United States.

3 Chelsea and Crystal Palace were the two clubs that abstained which was curious since their chairmen were Bates and Noades, respectively.

4 As a general footnote to this entire chapter, it is worth commenting on an argument which has featured in the press and in public discourses that the Sky deal brought about the disenfranchisement of the football fan (e.g. The Guardian 23/5/92:17). All stadia have priced fans out of the ground and the BSkyB deal threatened to price

them out of watching live football on television. This argument exaggerates the extent of live television coverage of football in the 1980s. The first League game to be transmitted live was in 1983 and even after that date the number of games transmitted live was restricted. Furthermore, the BSkyB deal was a joint deal with the BBC who would re-screen 'Match of the Day'. Terrestrial television had as much football to broadcast even within the BSkyB contract itself as had been available in the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, ITV has adopted compensatory strategies; in the face of the failure of their bid for the Premier League regional networks have broadcast local games live. Thus there is actually more football on television, both live and recorded, than there has ever been.

5 The cultural effects of the transformation of the coverage of football are important but are not discussed explicitly within the confines of this PhD because it is a potentially huge topic. For a discussion of the new coverage of football see I. Taylor 'It's a Whole New Ball Game', *Salford Papers in Sociology* 1995

CHAPTER 10

THE NEW BUSINESS CLASS

As the appeal of the formal structuralist Marxist approach to the analysis of class declined in the 1970s, more recent sociological debate on class has focussed on two central issues. Firstly, the analysis of class has been increasingly influenced by Weberian sociology. In particular, this approach has focused on the way class is determined by market position, rather than suggesting that class is the formal outgrowth of relationships which are logically intrinsic to capitalist exchange itself. Furthermore, Weber's notion of 'status', which refers to the interpretive element in the creation of inequalities, as opposed to objective market-given social divisions, has been extensively adopted in the recent literature on class. The publication of Giddens' *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies* (1977) was an important moment in the discourse on class. Despite the fact that Giddens sought a synthesis of Marxist and Weberian approaches to class, the work actually highlighted the Weberian aspects of class in contradistinction to the Marxist orthodoxy which had insisted on the objective structuralist basis of class and which had been articulated in the sixties and seventies in the works of Poulantzas (1979), Carchedi (1977) and Althusser (1971, 1975).

In more recent contributions to the class debate, this Weberian turn has been affirmed (Bourdieu (1984), Goldthorpe (1980), Abercrombie and Urry (1983) and Savage et al. (1992)). According to these theories, class then is the outcome of the way in which individuals interpret the social position which their (objective) market positions in the economy provides them.

The second element in recent writings on class which has broken from the Marxist orthodoxies of the 1960s has been the emphasis on the historical transformation of class.

The solution to the 'boundary problem' requires an approach which unambiguously regards the accumulation process as the bedrock of the analysis of class inequality. This means that a developmental/historical perspective is essential as is the realisation that relations between classes (or fractions of classes) are dynamic or dialectical. (Mackenzie 1982:85-6)

Savage et al.'s recent work (1992) is an example of exactly the kind of historical and dialectical analysis for which Mackenzie calls. Through isolating three methods of exploitation, Savage et al. attempt to plot the recent shifts in the middle classes. The work concludes, in short, that although the professional middle classes were dominant in the past, they are presently being subordinated by the new private sector service class (exemplified by the 'yuppie') who exploit their property resources.

I want to situate this analysis of the new business class and its crucial role in the new consumption of football within this Weberian and historicist trend in the recent literature on class. Furthermore, I want to highlight the connection between both currents of thought. The historical development of class and class relations is only achieved through the negotiations between classes and class fractions. In other words, a class's self-understandings (and other classes' understandings of it) are central to the development of a class and its relations to others. The interrelated historicist and Weberian aspects of recent writing on class connects with the sociological approach which I outlined in Chapter 1. The historical emphasis of recent writings is compatible with my notion of organic development : both suggest that social developments are the result of long-term transformations in the political economy. In the case of contemporary class theory, the means by which emergent classes attain their capital is

looked upon as determining their historical emergence. On the other hand, the hermeneutic dimensions of class highlighted in the Weberian perspective corresponds with the notion of the 'conjuncture', in which discourses are employed to justify certain projects and strategies and thereby to re-negotiate social relations. In analysing the role of the new business class in the new consumption of football, I want to draw upon both of these strands which are central to contemporary thinking on class.

The historic (and organic) origin of the new business class lies in the collapse of the post-War settlement and the mass markets which were an economic part of the later affluence of that settlement. The new business class principally exploited the retail opportunities which the increasingly fragmented markets of the 1970s presented. I would suggest that Savage's account of the rise of the petite bourgeoisie (1992:218), whose class position he argues was based on the exploitation of property resources - by which, I infer, that Savage primarily means capital - actually refers to many members of the new business class. These individuals have improved their class positions by cleverly investing their often initially small property (capital) resources in new (and fragmented) markets.

Conjuncturally, the new business class was crucially assisted in its emergence by Thatcherism, which both ideologically and politically favoured this new class of entrepreneurs, regarding this group as capable of economically revitalising Britain. In the last chapter, we saw the central role which Thatcherism (and Thatcher herself) played in establishing Murdoch, one of the central figures of the new business class. Although the extent of Thatcher's assistance to Murdoch was unusual, it was in line with her general support for this emergent class fraction. There are, however, two

important points to make about the relationship between Thatcherism and the new business class. Firstly, this relationship (as I showed in the last chapter) was dialectical ; although Thatcherism certainly promoted the project of this class fraction with the implementation of her belief in the free market into policy, the growing dominance of this class demonstrated the apparent veracity of Thatcher's project. The new business class was supported by Thatcherism, then, but in as much as this class embodied this political and ideological project, it confirmed Thatcherism as the appropriate interpretive framework by which British society should be reformed.

Secondly, the relationship between Thatcherism and the new business class confirmed the claim that the rise of this class fraction was itself dependent on wider political economic and social changes. As I have argued, Thatcherism itself was a response to organic developments ; in particular, this political project articulated the interests and understandings of a significant and emergent section of British society because it offered a method by which the obstacles of the post-War settlement could be overcome while still preserving the affluence of the majority. It was logical that Thatcherism supported the new business class because the economic project of this class - which involved creating new markets for consumer commodities - was a method by which 'post-War affluence' could be defended and, for the majority, extended.

The new business class is an important element in the peculiar post-Fordist transformation of the British social formation (and economic practice). This class fraction only arose in response to conditions which gave rise to post-Fordism but at the same time, the activities of this class have irredeemably shaped British social formations. Before I go on to discuss the specific role of the new business class in the

new consumption of football, however, it is necessary to specify the particular characteristics of this class.

The new business class is distinguishable as a new and discrete group on a number of grounds. Firstly, the new business class has arisen through its innovative exploitation of new technologies, especially the computer, to increase the productiveness of its operations. This increased productiveness has been matched crucially with an increased flexibility in the production of commodities : this flexible specialisation marks the projects of these individuals out as post-Fordist and thereby renders them historically distinct. In Britain, however, many of the new business class have not been involved with the production but only with the retail of commodities, and the new business class has to be defined by reference to the particular commodities which it sells and the way in which these commodities are retailed ; the new business class has exploited post-Fordist marketing techniques which have aimed at directing commodities to particular segments of the market. Furthermore, the new business class has crucially come into existence on the crest of the consumer boom of the 1980s and specifically through the sale of new electronic and computerised goods, such as word processors, cd players, but also through the creation of new symbolic values for old commodities like clothes and beer.

Alan Sugar of *Amstrad* and George Davies of *Next* exemplify the new business class in the 1980s. Sugar's electronics business *Amstrad* had had its first success in the mid-1970s when he devised a new way to make the plastic dust-covers for record players which undercut the market significantly. Sugar employed cheap Asian labour to produce these new covers which he then transported to his British markets. Sugar's *Amstrad* achieved its greatest coup in 1986 when it released the first cheap word

processor, the *Amstrad* 8256. Also, during the 1980s, George Davies established the retail chain, *Next*, which carefully marketed itself at an exclusive niche market of the newly affluent young workers of the service class. The fortunes of *Next* declined in late 1988, principally because it was difficult to expand this chain of stores and retain the exclusive name which attracted the fragment of the market on which the store's initial success was based (Gardner and Sheppard 1989:30).

Although post-Fordism has involved a shift to small-batch production and economies of scope rather than scale, post-Fordism has also been characterised by the growing dominance of multi-national conglomerates, in which vast capital is concentrated. The apparent anomaly between the growth of small-batch production on the one hand, and the concentration of capital, on the other, is explained by the fact that the huge multinationals invest their capital fluidly in various enterprises but, more importantly, simply because post-Fordism is directed to small-batch production, that in no way means that it requires small capital investment. On the contrary, successful post-Fordism necessitates the use of the most advanced (computerised) technology which allows for flexibility at the shopfloor. Consequently, the multinational corporation is supremely well-placed to afford this vast capital investment in flexible specialisation and is also crucially able to afford the necessity to advertise the new batches to segmented markets.

The new business class is part of the larger capitalist class which inhabits the boards of these multinationals but the distinguishing feature of the new business class is that it is primarily entrepreneurial. Although some of its members do own multinationals (Murdoch, the late Maxwell, Branson), they retain control over their investments and decide upon entrepreneurial strategy. However, most of the new

business class necessarily operates at a lower level in smaller companies ; it is very difficult to operate as a sole entrepreneurial executive over a vast global organisation.

The new business class, generally, operates in the interstitial markets between the multinationals ; specifically the new business class has tended to be regionally limited in its markets and it is the fact that it has responded to a moderate-sized niche which had enabled its operations to go on alongside global multinationals. Although Murdoch, archetypically, has survived as an entrepreneur in the same markets as multinationals, most members of the new business class who have tried to extend their markets onto those of multinationals have been defeated (e.g. Sugar). In addition to their general subordination to global multinationals, *the new business class is like all capitalists dependent on the support of the banking system.* The recent demise of Robert Maxwell and the growing debts which Murdoch's News Corporation is daily mounting up (Belfield, Hird and Kelly 1991:254,273) suggests that even these entrepreneur's enterprises might be finally subsumed under a corporate structure if the banks who fund these entrepreneurial schemes lose faith in the individuals who plan them.

In the light of the fragmented markets of post-Fordism, it has been necessary for capitalists to adopt techniques which obviate the problems posed by the volatility of the market. As I noted above, one of the strategies which manufacturing interests have adopted is to introduce flexible specialisation into the shopfloor. Japanese motor corporations and Italian clothes manufacturers such as Benetton are regarded as archetypal of this strategy. However, since the new business class has generally lacked the quite vast capital outlay which post-Fordist production requires with its advanced computerised technology, it has sought a different solution to the problem

posed by the post Fordist differentiation of the market. It has not confined its interest to one product or even one market but rather, if it has made money through the sale of one commodity, it has reinvested that capital in other markets. In other words, it exploits the fluidity of the international money markets and the new global economy to sustain its capitalist interests. This strategy of re-investing in the global economy brings the new business class once again into contact with the financial markets and the multinational banks which are the principal actors in that market. The reinvestment of capital across the global markets has been particularly prevalent in Britain where the response to post-Fordism has involved wholesale de-industrialisation and a re-channelling of British capital into the service industries, which market commodities which successful post-Fordist multinationals manufacture elsewhere. In a sense, the new business class is the rightful heir to British capital which historically was always directed outwards to the opportunities which the Empire provided rather than towards domestic investment in indigenous industry (Gamble 1985:112).

The new business class' search for investment opportunities and its focus on the retail rather than the production of commodities has led this class fraction to football during the 1980s but, more importantly, from 1990. Football was a particularly attractive commodity for the new business class because not only was it a commodity of wide popular appeal, despite the crisis of the mid-1980s, but above all it was especially meaningful as a ritual in which the central ideas which oriented British society was expressed. In other words, football presented the new business class with a commodity which not only potentially offered lucrative opportunities in itself but could communicate the new business class' project more widely and therefore, football could act as a symbolic switchpoint which opened other avenues of

commodification as well as announcing the wider project of the new business class.

The attraction of football for the new business class because of the ritualistic nature of the game will be discussed at greater length in the analysis of the involvement of Sir John Hall, Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell in football. Before we go onto the successful involvement of the new business class in the game in the 1990s, it is necessary to comprehend the process by which certain members of the new business class were able to gain control of the game.

1. The 'Traditional' Chairmen

To appreciate the historic specificity of the new business class's project in football, it is necessary to be aware of the style of football proprietorship in existence before the new business class became involved in the game. Although I have entitled this style of administration 'traditional', that terminology should be treated with some care. As Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) have demonstrated the appeal to 'tradition' is more often than not an attempt to legitimate a contemporary and relatively recent practice by inventing a fictitious heritage for that practice. I will suggest below that the 'traditional' style of directorship might actually be historically specific to the period between about the Second World War and the 1970s.

Traditional chairmen and directors of football clubs have been described as regarding the football club as a form of patronage towards the fans and local community. Traditional chairmen administered and occasionally financially assisted clubs out of a sense of obligation to provide a service for the city or town in which their business interests lay.

A football ground was in many ways as much part of a burgeoning corporation as a public library, town hall and law courts and was certainly used by more people. (Inglis 1991:12)

The traditional directors of football invested in clubs out of a similar notion of public utility which informed the capitalist class's funding of various public services, such as libraries, museums, parks and baths. For instance, Denis Hill-Wood, who went on to become chairman of Arsenal, created a League team in Glossop, his home town, in which he owned some mills, and his son, Peter, explained this creation of a football as an example of bourgeois philanthropy.

I suppose my father felt it was his duty to give the townspeople something. They had schools and a hospital, so I suppose he said he'd give them a football club. (Hopcraft 1990:153)

For traditional directors the football club was a public utility and in line with the logic of this provision of a public good, these directors did not regard the football club as an appropriate or possible site of capitalist accumulation. This unprofitableness of football was revealed by Peter Hill-Wood's remarks about the accession of David Dein, who, as I will argue below, was a representative of the new business class.

Some rich men like to buy fast cars, yachts and racehorses but Dein is more interested in Arsenal. I'm delighted he is but I still think he's crazy. To all intents and purposes, it's dead money. (*The Sunday Times* 8/8/91:1a)

As I intend to show below, it was not Dein who proved to be 'crazy' for investing money in an enterprise which did not make money, but rather Hill-Wood himself for regarding football as a poor investment. Hill-Wood's delighted incomprehension at the interest of a successful businessman in Arsenal neatly highlights the decisive divide between traditional directors and the new business class.

Although the notion that football was a public utility has become commonplace in historical and sociological accounts of the game (e.g. Taylor 1984:110, Fishwick 1989: 42,150), I want to suggest that this tradition is, perhaps, somewhat fabricated. Although I cannot fully sustain the suggestion that the notion of the traditional director is invented since the empirical evidence required for such an argument is beyond the remit of this research, it is possible to trace a different style of chairmanship at the beginning of the century. For instance, in the early years of the League there were complaints that football was 'too much of a business' (Inglis 1988:16) while William Macgregor (one of the architects of the League) 'paraded that fact with satisfaction' (Inglis 1988:19) and

confirmed that professional football was an expanding, thriving industry. (Inglis 1988:19)

It must be reiterated that it would be unwise to read too much into this scanty historical evidence but it does suggest that the so called traditional style of directorship emerged in the twentieth century. Following Fishwick's argument, that from the 1920s until the 1950s football could be seen as 'the Labour party at prayer' (1989:150), it might be suggested that the 'traditional' directorship of football clubs which saw the proprietorship of that institution as the non-profit making provision of a public good could be linked more to the wider development of Keynesianism as a framing policy of national intent. 'Traditional' directorship paralleled state Keynesianism which first emerged in the 1930s and reached its apogee in the post-War decades with the development of the welfare state.

However, whenever this style of directorship emerged, it came under serious assault in the 1980s although there had been complaints about the style in which these traditional directors ran clubs since 1960s, as the analysis of the abolition of the

maximum wage revealed. The discursive pressure which was exerted on the traditional directors was matched in the early 1980s by financial pressures which had been brought about by transformations in the political economy of football. These dual developments rendered the traditional director's running of the club as an essentially amateurish pursuit inadequate and anachronistic. In the light of the demands for the reformation of the administration of the game and the replacement of the individuals who run it, the first representatives of the new business class began to emerge into football in the early 1980s.

2. The New Business Class : The First Wave

A. Attitude to 'Traditional' Directors

A crucial moment for the first wave of the new business class was the rescission of the regulation which restricted the maximum dividend for any shareholder in a football club to 7.5 per cent in 1982. This rule was designed to prevent clubs attracting unscrupulous owners who were concerned only with the profits of a club. The Football League abandoned the rule in the face of recommendations from various reports and the demands which were articulated by various sections of the press.

The abolition of the maximum dividend encouraged the investment of entrepreneurs because they could now hope to get a return on their investments. It was at this point, in the early 1980s, that Dein (Arsenal)¹, Edwards (Manchester United)², Bates (Chelsea)³ and Scholar⁴ (Tottenham), who were all members of the entrepreneurial business class, established themselves on the boards of clubs.

The difference between the 'traditional' directors and the new business class is revealed in Scholar's discussion of his attitude to Sir Arthur South, the 'traditional'

chairman of Norwich City, and to Robert Chase ⁵, his new business class successor.

For Scholar, Sir Arthur was :

a nice old buffoon. I do mean this well. But it was clear that many of the technicalities of negotiations passed him by. (Scholar 1992:130)

Robert Chase was regarded in a more hostile fashion (even though he was a fellow member of the new business class).

I did not always take to Chase's negotiating style. His attitude was always to sell for a high price and buy for a low price. (Scholar 1992:131)

Scholar concludes.

Looking back, for all the Old Boys' air of Sir Arthur I would rather deal with him than Chase, particularly when it came to selling a player. (Scholar 1992:131)

The point is, of course, that Scholar had little difficulty outmanoeuvring South's 'traditional' buffoonery, whereas Chase, as a dynamic and entrepreneurial member of the business class, was a more difficult opponent. Ironically, Scholar criticises those qualities in Chase which he would most readily endorse in businessmen more generally and which he argues throughout his autobiography were fatally absent from football in the early 1980s.

The difference between the traditional and new business class expectations were further revealed by Scholar's horror at the financial practices which were typical at Tottenham under the 'traditional' Richardson family.

Simple matters such as VAT records had not been kept up to date, and one of the new board's first tasks had been to fend off a court summons for non payment. Rummaging around White Hart Lane they [Scholar and his business associates] found great wads of banknotes lying about in the ticket office, and listened with horror to the story of how a huge pile of fivers handed over at the turnstiles had once spilled on to the floor and had to be swept up by the cleaners. (Horrie 1992:35) ⁶

B. The First Wave's Project

The project of the first wave of the new business class was not generally unified or coherent, which was almost certainly due to the fact that the first wave became involved in football before 1985, and therefore before the discourses of reform had been most forcefully and eloquently articulated. In other words, there was no widely held project of reform for the new working class to enact. However, even after the discourses of reform were articulated in 1985, the new business class did not enact its recommendations. It was only in the 1990s, after the Taylor Report, that the second wave of the new business class achieved the reformation of the game. This failure of the first wave can be explained by the fact that it was more logical to take a piecemeal approach to the reformation of the game, than to take the risk of implementing expensive strategies individually, until compelled by the government after the Taylor Report. In addition, after the disasters of 1985, football was financially disadvantaged by its poor public perception. Consequently, there were insufficient funds in the game to finance the reformation which would be achieved in the 1990s.

The new business class realised that football was in need of some reform (as various quotations in Chapter 5 revealed) but it was impossible in the context of the mid- to late 1980s to implement these schemes. As I will demonstrate in section 2.C, 'The Visionaries', even those entrepreneurs who attempted to implement wholesale reform along the lines which would be undertaken in the 1990s failed. Although the first wave did not aim at the reformation of the game, which occurred in the 1990s, its modest projects of reform were essential to the new consumption of football. The piecemeal projects of the first wave involved two particular strategies ; the attempt to

increase television revenue and the attempt to gain greater control over the football crowd.

i. Television Revenue

It is unnecessary to discuss this project at length, as Chapter 5 was almost solely concerned with the debates over television revenue in the 1980s. In that chapter, however, the debate between the Bates-Noades axis and the Big Five was highlighted as the dynamic which precipitated the development of the Premier League. Here, it is necessary to emphasise not the divide within the League *per se* but rather the fact that, whatever may have been the debates between clubs over the distribution of revenue, all the chairmen were unanimous in their determination that football should command a higher price than it had under the duopoly of the ITV and BBC.

Those members of the new business class who presided over the Big Five clubs (Edwards at Manchester United, Scholar at Tottenham, Carter at Everton, Dein at Arsenal, Smith at Liverpool) attempted breakaways throughout the 1980s. As I have shown in Chapter 5, these attempts created the conditions for the eventually successful breakaway in 1991, with the establishment of the Premier League. Since the Premier League enabled all the First Division clubs to increase their incomes exponentially, with which money they could finance their self-transformation, the new business class chairman of the Big Five clubs in the 1980s who had been instrumental in both raising the price of football on television and in creating the Premier League played a significant part in the eventual success of the second wave of the new business class. Of course, these individuals did not intend to assist the projects of other chairmen, but their demands for a redistribution of football's revenues in the form of a

breakaway league certainly aided those clubs involved in that breakaway to implement reforms.

ii. Crowd Control and the Football Spectators' Bill

The new business class' strategy of crowd control comprised two facets ; the erection of fences and the opposition to Thatcher's national identity scheme. Both of these strands were crucial to the development of the new consumption of football, albeit unintentionally. Firstly, the installation of fences was a cheap and relatively easy method of limiting the worst excesses of crowd disorder. However, they were also an extremely dangerous method of preventing pitch invasions as the Hillsborough disaster demonstrated. Through the installation of fences, the new business class unknowingly facilitated the eventual new consumption of football in the 1990s because the fences demonstrated that the terraces could not be made both safe and controllable. Consequently, the fences precipitated the move towards all-seater since the latter seemed to be the only solution to hooliganism. It was ironic, then, that a strategy which the new business class adopted to minimise outlay on the grounds should, in the end, ensure that the complete renovation of the grounds was necessary.

Although the first wave did attempt to control the crowd through cheap and clumsy fencing, the most important contribution which this first wave made to the new consumption of football was to oppose the Football Spectators' Bill. Despite the new business class's affiliation to Thatcherism, due to the ideological and practical political support which Thatcherism provided by its affection for free market doctrine and policy, the new business class was brought into opposition with Thatcher over her demands for the implementation of this authoritarian measure. It has already been

suggested that, in general, Thatcher's demand for a strong state was not in contradiction with her espousal of the free market ; the strong state created the conditions for the free market and defended property, which was essential to a market economy.

However, the proposal of a national identity card scheme was plainly in contravention of the interests of the new business class. The identity card scheme promised to reduce attendances at a time when attendances were already poor. Furthermore, the card scheme did not promise to rid the game of hooliganism for, as Taylor noted, the scheme merely threatened to create congestion outside the grounds which would increase the likelihood of fan confrontation there.

The first wave of the new business class was among the most vocal of chairmen to oppose the Bill. For instance, Martin Edwards publicly condemned the scheme, citing the recent chaos at an FA Cup tie between QPR and Manchester United as an example of the effect which the scheme would have (*The Times* 1/25/89:42b). Scholar was also vociferous in his opposition, giving a speech on 24 January 1989 to the Lords which highlighted the shortcomings of the scheme (*The Times* 1/25/89:40a). He argued that the scheme would reduce attendance and increase disorder outside the ground, to which he added that the new Bill was superfluous in the light of the Public Order Bill of 1986 (*The Times* 1/25/89:40a). The national identity card scheme was finally condemned in the Taylor Report (see Chapter 8) but the new business class's opposition to the scheme can only have assisted in that judicial rebuttal by contributing to a general sense of opposition to the scheme, on which Taylor could draw to inform his final decision.

C. The Visionaries

Although the first wave of the new business class was generally pragmatic in its attempts to reform the game, it attempted only piecemeal reforms which were designed to maximise the revenue of the game through the minimum of outlay. Thus, the fences were symbolic of the first wave's project - they were clumsy stop-gap methods of achieving some crowd control without ever resolving the root of the crowd disorder problem. However, there were some members of the wave who attempted to apply a coherent project of reform to football.

i. Scholar

Scholar's self-conscious differentiation from the 'traditional' directors was noted above and, in line with this division, Scholar attempted to transform Tottenham as a football club. Scholar employed three specific and original strategies to improve Tottenham's financial position : the extension of the fan base, the public floating of the money and diversification.

Firstly, Scholar employed Alex Fynn of Saatchi and Saatchi, the advertising company, to suggest ways in which Tottenham might promote itself. Scholar had apparently been impressed by Fynn's work for the Health Education Council (Alex Fynn, personal interview, 11/8/94). Consequently, Scholar had hired Fynn to assist the club in its marketing project. In 1983, under Fynn's guidance, Tottenham released the first ever television advertisement for League football when they broadcast a commercial which announced Tottenham's first League match of the 1983-4 season against Coventry. The advertisement was particularly significant since it explicitly foregrounded football as a potential leisure pursuit of those individuals who were not

in the early 1980s associated with the sport ; the advertisement attempted to attract the attention of potential fans other than the 'traditional' constituency of white, young working class males. The advertisement showed the team being led out onto the pitch by Ossie Ardiles followed by Mrs Ridlington, 'a bespectacled, white haired' granny (Horrie 1992:44) who led out her own team of celebrity supporters including (the late) Peter Cook, the satirist and comedian (Horrie 1992:44). The use of Mrs Ridlington suggested that football was suitable for a family and female audience while Peter Cook's presence denoted football as an arena which was suitable for the more intellectual and wealthy members of the service class at whom his work was principally directed. The significance of identifying women and intellectuals as potential consumers of football will become clearer in Chapter 12.

Scholar's second strategy was to float Tottenham on the Stock Exchange. The initial share issue on 13 October 1983 was a success ; 3,800,000 shares were sold at £1 each. Beyond the £3.8 million that this share issue raised, it was also meaningful in other ways. Symbolically, it announced the transformation of Tottenham Hotspur as a football club. The club, and by extension football itself, had become a business like any other, as Jimmy Hill had anticipated as early as 1961. The symbolic transformation of Tottenham was demonstrated by its new title because with the share issue the Tottenham Hotspur (the team) was subsumed under a larger holding company, Tottenham Hotspur Plc (Horrie 1992:38). This division was a fundamental change because it announced that football was only one of many potential subsidiary interests which the holding company owned.

Thirdly, Scholar diversified into a range of leisurewear goods. In 1985, Scholar signed a four year deal with the leisurewear company Hummel for replica shirts and

obtained the right to the franchise brand in the United Kingdom (Horrie 1992:100). Hummel expanded into leisurewear for adult football fans more generally and, in an attempt to identify this new commodity, Glenn Hoddle, the gifted Tottenham player, was persuaded to model the new garments (Horrie 1992:101). Tottenham Plc also purchased two other clothing companies, Martex and Stumps, a ladies' fashionwear distributor and a cricket clothes manufacturer respectively. The Plc's strategy of diversification, although in principle logical (and successfully implemented by Manchester United and Arsenal in the 1990s), was flawed. Hummel faced too much competition from Adidas and Umbro which were already successfully established in the football leisurewear market (Horrie 1992:101), especially in the light of the poor image of football in the 1980s.

The significance of Scholar's project lies in the fact that while his specific first project of reform failed, the methods which he sought to implement were exactly those which *would* be successful in the 1990s ; a new market for football, share issues and diversification (into leisure commodities). Thus Scholar demonstrates that the project of the first wave of the business class - and the likelihood of the success of that project - was substantially determined by the wider historical circumstances. In the 1980s, the financial position of football was so weak due to its poor cultural position that the ambitious strategies which Scholar sought to implement were unlikely to succeed ; football itself was not yet an attractive commodity, ready for market expansion.

ii. Maxwell and Bulstrode

Scholar was not the only casualty of the historical circumstances of the 1980s in the new business class's offensive on the game. David Bulstrode, the chairman of QPR, and Robert Maxwell, the chairman of Oxford but with links to Reading (and later chairman of Derby), also failed in their strategy of reform. However, this strategy involved the merger of two clubs. In 1983, Maxwell attempted to merge Oxford and Reading into the 'Thames Valley Royals', while Bulstrode sought a similar amalgamation of Queens Park Rangers and Fulham in 1987, whose ground his company, Marler Estates, owned. The merger scheme accorded with the logic of the free market discourse ; both teams were financially struggling and through their amalgamation they would both combine resources and enhance their support since both sets of fans would theoretically be drawn to the new club.

The two clubs had no alternative, with costs going up and neither side receiving sufficient support. Supporters must realise that they have to move with the times. I hope the new club, the Thames Valley Royals, could eventually get into the First Division and they will carry on the great traditions of Oxford and Reading. Otherwise, there will be no League football in this area. (Maxwell, quoted in *The Times* 19/4/83:32a)

Bulstrode's justification for the merger of Fulham and QPR traversed a similar line of argument based on financial viability.

There are too many clubs chasing too many customers. The implication for football is the same for any business. (Bulstrode, quoted in *The Financial Times* 28/2/87:5c)

Fulham was going nowhere. This had been a working class area, people walked from their cottages to the game. Those cottages now sell for £250,000. There is no local following left. There is no football solution for Fulham. It has to be a property answer. (Bulstrode, *The Times* 25/2/87:10d)

The proposed merger schemes foundered in the face of opposition from the fans⁷ and the Football League itself which could not condone the loss of one of its members.

However, the significance of the project was that it employed the discourse which would inform the new consumption of football in the 1990s. Crucially, the second wave would then use the discourse of the free market which Bulstrode and Maxwell employed to legitimate their projects ; in particular, football was to become a business, in which clubs were subject to attrition, and fans were to become customers. Bulstrode and Maxwell, therefore, took this free market discourse to its logical conclusion and sought to concentrate the capital of the football clubs through mergers. Although Bulstrode and Maxwell were ahead of their times - their explicit appeal to the free market discourse would become commonsensical in the 1990s - their project would still have failed in the 1990s as it went against the fans' understanding of themselves too forcefully.

The visionaries of the first wave of the new business class attempted to apply free market projects to the reformation of the game. Although some of these strategies were to be successful in the 1990s, they failed in the context of the 1980s because they attempted to transform the market position of football before the cultural position of the game had been altered. These members of the new business class attempted to implement particular conjunctural projects which were not privileged by organic conditions ; neither the interpretive framework nor the level of economic development had been reached at which the projects of Scholar, Bulstrode and Maxwell could be accepted.

Despite the failure of these premature projects, the first wave did not fail as a whole since it did implement the limited and pragmatic policies by which it sought to increase the revenue of the game. In this, the first wave was crucial to the eventual new consumption of football as this improved financial position was essential to the

transformation of the game. As we have seen the demands for greater payment for television coverage was essential to the development of the Premier League and since the latter was itself fundamental to the financing of the new consumption of football, it becomes clear that though the first wave's project was important it did not have a clear idea of the new consumption of football.

3. The New Business Class : The Second Wave

The second wave of the new business class consisted of those certain entrepreneurial individuals, who had attempted piecemeal reformations in the 1980s, which had created the conditions for the successful transformation in the 1990s, and certain individuals (such as Alan Sugar, Sir John Hall and Jack Walker) who became involved in football for the first time, looking upon it in a very different way to the traditional directors. It is true that not every club had a change of clientele at the boardroom level in the 1990s. The persistence of individuals who in the 1970 and 1980s might be regarded as 'traditional' does not, however, undermine the case which is being put here. For the most part, even 'traditional' directors transformed their styles of management to bring them in line with the activities of the more dynamic members of the new business class. Moreover, this self-transformation of traditional directors was especially notable at the large clubs in the First and Second Divisions, or what became in 1991, the Premier League and the First Division. Clubs at this level could not afford to look on themselves as public utilities, which existed as islands, washed by the tides of the free market .

The project of the new business class amounted to three central and interrelated projects ; the installation of proper club administration, the maximisation of profit (along with the belief in the attrition of those clubs which were incapable of turning a profit) and the transformation of the fan into a customer. It will, of course, be noted that all three strategies featured as elements in the free market discourse . The second wave, therefore, implemented the free market discourse which had been articulated in response to the crisis of the mid- to late 1980s. However, the implementation of the free market discourse was not a simplistic matter of application

in which the new business class was the mere cultural dupes to a higher set of rules.

Rather, the practice of the new business class was already substantially informed by the ideas which were articulated by the free market discourse. Crucially, the free market discourse created a certain horizon of possibility for the second wave ; it promoted the idea that football was indeed a business and that the three strategies which the second wave adopted were legitimate. The free market discourse did not constitute a blueprint for reform but rather it created the cultural conditions in which the changes which it recommended became possible.

A. Club Administration

The fundamental project of the new business class was to transform the game into a business ; football should no longer be run as a public utility but should be brought into line with the standards expected of any other enterprise in the competitive post-Fordist market and demanded by the press throughout the 1980s in the discourse of the free market. The new business class has explicitly affirmed this change to market principles.

I can remember arguing with the late chairman of Gillingham, Dr Grosmont. Again fifteen, twenty years ago and he turned round and said, 'Oh, you don't understand football. It's not like any other business.' I said, 'That's rubbish.' I said, 'The plumber down the road writes a cheque and there's not enough money in the back and it will bounce.' I said, 'At the moment, you don't think banks won't dare to do anything but one day they will, they will bounce your cheques. (Ken Bates, chairman of Chelsea FC, personal interview, 10/10/94)

Football has to be a business. (Robert Chase, chairman of Norwich City FC, personal interview, 18/10/94)

I think you have to [think of football as a business]. I mean, I think that has probably been one of the problems with clubs over the years. They've been growing and growing and still been treated very much as

the football industry. But West Ham is a £9 million turnover business. That is a reasonable size business. That is not a small business anymore. That has to be run professionally. You have to get all your income levels. (Peter Storrie, Managing Director of West Ham United FC, 25/7/94)

There is a general consensus among those individuals who administer the game in the 1990s that football is business. Consequently, clubs have to be run in accordance with contemporary management practice, Peter Storrie's statement implies the need for proper administration ; because West Ham now turns over some £9 million pounds, it must be administered in such a way as to cope with that substantial income. Robert Chase, the chairman of Norwich City, echoed this need for proper financial organisation within the club.

Football has to be a business. We have to pay the VAT. We have to comply with the Inland Revenue Regulations. We have to comply with the very sophisticated safety certificates and rightly so. There is as much skill at managing the football business today as there is playing on the pitch. (Robert Chase, personal interview, 18/10/94)

The renovation of club's administrations to bring them into line with contemporary management practice has involved the transformation of the club's financial arrangements. These financial arrangements have been transformed on two levels. Firstly, the revenue of the club is more closely accounted for ; professionals, usually accountants, have often been employed on a full time basis to oversee these finances. For example, Manchester United appointed Robin Launders, a fully qualified accountant, as finance director. At the level of the board, the club has also transformed itself in accordance with modern business practice. Traditional boards which featured chairman and major shareholders have often been formalised so that clubs now have chief executives, chairmen and managing directors in line with company practice.

B. Profit and Attrition

The renovation of the clubs' administrations to bring them into line with contemporary business practices has not been effected out of a mere desire to conform with those practices ; rather the point of this re-organisation has been to maximise the clubs' profits. Poor administration was incapable of adequately orienting the clubs in the competitive political economy of the 1980s and 1990s and, consequently, at the very time when the clubs needed to maximise their incomes, the mechanisms to achieve that maximisation were not in place.

The new business class's frequently articulated claim that football has become a business has had another effect beyond merely justifying the reformation of the club's administration. Crucially, the claim that football was a business legitimated the new business class's project of turning the game into one and that transformation ultimately involved foregrounding profit as the club's primary activity. In 1947, only six clubs had failed to make a profit but, by the 1980s, 56 clubs lost money (*The Economist* 31/5/86:47) and only the very few wealthiest clubs were able to show a profit for their activities. In those decades, as Dr Grosmont of Gillingham FC revealed to Bates, football was not concerned with profit. The new business class's demand that football was a business reintroduced and legitimated the pursuit of profit as a major concern for the club.

One of the crucial elements of this new profit-making ethic was that the clubs should be substantially independent of each other. They should be allowed to develop their own strategies of accumulation and, implicit, in these arguments of independence was the acceptance of any potential attrition which may occur to the League

clubs ; those clubs which were incapable of sustaining themselves had to be allowed to go out of business. These themes have been discussed at length in Chapters 5 and 7 and here I simply want to highlight that the appeal to business was a method of reinstalling profit as the central pursuit of the new business class. Ken Bates revealed that capitalist accumulation was central to the new business class' attempts to turn football into a business.

Now the moment you said that home clubs could keep their own gates then that meant that every club could run their business according to the way they thought best. Some people let unemployed people in, some people don't, some people do special deals with schools, others don't. You can vary your prices. For example, Chelsea did lead in one thing which is 'eventing'⁸ i.e., we charge more if Manchester United or Arsenal come to the game, come to here, than if you want to watch Ipswich or Coventry. People pay more for Barbara Streisand than Barbara Dickson. Same principle. But it means that every club can run their business accordingly, it also means they can adapt to their local community or area more than if you legislate at the national level.
(Ken Bates, personal interview, 10/10/94)

For Bates, the clubs' autarky is crucial to the new business class's project of making football profitable, for that autarky liberates the clubs and opens up to them the opportunity of developing their own strategy of maximising income.

Importantly, however, Bates' approval of financial independence must also mean that not only are clubs free to adopt strategies which will maximise their profits but they must also be free to go out of business if they fail to make profits. To sustain loss-making clubs would involve the redistribution of revenue from profit-making clubs and that redistribution implies that clubs are not free to adopt whatever strategies they deem appropriate but are constrained by the need to support others. Bates implies this attrition of loss-making clubs in the statement which was quoted in the previous section, when he warned Dr Grosmont that the banks would foreclose on clubs in the future. For Bates, it is essential that clubs make a profit or they are

dependent on the uncertain goodwill of the bank ; if that goodwill expires then, it is logical that the club will simply be forced out of business.

Diversification has been one of the commonest strategies by which the new business class has attempted to increase its profit through independent commercial activity. In particular, diversification has involved the retailing of commodities (especially clothing) which has been branded with the clubs' name or crest ; in the 1990s, replica shirts have been the most financially lucrative strand of diversification for clubs. In branding their commodities with the representation of the club and all the connotations which that representation has for the fans, clubs are effectively providing the fans with the right to consume the symbolic value of the club. However, in order to exploit that symbolic value, the club has had to ensure that it has exclusive rights to brand commodities with symbolic value. Thus, Manchester United, for example, has made a trademark of its own name so that only it can produce commodities and lease the rights to consume the name and crest of Manchester United out to supporters. As Lury argues this use of the trademark has been a standard strategy in post-Fordism.

It [trademark] has increasingly come to set the terms for the institution and exploitation of intellectual property both within and crucially, outside, the culture industry. (Lury 1993:85)

Since post-Fordism centrally involves establishing a symbolic meaning for a commodity so that it appeals to the identities of a particular segment of the market, it is necessary to prevent competitors duplicating that symbolic value and breaking into the niche which a company is attempting to direct its commodities towards. By enforcing its trademark, Manchester United has improved the profitability of its diversification strategies.

The attempt by the new business class to make football clubs profitable has involved grander schemes than merely seeking new ways of increasing the revenue through better administration and diversification. Certain members of the new business class have employed football as part of a much broader capitalist project, of which football is but a part - albeit a crucial symbolic part. These grand capital projects have been exemplified by the investments of Sir John Hall, Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell in football.

Sir John Hall has not simply aimed at using the symbolic value of Newcastle United to make a profit out of football but rather his project at the club is part of a wider strategy intended to initiate a retailing and consumption-led regeneration of the region.

They say you can't regenerate the UK by shopping centres alone. But you can break into the manufacturing decline of an area by making it an attractive area. Industries won't come just because Geordies are nice people. You have to present them with ambience, lifestyle. (Sir John Hall, quoted in Gardner and Sheppard 1989:41)

Newcastle United is part of Sir John Hall's attempt to transform Newcastle into an 'economy of sign and space' (Lash and Urry 1994) - that is an area in the global markets which defines and sells itself by a communication of itself as a sign value - but the transformation of the football club has crucially been preceded by the construction of the MetroCentre on Tyneside.

The MetroCentre is a hundred-acre indoor mall development, containing scores of shops (Gardner and Sheppard 1989:38), which stands directly across the River Tyne from the old Parsons turbine works and the Vickers tank factory. This proximity symbolically represents the shift in the British economy from production to consumption and this is reflected in the levels of employment on either side of the

river ; Vickers employs less people than the combined workforce of the MetroCentre's Marks and Spencer and Carrefour stores alone (Gardner and Sheppard 1989:108). The MetroCentre denotes that Newcastle is a city which had adapted to the demand of the global economy and that it offers serious investment possibilities.

Through the creation of these sites of consumption which deal in symbolic values and which themselves symbolically communicate Newcastle as an economy of sign and space in the post-Fordist global networks, Sir John Hall has attempted to renovate Newcastle. Newcastle United has been part of this strategy because the re-emergence of the team to the upper echelons of English football along with the creation of a St. James' Park worthy of European football augments that image of Newcastle as a prominent city. Having a successful professional football team, playing in a good stadium, communicates the fact that Newcastle is a city of importance capable of competing in the post-Fordist global ⁹. Newcastle as a city is worth the attention of the global markets. Sir John Hall's strategy seems to have worked as he has attracted the Japanese electronic company, Samsung, to set up its European operations in Newcastle.

Maxwell and Murdoch have adopted a similar strategy as Sir John Hall, although the profitability of the sign-value of football lies in the fact that it is a primary commodity by which newspapers (and satellite television) is sold, rather than as a symbol by which a region is sold to global investors. In particular, football became a central symbolic value in Maxwell and Murdoch's battle over the circulation of papers.

That football was important to the business strategies of these entrepreneurial individuals is demonstrated by the effort which they took to establish financial control over certain clubs. Maxwell created a family network across several clubs so that

while he when he became chairman of Derby, his son Kevin, retained familial control over Derby, while Maxwell still held substantial shares in Reading. Yet, Maxwell was never satisfied with his football clubs, which were distinctly Second Division, or worse, and which therefore gave him little leverage over English football, even though he made the most of what his modest clubs gave him. He made no secret of this dissatisfaction, declaring :

I am a First Division chairman and I need a First Division club. (Horrie 1992:64)

The only reason for such a desire to become a First Division chairman could have been his need to manipulate the symbolic value of football in accordance with the interests and understandings of his publications.

It was this need for control over one of the major interests in English football which eventually brought Maxwell and Murdoch into conflict. Their circulation war was extended to football since that was a major symbolic value by which they sold their papers. By influencing the development of football by attaining votes (or influence over others who did the voting), Maxwell and Murdoch hoped to steer the game in the direction which was suitable for their media interests.

There is, of course, little direct evidence for this claim since it was unlikely that either party was going to reveal its reasons for getting involved in football to the public. However, since this involvement in football was costly in terms of both time and money, it can be deduced that both parties believed that they were gaining something from the involvement and it is logical to assume that what they were gaining was related to their core business of newspaper publication.

Maxwell and Murdoch came into competition over two principal clubs, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur. Maxwell had attempted to buy Martin

Edwards' shares in 1983 and, although that deal had collapsed, this did not dampen his desire to become chairman of one of the premier English clubs. When Michael Knighton made a farcical attempt to buy Manchester United in 1989 (Crick and Smith 1990:277-295), with £10 million which he did not have, Maxwell constantly interfered, trying to put himself in a position to purchase the club once again (Horrie 1992:193). Maxwell's interferences in these finally futile negotiations seemed to have been inspired because he was worried about the eventual destination of the United shares and, in particular, whether Murdoch was not discreetly behind Knighton's bid and whether Murdoch himself was not interested in United (Horrie 1992:194). It emerged some six weeks later that Maxwell's suspicions had been correct as Murdoch had investigated buying Edwards' stake through an intermediary (Horrie 1992:196).

A similarly covert struggle was waged over Tottenham when Scholar got into financial difficulties. In July 1991, Maxwell secretly loaned £1 million to Tottenham to prevent Barcelona repossessing Lineker, whose transfer fee had not been completed (Horrie 1992:198). Maxwell further assisted Scholar by underwriting a £12 million share issue, although he did not want a controlling stake yet (Horrie 1992:199). Furthermore, he insisted that the dealings be secret (Horrie 1992:199). Maxwell's insistence on secrecy and his refusal to take a controlling stake cannot be imputed to his generosity but rather to the fact that he was transgressing League rules, which stated that no chairman of a club could have holdings or financial dealings in another. Maxwell had already breached this rule by having interests in Reading, Oxford and Derby but it was clear that the League would not allow his interest in one of the biggest clubs to go unchallenged. When Maxwell's loans came to light, the end was in sight for Scholar as Tottenham's shares were suspended because the shareholders were

being denied information about the finances of the club (Horrie 1992:211) and Tottenham was revealed to be in breach of rule 86 of the Football League which banned financial dealings between club chairman.

With Scholar gone, Maxwell attempted to establish himself as a 'First Division' chairman. However, he was in serious competition with Alan Sugar, who was eventually successful after much convoluted negotiation (see Horrie 1992:268-277). The important point here is not the particulars of these negotiations but rather the fact that Sugar was assisted in his take-over of Tottenham by Murdoch. Sugar and Murdoch had already established a relationship of mutual self-interest in the creation of satellite television but Sugar's presence at a major football club would give Murdoch a huge advantage in Sky's bid for football (Horrie 1992:263, Scholar 1992:344) and Murdoch accordingly encouraged Sugar to buy Spurs as part of this wider strategy. Sugar was open about this encouragement.

Rupert rang me up one day and said, 'What's going on with this football club you are thinking of buying? I see that this clown Maxwell is trying to buy it'. (Alan Sugar, quoted in *The Times* 30/11/92:25e)

Furthermore, Sugar revealed that Murdoch's assistance had not only been moral ; he had asked Murdoch for backing in this bid for the club (*The Times* 30/11/92). Sugar eventually gained control of the club in June 1991, eleven months before the crucial television contract was to be agreed upon (when he cast the critical vote in favour of BSkyB).

In the definition of the new business class, with which I began this chapter, I argued that a central strategy of this class was in investment in new commodities. The investment and (attempted investments) of Hall, Maxwell, Murdoch and Sugar are examples of this strategy of accumulation. However, the investment in football is not

straightforward ; the new business class does not seek merely a return on its investments in the form of share dividends. Rather, the new business class wanted to use its financial investment to gain control of the game and therefore, to have some say in its reformation. This is crucial because the profitability of football for the new business class comes from its symbolic value. The return which the new business class seek then is from the sale of the symbolic value of football once the game has been re-marketed. In the next section, I will examine the principal method by which the new business class has sought to transform the symbolic value of the game.

C. Creating the Customer

In Chapter 7, I argued that the third strand of the free market discourse argued for the transformation of the football fan into a customer. I want to suggest that this strategy was central to the second wave's transformation of the game and to the new consumption of football. In my interviews with certain members of the new business class it became clear that they were conscious of this project of bringing the consumption of football into line with the wider meanings and values of British post-Fordism and that this was to be achieved by treating the fan as a customer.

The customer in any business pays for what he gets. I've been converted to all-seating. I mean the working class no longer go to Blackpool for their holidays, they go to Spain or Madeira and Phuket and the Caribbean they go on cruises. They no longer have Blackpool rock and cloth caps and handkerchiefs on their heads and their stockings rolled up while they're packing in [unclear] Brighton. And the other thing is that when they go to the pictures the working class, they don't go in and stand in the rain with water running down the back of their fucking neck with their cloth cap and a muffler. They go into a warm place where they can sit down. Somewhere to hang their coats up. They can get a cup of coffee or an ice cream or pop corn or whatever and they sit down in two or three hours comfort. (Ken Bates, personal interview, 10/10/94)

Highlighting the fact that Bates' arguments were not idiosyncratic, Robert Chase traversed a similar discursive line.

The world is changing. At one time, people who used to come to football were men who worked on Saturday morning, who left off work at about one o'clock and football started at about one o'clock in the winter because of the dark nights before there was floodlighting. In the summer it was a little bit later because they could sit on the river bank and have a pint before they wanted to come. So, traditionally, it was when the factories stopped working, men used to drift down to watch football before they went home on a Saturday afternoon. (Robert Chase, personal interview, 18/10/94)

The significance of these statements lies in two basic claims. Firstly, that the condition of the working class has changed beyond all recognition ; in recent years the working class are far more affluent and enjoys more diverse and sophisticated leisure pursuits. Secondly, it is logical and even necessary that the new business class transforms football in line with these changes. Implicit within this claim is the important assumption that football is part of the leisure industry like any other. Even for football's 'traditional' audience of the working class, the conditions which were experienced at football grounds by the 1980s, were unacceptably anachronistic.

The new business class's central project was to introduce the standards and values current in the wider post-Fordist leisure industry into football. This renovation of the stadia was necessary because football no longer reflected wider social identities. Consequently, its market was limited as individuals only attended those rituals which were meaningful to them ; the discomfort (and danger) of a terrace had little meaning to most of the affluent core of post-Fordist society. Since football needed to attract individuals from this core, in order to improve its financial position, it needed to reform itself so it appealed to those individuals' self-understandings.

In particular, the transformation of the consumption of football was directed at attracting women from the affluent core to the game. The terraces had been colonised by violent masculine fans since the 1960s and the masculine celebrations, which fandom involved, both threatened women and ensured that football had little meaning for them. The strategy of feminising the crowd was evinced by Robert Chase, the chairman of Norwich City.

Females, I don't know why, seem to want better standards and they demand better standards. (Robert Chase, personal interview, 18/10/94)

The widening of the market for football through the reconstruction of the grounds has been designed to encourage the attendance of individuals, and especially, women and familial groups from the core of post-Fordist society. This re-location of football is the strategy which is referred to by the term 'treating the fan as a customer'. The term customer, therefore, at one level, refers to the development of a new supporter who is situated in a socially different and more affluent position than the poor white males who have comprised most of football's support in the last thirty years. In this, the term 'customer' is plainly a discursive construction which veils the potentially exclusionary strategy involved in transforming the fan into a customer, as the marketisation of the fan relationship involves increasing the amount which fans must pay for the improved facilities which they enjoy¹⁰.

However, the notion of 'the customer' not only refers to a social relocation of football but also to a process of gaining control over the crowd.

In any business, in any walk of life, you have to say sometimes to your customers, 'I'm sorry, you're abusing the service that I'm providing, if you're not prepared to mend your ways or to conduct yourself in a better or more reasonable manner, the service will cease'. Take, for example, the bank. If you open an account and you don't stick to the rules, the manager generally writes to you nicely. The second time, he rings you up and says, 'I think you ought to come and see me' and the third time, he closes the account. (Robert Chase, personal interview,

8/10/94).

This statement is extraordinary because Chase describes the relationship between fan and club as that between a customer and a business which would have been inconceivable in previous decades and, yet, he takes this new relationship as if it were entirely commonsensical. The importance of Chase's statement lies not only in the fact that it highlights the transformation of the relationship between the club and fan but it also suggests why the new business class was keen to institute this transformation. Crucially, as Chase's statement reveals, the creation of the customer was centrally concerned with establishing control over the football crowd. In particular, the notion of the customer entailed certain ideas of the appropriate behaviour of the customer and the appropriate service which the customer could expect in return. The point was that the customer was founded in the notion an affluent, feminised and familial culture and any behaviour which did not conform to this ideal of post-Fordist consumption, was regarded as illegitimate. The notion of the customer, therefore, highlighted the masculine fandom which had been typical on the terraces for some thirty years as inappropriate.

The notion of the customer is a discursive method by which the new business class has justified marketising the relations with the fans, which has ultimately meant increasing the ticket prices and altering the social location of football to the more affluent sections of society. The notion of the customer conveniently disguised the potentially exclusionary strategies of the new business. Furthermore, the notion of the customer has given the new business class a discursive strategy by which it could deflect the very complaints of those masculine fans whom the notion of the customer was designed to exclude. A frequent reply to the complaints about the increase in

ticket prices which the new consumption of football involved was that the clubs had to both pay for renovation and adopt the prices set by the market for other leisure goods ; the new ticket prices are not, it is claimed, expensive when compared with theatre tickets and so on. It followed that if the football fan was discontented with the increased prices involved in the new consumption of football, then the customer was free to go elsewhere. The importance of the discursive construction of the customer is that it reduces the relationship between the club and fan to an economic one only ; neither party has any right over the other beyond those decreed by the market. 'The customer pays for what he gets', as Bates said. In other words, customers have the right to demand the facilities for which they pay but if they are dissatisfied with the service beyond what is reasonably included in the price, then they can exercise the only option envisaged in customer discourse - they are free to go elsewhere.

It is at this point that the notion of the customer emerges as a discursive construction which is designed to legitimate a political economic project because, in even the briefest discussion with fans, it immediately emerges that they do not see themselves as being free to become fans of other clubs. Even the fan which the notion of the customer envisages - the feminised, familial groups from within the core of the post-Fordist society - is not a customer in the way in which the new business class's discourse suggest. Firstly, as we have already noted, even the new consumer fans do not attend the game specifically because they are customers ; they are not drawn to the game because the club now treats them like a customer. Rather, the renovation of the grounds means that the game has in the 1990s started to express the understandings which inform their notion of themselves as members of the new working class, white-collar salariat or service class. The new business class flattens this crucial interpretive

element of fandom out with the concept of the customer and this denial of the hermeneutic aspect of fandom both legitimates the new business class's project and diminishes its responsibility to the fan.

Since the fan is drawn into fandom because the game articulates the understandings of the fan, the fan has an emotive attachment to the club which goes beyond any brand loyalty which features in customer discourse. The fan does not attend a club's games because that club obviously provides that fan with the best product in the football market ; if that was the nature of football fandom then each season, all fans would inevitably support the champions. Certainly, the new consumer fans have been attracted by the improved facilities and the lack of violence but the 'product' which they buy is not necessarily the best in footballing terms. Rather it appeals to them because it reflects their notion of themselves. This means that football fans do not make a choice like other consumers in the leisure market ; the latter do not select a cinema and attend every film which that cinema shows, regardless of its quality (going for years without ever seeing a good film or-a star performer).

Furthermore, the interpretive aspect of fandom is only realised through participation in the game and this fan practice is actually essential to football as a meaningful and therefore commodifiable ritual. The fans' practice is part of the product which the new business class sells. However, the new business class argue through the discourse of the customer that it sells football to the fan in the manner that goods are sold at the high street. There, the relationship between the customer and the business is purely monetary and the interpretive work of consumption is carried out away from the shop (see Miller 1987). However, football consumption is entirely different to normal commodity consumption and, therefore, the relationship between

the fan and the club is unlike the relationship which exists between the consumer and the shops on the high street. Football fans only attend the game because the game seems to articulate some aspects of their identity in a visceral way and the game is only able to do this because the fans attend and create this sense of identity which is what is actually sold by the business class. The fans are part of the product which they are being asked to buy but the new business class deny the role of the fans in the production of the football commodity in order to facilitate profit-making by denying that the fans have any rights over the club which are not institutionalised in the market.

The notion of the customer is deliberately inadequate to the experience of football fandom ; it denies the interpretive nature of the attachment (and the loyalty which that attachment brings) and denies the role which the fan has in creating the product which the new business class then attempts to sell. The notion of the customer is, therefore, a discursive construction which legitimates a political economic project by ignoring the claims which the fans' special contribution to football imply. In particular, the notion of the customer plays down the obligations which the fans' special relationship to the game demand of the club. In particular, since it has been the masculine fans who have been most vociferous in their opposition to the renovation of the grounds and to their transformation into customers (because they cannot afford it and their style of support has been most threatened by the new 'customer' fan), the discourse of the customer has been most effective in deflecting their criticisms. The discourse of the customer has simply denied the validity of the imagined relationship which these masculine fans have established with the clubs over several decades. This denial of 'the lads' (as I shall call these masculine fans in the next chapter) is appropriate because the notion of the customer is a veiled reference to a new social

and sexual location for football, away from poorer males who are positioned in the lower echelons of the service industry or outside the core all together, and into the affluent familial core of post-Fordist society.

D. The Success of the Second Wave

Although, as we shall see in the following chapter, the project of the new business class has been contested, it has at the same time been substantially implemented into football so that football has undergone a radical transformation in the 1990s. The success of the second wave cannot merely be put down to the self-evident superiority of its project over the first wave's attempts at reform ; Scholar, for instance, attempted to implement a very similar strategy of reform to the game in the 1980s. Rather, the success of the second wave was facilitated by the wider social conditions in which the new business class operated in the 1990s and there seem to have been three principal factors which assisted the second wave's project.

Firstly, as I have suggested, the discourses of the new business class and its project of reform were closely linked to wider social discourses, and in particular, to Thatcherism. By the 1990s, Thatcherism had established itself as a dominant interpretive framework across much of the social formation, informing and transforming social relations and economic practice. In the light of the wide (though not, of course, complete) consent to Thatcherism, even after the demise of Thatcher herself, it was likely that the new business class's project and the discourses which legitimated it would also be more easily accepted across the social formation in the 1990s.

Secondly, since *Italia '90* football had attained a new cultural position and was increasingly attractive to the classes in the core of post-Fordist society. Furthermore, the Taylor Report assisted in the re-creation of the public perception of football because it promised a better future for the game. Thus, the new business class's attempts to reform the game were more likely to be successful, for, whereas Scholar attempted to widen the appeal of the game at a time when it seemed irredeemably wedded to the poor white male, the second wave's project coincided with a renewal of the game. This coincidence was not accidental as many of the new business class (Sugar, Hall, Walker, Johnson), all invested in the game in the 1990s after *Italia '90* and the Taylor Report. Unlike Scholar, they timed their project to coincide with an improvement in football's market position.

Thirdly, the new business class began to renovate the grounds after it had opted for the BSkyB contract and, consequently, it had the benefit of the sudden and radical increase in finances, which the satellite company provided. Although the transformation of the grounds was demanded for both the top divisions by the Taylor Report, and some members of the new business class, who owned First Division clubs, had to renovate their grounds without the benefit of BSkyB funding, the revenue from the satellite network critically expedited the project of the new business class. Thus the development of the Premier League itself, as a political economic institution, was crucial to the success of the second wave as this institution substantially improved the market position of football.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I situated this discussion of the project of the new business class in the current historicist and hermeneutic approach to the analysis of class. The new business class's project to football demonstrates the social features which have been highlighted in this sociological discourse. The new business class has employed its economic resources to gain a hold over football but it has only been successfully able to do so in the light of the substantial organic political economic change both within the game and within wider society.

Furthermore, although the new business class has emerged on the back of economic opportunities which have arisen after the collapse of the welfare state - the fragmentation of consumer markets, in particular - its rise and its relations with other classes has not been determined absolutely by certain economic developments. In contradistinction to the claims of Marxist structuralism, the rise of the new business class was not logically intrinsic to the capitalist system in Britain. The new business class has exploited certain economic transformations but crucially, the class has established itself discursively. In relation to football, the new business class has attempted to apply a notion of the customer, which had featured as a central motif, in the transformation of social relations in much of the British social formation in the 1980s. The notion of the 'customer' has principally been involved in re-negotiating relations within the core of post-Fordist society, with the service class and the affluent salariat, employed in the lower echelons of the service bureaucracy. The notion of the 'customer' has not so much reflected the true nature of the relations between classes but rather it has been (as we have seen) a discursive device by which the new business class has attempted to establish its dominance and legitimate that position. As

a discursive method, which informs the understanding of social relations, the notion of the customer has come under serious contestation from those classes and class fractions which have been either excluded or subordinated by its acceptance. The next three chapters are substantially concerned with the reactions of three different types of fan to the project of the new business class and to its attempt to transform football fans into customers.

NOTES :

- 1 David Dein, who joined the board of Arsenal in 1983, was a very successful commodity broker, specialising in sugar, in the City.
- 2 Martin Edwards became chairman of Manchester United in 1980, after the death of his father, Louis. He sold his father's meat business in the early 1980s and invested all his money in the club.
- 3 Ken Bates had previously been the chairman of Oldham (1965-70) and Wigan in the late 1970s and rescued the 'traditional' Mears family from financial ruin threatened by the construction of the East Stand. Like many of the new business class, Bates had invested his money diversely in the global economy. He had made money from quarrying gravel in Lancashire but had then reinvested this capital in sugar in Australia, land reclamation in the West Indies and a dairy farm in Buckinghamshire (*The Times* 9/4/94:42a).
- 4 Scholar worked his way up from being a clerk in a North London estate agency to owning a multi-million pound property company by exploiting the crash of property prices in the 1970s.
- 5 Robert Chase became a millionaire through property development and still owns his property company.
- 6 Scholar's horror at the financial practices at Tottenham should be treated with some scepticism as the worse the state of the club when he took over, the greater the legitimacy of his position as the new chairman.
- 7 The opposition of the fans to the merger schemes is of interest for it demonstrates that, although the new business class has risen to a position of dominance, its project must earn the consent of the fans. The new business class has to negotiate the transformation of football with the fans' own self-understandings. This complex negotiation is the subject of the final three chapters of the thesis.
- 8 Eventing involves increasing the price according to the opposition. This strategy has caused discontent among the visiting fans of the more famous clubs.
- 9 For an account of the symbolic role of the club in the identity of cities, see King 'The Problem of Identity and the Cult of Cantona', *Salford Papers in Sociology*, 1995.
- 10 Membership schemes have also proved a useful method for the new business class of establishing relationship with the fans on a customer basis. In Chapter 6, it was noted that Thatcher had legislated for the implementation of a membership scheme at all the clubs in the League which should include at least half of the attendance at any game. In practice, this scheme actually only included half of the home team's attendance. Initially, as its origin in Thatcher's authoritarian discourse implied, the scheme was developed as a means of controlling the hooligan. By recording a substantial body of its support, it was hoped that troublemaking fans could be identified and removed from the ground permanently. However, the membership

schemes, for those clubs which have them, has become not primarily authoritarian but rather market-oriented. They establish the relation of obligation which Chase implied in his notion of football being a service for the paying customer. However, membership schemes have also crucially brought the fans into a closer relationship with the club and assisted the club in marketing themselves. They have been communicated their products to their fandom but also gained *information on that* fandom's preferences.

CHAPTER 11

THE LADS

Although the new business class has been crucial to the new consumption of football, the role of fans in the creation of this new consumption and their contestation of the new business class's project cannot be ignored, for, as their opposition to Maxwell's and Bulstrode's merger schemes in the 1980s demonstrated, without the consent of the fans in the form of their attendance at games, the sport was worthless to the new business class. The fans crucially contribute to the ritual. Without their presence in the ground, their singing and celebration, the game itself would be meaningless and, therefore, uncommodifiable for the business class. The fans' consumption of the game is, therefore, also an act of production. The next three chapters are concerned with the fans' responses to the new consumption of football and the project of the new business class - in particular, I want to highlight the intense political debates which the new business class's project has stimulated.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the interpretive practice of teenage to middle-aged male fans at Manchester United in the 1993-4 season (*the second season of the Premier League*) - their contribution to the production of football. In analysing the interpretive practices of these young men, 'the lads', I want to relate my discussion to the recent literature on fans and audiences. The principal question which has been at issue in this literature has been whether fandom constitutes a form of mystification, where the particular form of consumption is regarded as 'the opium of the people' or, on the other hand, as a knowing and active form of resistance.

Much of the recent literature opens its account with a complaint about academia's attitude to fandom in the past. Either the academy has ignored these

manifestations of interpretive practice as trivial and therefore peripheral to sociology's concern with putatively more central elements of social life : work, class and the state (Lewis 1992:10, Bromberger 1993:90). Or, alternatively, those sociologists that have analysed popular pastimes have looked upon them with disdain, regarding their practitioners as cultural dupes whose mystified compliance ensures their continued exploitation (Lewis 1992:10, Hargreaves 1982:41, Clarke and Critcher 1985:228-232 ¹). Through a close examination of the actual practice of fandom, the recent literature has sought to demonstrate that such approaches are, at best, simplistic and are, in fact, likely to be founded in quite blatant snobbery.

On the other hand, since the 1970s, there has been a tradition in cultural studies which, has run in almost direct opposition, highlighting the elements of resistance. The work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, notably *Resistance through Rituals*, constitutes the prime example of this position in British sociology. However, with specific reference to football, Ian Taylor argued that the hooligan constituted a sub-cultural rump of the working class, which protested and resisted the gradual decline of working class culture both in football, and in wider society, as a result of the growth of commercialism (1971). For Taylor, the hooligan was in the 1970s an 'anti bourgeois resistance fighter' (Giulianotti 1994:20) ².

In line with the recent analysis of fans, I want to suggest here that in analysing the interpretive practice of fans, a more sophisticated approach is required than the tired dualism of mystification or resistance. With respect to 'the lads', who comprised an important element of Manchester United's support ('Fergie's Red Army' as they liked to call themselves), I want to suggest that it is finally impossible to determine categorically whether a particular form of fandom is either resistant or compliant (and

mystified). On the contrary, the self-understandings which the fans create for themselves and which inform their relations with others and especially with the new business class are complex and their effects contradictory. Through their fandom, individuals both resist and comply to the projects of superordinate classes and do so in the same moment.

Portelli has insightfully described this paradoxical fan culture of submission and resistance in an examination of Italian football fans, which he terms identification and resentment (1990:2). I want to follow Portelli's argument of the contradictory relationship between the rich and poor in Italian football culture and re-apply it to my experience of male fans at Manchester United. However, I also want to sketch the links between that relationship and the wider post-Fordist transformation in Britain (see also Radway 1987:148, Lewis 1992;35,59,65).

1. The Crack

A. The love of the team and the lads' pride

I would say it's the modern equivalent of a religion, football. I would say that quite honestly. It's got all the same traits, like. You go to your place of worship, you have your icons, you follow your team. Even now out of season all you're thinking about is who they are going to sign, what's the new shirt going to be like, how you going to do next season, who they going to get in Europe. (David, personal interview 25/5/94)

It's passion. It runs a lot deeper than money. Money's no object. It's all about passion. That is the truth. 'Cause it's not support, it's an obsession. It's everything. As Bill Shankly said, it's not life and death, it's more important than that...My family has been split up through it. I try to curb it but it's, it's just that little bit extra, you know what I mean. The boys. You're buzzing. You're on cloud cuckoo land. (Rob 1/6/94)

These descriptions of fandom by two United 'lads' trace the contours of the analysis I want to offer of the lads' interpretive practice as fans. Since the lads' self-

understandings have determined their response to the transformation of the consumption of football and that fandom has in fact played into the new consumption of the game, it is necessary to go into some detail about the nature of the lads' identities and practices. The analysis of the lads' football fandom could usefully draw on Durkheim's classic work on aboriginal religions. In the ritual of support, which the lads consciously conceive of as religious, the lads reach a heightened emotional state 'The boys. You're buzzing'. In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1964), Durkheim argued that in the ritual the clan, who had been involved in the profane and dispersed activity of hunter gathering, came together to worship their totem. In those ecstatic celebrations, the members of the clan viscerally felt the social reality and solidarity of the clan. These emotions were focussed on the totem of the clan and since the totem represented the clan, the aborigines were, in fact, worshipping their own society in celebrating the totem ; their 'god', represented by the totem, was in fact their society, which came into being in these sacred moments of the ritual.

The relevance of Durkheim's analysis of aboriginal religion and the lads' support for their team becomes apparent in the two quotations cited above. In their own account of their support for the team, the lads admit to becoming ecstatic (see also Guilianotti et al. 1994:5, Finn in Guilianotti et al. 1994:107-8, Bromberger 1993). That ecstasy is produced by the communal practice of singing and supporting the team. However, those communal practices are not only staged in the ground. The pub is also a crucial site for the creation of masculine solidarity. In the steamy and inebriated atmosphere of the pub, before the game³, the lads first begin to recreate their sense of mutual solidarity, which (sometimes) reaches its height in the ground.

At any club, the lads, inverted commas, who go and support the team and who go, who want the keg [alcohol] and want a bit of a crack, not necessarily

fighting or anything or even to see an away fan but they just want to go to the boozer and have a good day and support the team... (David 25/5/94)

The crack is the great thing about football whether you support United or Lincoln City. Meeting up with the lads in the pub before the match, going to an away game with all your mates. That makes it more enjoyable definitely, I couldn't go to a game every week on me own. (David 25/5/94)

The crack, then, is only possible insofar as the lads mutually practice and demonstrate their support, by drinking and singing together, intensifying their emotions, raising them in some cases to a crescendo of excitement. In line with Durkheim's argument, this ecstasy has a focus, which is expressed in the songs of the lads, which resonate out of the doorways of a multitude of pubs and bars in towns and cities around England and Europe. That focus of solidarity is, of course, the team. The lads conceive of this relationship with the team, which acts as the medium for their masculine solidarity, in distinctive terms.

It has been said that the nearest thing to unconditional love is that of a mother for her son. No matter what her son may do or say she will stick by him. No provisos, no conditions no bloody chance. The nearest thing to true unconditional love is that of a lad for his football team. (Steve Black, 'True Love' in *United We Stand* Issue 35)

Or again.

I reckon it's surrogate emotions, I really do. I think it's all these blokes that just can't say 'I love you'. I can't say 'oh, you're a really good mate, you are' but I can sing at the top of my voice, 'I love you City' or 'we love you City', or I can cry when we get promoted or I can cry when we get relegated. But if my mum dropped dead I probably wouldn't cry but I can cry if City won the Cup. (Mark 14/6/94) ⁴

The lads conceive of their relationship to their team as a love affair. This conception links back to the creation of ecstatic solidarity in 'the crack' when the boys are 'buzzing'. On the one hand, the ecstasy of football fandom engages their emotions so deeply that they build up an affection for the club which is seen as love. However, the

lads are only able to raise themselves to the level of excitement in their spectating because they invest the game with so much importance as a result of their love for the club. The ecstasy of the lads' support and the love they have for the club are symbiotic, therefore. Yet, the lads' relationship of love seems to be more significant than merely reinforcing the fans' ecstasy.

The love which the lads feel for their team, then, is simultaneously also a love for the feeling of solidarity which they experience every time they see their team and participate in the communal practice of drinking and singing. Just as Durkheim suggested aboriginal tribes worship their society through the totem, so do the lads reaffirm their identity as lads, with all the values and associations which go with that identity, and their relations with other lads through the love of the team. The love for the team is a transposed love of the lads' own social groups and the masculinity⁵, which informs that group's relations with itself and others. The team, and the love invested in it, is a symbol of the values and friendships which exist between the lads. The love the lads invest in the team affirms their notion of themselves as lads and their relations to each other at the deepest and most effective level.

Although I will not discuss the particular form of the lads' masculinity and its relationship to wider historical and cultural formations (see footnote 5(b)), one of the central elements of the lads' fandom is their 'pride'. By this the lads refer to the pride which their club has through its success on the pitch. This pride is reflected onto the lads, as supporters, but the lads also attain pride for themselves by the demonstration of loyal support ; regular attendance, singing (even when losing) and, in the past, fighting. This notion of pride is important in the lads' everyday lives for it is football which substantially defines their masculinity. The pride they attain from the success of

their club and their support of it brings them recognition in their everyday lives from other men who are supporters of the same club and those who are not. Since these masculine relations are substantially concerned with status and seeking recognition (Tolson 1977;43), the pride which a lad attains from football is important. It assists him in asserting himself in relations with other men in his community. Consequently, a fundamental part of the lads' support is emphasising the rivalry of his club with another and the superiority of his club over the others ⁶. This rivalry, which stems from the masculine competition for honour, is a central element in the lads' response to the new business class's project.

B. The Lads' Distinction

The masculinity which is celebrated by the lads in the interpretive practices of drinking, singing and supporting is a distinctive concept. Not only does it divide the lads from the opposition, who are regarded as unmanly, but the lads have a notion of themselves as a distinct body within the following of the club as a whole. This distinction has become particularly important at Manchester United since the transformation of the ground after the Taylor Report because the lads feel themselves under threat. Their style of support and the masculinity which it articulates is, as far as the lads can see, under a quite deliberate assault by the club's bureaucracy.

People like us [the lads] ideally aren't wanted at United. We go to the matches, we don't spend any money in the souvenir shop, we don't buy the programmes. (Grant 8/6/94)

As new support has been encouraged to attend games at Old Trafford, the lads have been forced to recognise the distinctiveness of their support. The distinctiveness of this support is worth close examination as it highlights both the

nature of the lads' support and it also provides the categorical framework of the following chapters on the contemporary state of fandom in the light of the new consumption of football.

The lads are principally aware of two other fan groups (apart from the executive boxes) and their difference from these other fans. Their ridiculing of these other fans constitutes a substantial part of their conversation and their understanding of themselves as fans. The two principal groups of fans which the lads view as distinct from themselves are, as I shall call them, the new consumer fans and the new football writing fans.

On the one hand, the new consumer fans are generally content with the new consumption of football and demonstrate this satisfaction by their willingness to purchase all manner of club merchandise. The new consumer fandom is more mixed, sexually, than the lads and often includes whole families. Since it is an expensive matter to attend matches, the new consumer fans' ability to bring their whole family points towards their having a significantly more affluent profile than the lads (Sir Norman Chester Centre 1994). The wealth differential between the two groups should not be overstated however. On the other hand, the new football writing fans comprise a very small body of any clubs' support. They are generally the college-educated sons and daughters of higher grade white-collar workers or professionals and are themselves often part of the 'service class', although they are often employed in the public sector. I will discuss these particular styles of fandom and their significance in the following chapters but for now, I want to consider only the lads' perception of these other fan groups. In particular, I want to highlight the way in which the lads regard these groups as potential threats to their notion of fandom (and, therefore, their

notion of masculine solidarity) and the attempts they make to maintain distinction from these groups so as to preserve the specific interpretive practices on which their self-understandings as men rely.

At Manchester United, the new consumer fans are particularly distinguishable by their use of official club coaches (to away games), rather than travelling independently or with the fanzines' coaches, which are principally organised by and for the lads. The lads describe those individuals who travel with the club as 'trainspotters' and travelling with the club is called 'going with the trainspotters'. Thus, on a couple of occasions, Steve D, a fan with whom I spent much time during the 1994-5 season, described himself as going with the 'trainspotters' and joked that he had prepared his 'flask and butties'. The new consumer fans are mocked in this way by the lads because the official coaches are regarded as being overly protective and restrictive. In particular, the lads point to the fact that the coaches organise their journeys to arrive at away grounds so close to the kick off time that there is little drinking time for the fans. This loss of drinking time becomes significant in the light of my earlier comments on the communal ritual of support. The lads are only able to express their masculinity and create the ecstatic solidarity, which reaffirms that masculinity, insofar as they are able to drink. Alcohol heightens their emotions physiologically but the mutual exchange through the buying of drinks and the shared practice of drinking are all fundamental to this visceral sense of togetherness⁷.

The lads not only differentiate themselves from the new consumer fans on the grounds of the latter's dependence on the club for away trips but also attach importance and deride the different styles of dress which the new consumer fans adopt. The lads wear much less official club merchandise than the compliant fans. The

origin of this rejection of official kit is linked to the development of the casual movement in the early eighties (see Redhead 1991). The casual movement developed as a reaction against late sixties and seventies (hooligan) fan clothing of boots, denims and scarves - both as a means of avoiding police attention and as a method of expressing distinctiveness and superiority through the expensiveness of the designer clothes. This desire to dress well, thereby demonstrating financial and stylistic superiority, persists among the lads today, especially among those in their late teens and early twenties who are interested in violence. The distinctiveness of the lads' dress should not be overstated, however, as many do wear the replica strip, although few would go beyond that purchase.

The lads are, nevertheless, conscious of the distinctiveness of their style of dress and it seems likely that even if they did not originally adopt this smart 'casual' style for reasons of distinction, their clothes are now consciously recognised by the lads as differentiating them from the 'trainspotters'. For the lads, to wear club merchandise is to be associated with fans who do not drink, who are dependent on the club for away match travel, are uncritical of the changes to football, do not contribute to the atmosphere in the ground and will not stand up in a fight.

The bitterness with which the lads now view the new consumer fan at Old Trafford stems from the fact that with the reduction of capacities and increase in seat prices with the development of all-seater stadia, the meaningfulness of football as a central arena in which the lads can reaffirm their masculinity and their relationship with other lads is under threat.

It ruins it for me sometimes, the atmosphere, You know when you go out of the ground and all these people you just don't want there. It just ruins it for me, When I've been at some matches at Old Trafford this year and I've just been looking at the people around me. It just fucks me off so much to look at them all just sat there in shirts not singing. (Grant 8/6/94)

The new consumer fans are distinguished by their dress and the passivity of their support ; they are 'all sat there in shirts'. The lads are quite conscious about the origins of their style of dress as a means of making themselves distinct from the compliant fans.

The reason people used to buy things [club merchandise] was for the identity and all that, but there isn't one there anymore, There's more identity in a Ralph Lauren shirt as to be from Manchester than there is in a United or even a City top. Any football top like, you know, you walk round in a United top, they'd think you were from Manchester. You couldn't do that any more. (Mitch 8/6/94)

Used to (buy the shirt) up to the age of seventeen. But there's no identity in a Manchester United shirt anymore. There's nothing. If I'd have worn one on holiday last week, it would have been you part-timer. Do you know what I mean? I couldn't take that. (Andy 8/7/94)

Both of these fans claim there is no identity in a United shirt. Yet tens of thousands of individuals across Britain (and indeed, the entire globe) disagree and happily purchase the various strips, doubtlessly regarding the shirt as meaningful when they pull it on ; it symbolically represents their notion of themselves and is a metonym for their imagined relationship with Manchester United. Andy and Mitch's argument that there is no identity anymore in a shirt cannot be sustained ; rather, they must mean that the identity that the shirt articulates is not consistent with their notion of themselves. For Andy and Mitch, the United shirt, which for so many is the symbol of allegiance, ironically denotes inauthentic support ; it is worn by part-timers and by individuals who do not come from Manchester. The latter claim is very important as it lies at the heart of a debate which raged among the lads throughout the 1994-5 season through the pages of the fanzines, *United We Stand* and *Red Issue* about whether out of town support could be regarded as authentic (see footnote below).

The new consumer fans are the uppermost in the lads' consciousness, and it is these fans whom they regard with most disdain because they threaten the masculine solidarity of the lads' fandom, and from whom the lads try to distinguish themselves and thereby preserve the expression of their masculinity in their support. However, the lads are also aware of another new group of fans which has emerged since the mid 1980s, the new football writing fans. To say that this group emerged in the mid-1980s is not intended to suggest that individuals who eventually created this loose-knit fan group were not attending matches before that time. On the contrary, as the next chapter will show, the individuals who created this group became involved in football in the 'golden age' of English football in the late sixties but the particular form of fandom 'new football writing', as a discrete and recognisable interpretive practice emerged only after 1985.

The new football writing fandom is organised around and its views are articulated in the national fanzine *When Saturday Comes* and the Football Supporters' Association (see Chapter 12). The lads were disparaging about both of these bodies. Of the thirteen lads, whom I interviewed, and one other, Steve D, with whom I spent much time, only one read *When Saturday Comes* regularly and this individual, Hugh, was only on the very edge of the lad category. Andy had read *WSC* in the past but had stopped reading it some time ago because it 'had gone downhill' (8/7/94). Of the thirteen others seven said they did not read it, four because they regarded it as 'too serious'. Five more did not mention it when fanzines were discussed in their interviews, so it is assumed that they did not read it. The apparent flippancy of the comment that *WSC* was 'too serious' belies a significant distinction between the styles of support of the lads and new football writing fans.

I always feel that they're trying to be too, too sensible, upright, level-headed supporters. 'Cause football supporters aren't like that. (Graham 26/5/94)

The level-headedness of *WSC* refers to their disdain for the sometimes bitter rivalries between fans of different clubs. Graham regards this as too sensible because, as I have argued, one of the essential elements of the lads' support is the rivalry with the male fans of other clubs; the success of a club reflects honour onto the male supporters of a club who are consequently quick to show their superiority over the fans of other clubs. The incompatibility of the new football writing's deamplification of rivalry between fans sits uncomfortably with the very point of the lads' masculine support; the demonstration of and competition for male honour and status and is highlighted in another fans' criticisms of the FSA.

It seems like a good idea what I've seen of it but when all is said and done, like, I know we're all football fans but I just see some clubs... (next clause unclear).. who edit such fanzines are all right and all that but clubs that really dislike each other I can't see how they can work in unity. You could be from the same backgrounds and all that but even if you got individuals from each club who were prepared to work together, are you speaking for your fans? 'Cause if you could say you've got this plan to sort of have a go against ticket prices and you present it to the fans. You say me and such and such a person who is a Leeds fan and Liverpool fan and we're all agreed on this. It's hard to gain any respect 'part from a few right-on people. (Peter 28/5/94)

Here Peter is presenting an interesting picture of the lads' mentality and of their distinctiveness from the new football writing fans. The lads construct their identity around notions of rivalry and competition, consistent with notions of their masculinity in which the struggle for recognition and supremacy are paramount. The new football writing fans do not regard football primarily as an arena in which they achieve honour through the triumphs of their team but rather they see the game as a communal celebration, around which they would like to articulate certain political sentiments⁸.

The difference in the styles of support between the new football writing fandom and the lads was demonstrated with particular clarity during my fieldwork. Two fans, Jason F (5/2/94, fieldnotes) and Mick G, independently expressed similar sentiments about the comments of a member of the new football writing fandom on television. After the 1992 European Cup Finals, in which there had been some disturbances involving English fans, Channel 4 screened a programme, *Wake up England*, which examined the role of English fans in these disturbances. During this programme, Bill Brewster, who was on the editorial board of *When Saturday Comes* at the time, was interviewed after the initial violence in Malmö. He described how he was now fearful for his safety because every violently disposed fan would be out to get any English fan and he showed visible signs of anxiety on the screen. Both Mick (who had been in Sweden with England) and Jason mentioned this scene and ridiculed Brewster's fear. For them, it was inappropriate to show this fear - it was unmanly and negated their honour as men.

2. All-seater Stadia : Ticket Prices and Reduced Capacities

The development of all-seater stadia has had a serious impact on the means of entry into the ground. Before the implementation of the Taylor report, almost all grounds had large standing areas⁹. Entry to these terraces was relatively simple, involving a payment of cash at the turnstile, and was almost always guaranteed. It was rare for any ground to be completely full. It is true that at the more popular clubs, Manchester United, for instance, entry to certain terraces, notably the Stretford End, would require substantial queuing. With the development of all-seater stadia access to the ground suddenly became problematic. Capacities have been reduced so that on a

purely arithmetic level some of the fans who had been part of the crowd when Manchester United had a 60,000 capacity could not possibly gain entry. Furthermore, the reduction in capacity, the improvement in facilities and the cost of building had prompted a rise in price which has been quite unprecedented in football history. Between 1988-89 and 1992-93, ticket prices rose by 222.9 per cent at Old Trafford (Sir Norman Chester Centre 1994).

The first problem which the lads face is the new inaccessibility of the ground. The lads are almost exclusively drawn from the lower end of the wage scale ¹⁰. The lads are generally employed in the jobs of the new working class. They are well-paid manual or menial white-collar workers, although some have risen to higher ranks in the white collar bureaucracy ¹¹. In the past, a substantial proportion of the lads, who made up the hooligan following, were from inner city areas of high unemployment, which have now become all but lumpenproletarian. These poorest male fans have certainly been excluded, while even those who have got jobs find it hard to pay for the 200 per cent increase in ticket prices.

If they're going to keep putting like £30, £40, £50, you're going to have to jump off. You're going to have to say 'I can't afford this anymore'. It's ridiculous. (David 25/5/94)

Other fans expressed similar sentiments.

Lately, they want more upper class people - they don't want the working class there. (Mick 1/6/94)

In addition to feeling threatened by eventual exclusion due to the inexorable rise in ticket prices, many of the lads already knew of individuals who could no longer afford to go. In an interview, John described how friends he had always gone with could no longer go and how they felt terrible about their exclusion.

there's a few who've been to the game and you're up in the pub later on and you know, and you can say, 'Oh, such and such a thing happened' and they're

[lads who cannot afford to go] going 'Yeah, yeah, I heard that on the radio' but they didn't see it didn't experience the atmosphere or any thing. (John 29/6/94)

The lads who are excluded from the ground do not merely miss ninety minutes of football ; they are also denied a fundamental resource which mediates the lads' relationships with each other.

At Old Trafford, the lads face the additional obstacle of the vast excess of demand for tickets. For every single home league game United have some 120,000 members but a stadium capacity of only 44,000. Of those 120,000 members, approximately 26,000¹² have season ticket or league match ticket books. Thus, it would be possible for 94,000 members to apply for only 13,000 remaining seats at Old Trafford. Of course, for even the biggest game not all members will apply but throughout the 1993-4 and 1994-5 seasons, the ground was vastly oversubscribed. In response to this huge over subscription for tickets, the ticket office has had to be selective in their designation of tickets. There have been serious and widespread (though, as yet, unproven) allegations that these ticket office selections have been unfavourable to single males applying from the local area. Since the lads are least likely to visit and spend money in the club shop on a visit to the match, as I have argued above, it has been suggested that the club has developed a conscious ticket policy of awarding tickets to family groups who come from outside the Manchester area, knowing that these fans will be more likely to make purchases in the club shop. It seems highly likely that the club has employed this strategy although they would never admit to it, especially since they had consistently pursued policies which have disadvantaged the lads. For instance, the 4,000 seat family stand immediately excludes the lads but, more particularly, the club class area of some 3,000 seats in the middle of the Stretford End is marketed at a very different group from the lads (White

1994:230). In addition, as I have already argued, through merely raising the prices, the club has excluded many local male fans who can no longer afford to attend matches (e.g. Rob S). It is likely the club do formally discriminate against local masculine support but even without their doctoring the ticket ballot, the club has already instituted several methods of exclusion.

Yet the increased cost of attending games in an all-seater stadium and the new business class's explicit project of encouraging (more affluent) families to attend has not been the only transformation in the consumption of football to have interfered with the lads' masculine fandom. The creation of the all-seater stadium has also radically transformed the topography of the ground. The spaces which had been central to the lads' creation of solidarity, the open terraces, have disappeared. The disappearance of the open space of the terrace has problematised the lads' creation of solidarity because it has restricted their ability to gather together in one area of the ground. The atomisation and ordering of the crowd through seating restricts the formerly fundamental fan practices of *jumping, swaying and communal celebration*. The lads are quite conscious of these new obstacles that the apparently innocuous plastic bucket seat throws in the way of the creation of their identities.

I think you tend, when you're stood up, you tend to drift into different crowds or into different people and really you end up with people who are most like yourself. That's the way I always thought of it. You can't choose who you're with now.

It should get back to the days when it was everyone together the same kind of people you're with. I'm not advocating mass rioting or anything like that... (John 29/6/94)

We might add, though, that mass rioting was actually a potential feature of this ecstatic masculine solidarity. The terrace facilitated the lads' masculine fandom because they could all gather in one place.

Despite the reputation of the Stretford End, by the 1980s, the key site of masculine congregation was actually in the United Road paddock¹³. This was the shallow area of terracing which ran adjacent to the Stretford End along the north side of Old Trafford, behind which runs United Road. The lads used to gather here and, in particular, in its most easterly corner, next to the scoreboard paddock below the K Stand, where the away supporters gathered. The lads could consequently revel in their close proximity to their rivals and thus their demonstrations of solidarity, pride and honour were most effective. The lads remember the United Road, whose bars sold two pint mugs of beer (Steve D, fieldnotes), with some fondness and it is still possible to hear songs at games which recall its atmosphere¹⁴.

I used to stand in the United Road. I was obsessed with that corner. (Peter 20/5/94)

The terrace provided an open space in which it was easy to create an ecstatic solidarity. Furthermore, certain practice carried out in the communal anonymity of the terrace could become embarrassing from the isolation of a seat. The very anonymity of standing in a crowd protected the fan from humiliation if that fan started to sing alone or perform an action which no one followed. There is no such comfort in the panoptic isolation of the seat and, consequently, it has been doubly hard for the lads to regain the ecstatic masculine solidarity of the terrace. Thus, at the last game of the 1993-4 season at Old Trafford, when United paraded the trophy, the ground was celebrated in a restrained fashion but Graham incredulously described to me a scene in the bar area behind the K Stand, where many of the lads have seats. The area was completely congested with male fans who were singing and stamping in an extraordinary frenzy. The point is here, that away from their atomising seats, in the

congested space of the bar area of the ground or the pubs outside the ground, the lads can recreate their ecstatic solidarity. From their seats, that solidarity is actually impossible to recreate : the bucket seat has had the effect of pacifying the support, which Canter, Comber and Uzzell suggested (1989).

When it was all paddocks, it was all crushed in and everyone was swaying about and jumping about, and waving their fist at the opposition over the fence and all that. Now, it's not the same at all it's almost like going to the cinema it is at Old Trafford anyway. You pay at the start of the season to sit in the same seat. I mean it's all really nice - nice view, nice stadium and all that - but the atmosphere isn't the same and the whole thing is different almost like a different concept completely (Steve P, 13/6/94)

The transformation of the consumption of football by the creation of all-seater stadia, has threatened the lads' interpretive practice of fandom. Increased ticket prices, reduced capacities and the new topography of the ground are serious obstacles to the creation of the lads' 'imagined community' (Anderson 1990:15).

3. The Lads' Response to the Project of the New Business Class

A. Resisting the new consumption of football

In the opening comments of this chapter, I argued that the interpretive practice of fans cannot be seen as either straightforwardly resistant, on the one hand, or simply mystified, on the other. Fans have an autonomous identity which informs their practice and their relations with others. Their identity is an active response to their subordination. It sustains that subordination but it does so in a way which is not necessarily consistent with the understandings and interests of the hegemonic class. The lads' masculine identity informs their response to the hegemonic project of the new business class, mediating their opposition to the developments which obstruct the creation of ecstatic solidarity but, simultaneously, their notion of themselves as lads

also ensures their compliance to the reforms. They re-negotiate their interpretive practice to accommodate the reforms which the new business class has implemented. Before going on to the ways in which the lads' identities have ensured their eventual compliance, it is worth considering the manifestations of their opposition.

This opposition has at Manchester United been no more than the fusillade of small arms in the face of a full-scale bombardment but, nevertheless, they should not be ignored. In 1991, season tickets went up from £102 to £166 and this leap in prices occasioned the first resistant volley from the lads against the transformation of the consumption at Old Trafford. Johnny Flacks, who has subsequently become the FSA public relations officer, organised a group of friends, who called themselves H.O.S.T.A.G.E (Holders of Season Tickets Against Gross Exploitation) to oppose this rise. Flacks organised a mid-week meeting in October of that year at Lancashire County Cricket Club, which some one thousand United fans attended at short notice to air their grievances. Nothing ever came of Hostage in the end (much to the annoyance of many lads who attended the meeting and contributed money) but the attendance of so many at a meeting at such short notice, reflects the potential action of which the fans can be capable ¹⁷.

For the most part, however, since the Hostage meeting, the lads' resistance against the growing threat to their fandom has been carried at the discursive level; the lads have mainly worried about and complained about the developments. One of the principal and regular discursive appeals they have mounted against the project of the United board, and the new business class more generally, has been the appeal to tradition. The lads argue that the game was traditionally a working man's sport, of which they are the descendants.

We all believe it's a standing up sport. It's a working man's sport. (Rob 1/7/94)

Since, according to the lads, football is traditionally a working class sport, the lads, who still attend, regard themselves as 'the bedrock of United's support' (Steve D, fieldnotes 27/10/93) ; their support has sedimented over generations. Consequently, the lads argue that the present developments threaten the very foundations on which the success of United has been built.

United should be careful, they have effectively cut off the local young supporters who cannot get tickets for games now. I remember catching the 255 bus to Old Trafford as a kid and the bus was packed with lads the same age who knew they could pay in the match. That same bus is empty nowadays. (Andy UWS Issue 35)

This is a significant discursive manoeuvre. It questions the short-sighted pursuit of profit by the new business class. The club is easily able to fill the stadium now with a Championship winning team but, the argument runs, when the lean times return, the Board will face a potential crisis. The affluent families' will go elsewhere and the next generation of lads will not have built up a habit of going and, even if they wanted, would not be able to afford to go in the future.

Potentially, it is an effective argument, although it is impossible to determine how seriously the club takes it. It is, however, finally flawed. Firstly, the supposed traditionalism of the lads' support is an invented tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Although it is true that football was generally watched by working class men throughout this century, the lads' ecstatic style of support primarily developed in the mid-1960s, when the terraces became the homes of potentially violent, young groups of working class men ; the caricatured figure of the Woodbine-smoking, flat-cap

wearing spectator (from whom the lads draw a direct line to their own support) was no longer substantially present on the 1960s. In fact, throughout the twentieth century, although the football ground was predominantly a site of working class leisure, the social composition of football crowds has fluctuated to include other classes (Dunning et al. 1988: 101,119). It would be teleological and reductive to suggest that these fluctuations were merely superficial, belying the underlying reality of a working class game. On the contrary, the different constituencies of the crowds in different decades really gave the game different meanings at different times, which reflected the state of the wider social formation. To suggest that football remained essentially the same throughout the century is mere hypostasy and such claims of traditionalism must be treated with some scepticism.

The fluctuation in the composition of football crowds across the century undermines not only the premise of the lads' appeal to tradition but finally its conclusion as well. If football crowds have not remained monolithic in social composition, culture or meaning, then it is also possible to conceive that the present sudden and fundamental shift in crowd composition, witnessed at its most extreme at Manchester United, may not constitute a mere fluctuation but may indicate a permanent transformation in the crowd composition.

The lads' imagined (masculine) identity has informed their response to the transformations which face them in the 1990s. In the appeal to tradition, that response is actually flawed (although it may nevertheless succeed if enough people believe it). Yet the weakness of this particular discursive response does not negate the point of its examination. In contradistinction to the dismissals of fandom as mere mystification, fandom actually provides a resource by which the hegemonic projects of

superordinate classes are combatted. For instance, although the lads' claims of traditionalism cannot be sustained, their imagining of this traditionalism serves to reaffirm their notions of themselves and the distinctiveness of their style of support. It is only through their understanding of themselves as distinctive that they are able to create discourses and practices of opposition.

B. Compliance to the new consumption of football

The lads are not 'anti-bourgeois resistance fighters' (Giulianotti et al. 1994:20), however, and their fandom reflects a more complex relationship with the new business class than mere opposition. Indeed, I would suggest that no social practice can be entirely oppositional. Debates and disagreements are only possible so long as individuals inhabit the same language game or culture. Total opposition is silence but it is not a pregnant silence, where both parties know the meaning of the silence ; it is mere blankness.

In the analysis of constitution of the lads' fandom, I highlighted the love which the lads felt for their team. They conceived of this love as equivalent to, and as deep as, any love they might have for a woman. I went on to suggest that this love, though focussed on the team, was actually an expression of their emotional attachment to their fellow (male) fans. Yet that attachment which could be such a powerful resource of opposition has, I would suggest, facilitated the lads' acceptance of the transformation of football.

Although the masculine fan faces an etiolated kind of ecstasy in the stadium as a result of the demolition of the terraces, their love of the team compels them to attend. They may grudge the changes but at least they are capable of re-making the

ecstatic solidarity, in which their love was embedded, in some way in the new grounds. As long as changes in football allow the lads to preserve some of the ecstatic solidarity of their fandom intact, they will accommodate major grievances and inconveniences - even the loss of the company of friends who can no longer attend the game with them.

The way in which the lads' love for the team has allowed them to accommodate the transformations of the 1990s, many of which they have opposed, emerged in several interviews. Lads would sublimate their opposition to Martin Edwards and his commercial policies simply by excluding them from their totemic image of the club that they loved. The lads carry out an imaginary excision, which neatly slices the business side of the club from the team.

I don't support the board. I support the team, Manchester United. That name. It doesn't matter who is running it. (Rob 1/6/94)

If some ruthless bastard can make a lot of money and make a company a lot of money he's going to get a big salary for it. That's the way society been pushed, that's the direction it's been pushed and that's the way it's gone and that's why they've floated the company to follow suit with the way businesses are run... there's two levels of the club. There's all that bullshit side of the club there's the souvenir shop, there's the executive suite and the corporate lunches and all the rest - all that side of Manchester United. And there's the other side, which is like I said before, there's what really is the club which is the people who genuinely follow it. And for me, on that level, it's not altered at all and, no matter what they do, it never will because, I know without the likes of us that Martin Edwards wouldn't be earning a million pounds a year and they wouldn't be having all the rest of the bullshit. We are the most important factor. Maybe that should make us feel worse about it because they're profiting off our loyalty but, no, I don't feel that on the level that I'm involved in with the club I don't feel up to that level has altered really. But then, maybe that's just the way I want to see..No, I don't think they could alter it for me. (Graham 26/5/94)

The separation, which Graham and Rob attempt to effect, in order to preserve their love, is in 'bad faith', as Sartre would call it ; the lads do not want to admit the fact, of

which they are already aware, that they have to submit to their subordination to the new business class in the face of its financial power. As Graham's contradictory statement reveals, there is no longer any way to look on the team separately to the business which makes the presence of that team on the pitch possible. They admit this quite openly when they proclaim that the sale of shirts is good because it brings money into the club to pay the best players's wages and transfer fees. Significantly, in Graham's comments he is able to accommodate the conflict of understandings and interests between his style of support and the project of the board by appealing to a wider commonsense - he defers to the development of the broader social formation ; 'that's the way society is being pushed'. In other words, Graham has an understanding of the links between what is going on in other spheres of British society and Manchester United and since this shift to business orientation is so strong, it is both legitimate that Manchester United should follow course and necessary that the lads will simply have to accommodate this change.

The uneasy accommodation of the commercial developments at Old Trafford has been partially achieved because this radical transformation has conveniently coincided with a period of success, unparalleled at the club for over two decades. The extent of the team's success is so central to determining the relations between the board and the fans that it is worth considering separately the issue within the resistance-mystification dualism which I have been concerned throughout this piece.

C. Rivalry

In my analysis of the constitution of the lads' support I suggested that a central feature of their fandom was masculine pride. Through their loyal support of the team

and their team's success, they were able to gain recognition and status (Tolson 1977:43); football support dispenses honour in the relationships of men from the working class. The songs that the lads sing (and the conviction and frequency with which they sing them) in the ground demonstrate and articulate their status ; almost every song refers to their superiority and their opposition's inferiority.

The need for the masculine support to have a successful team, since their own status is informed by that success, drives the lads into alignment with the new business class, despite the fact that the project of the latter threatens the lads' fandom at another level. The masculine need for success draws the lads into accepting the interpretive framework which has informed post-Fordist transformation of football (and of wider society). They accept the priority of the economic and of capitalist interests and are willing to submit to those organising principles so long as their club is successful ;

A football club is a capitalist institution. I mean, I'm not like going on about the revolution or anything but it is, that's what it is. Some of them are run well in that and some are run badly in that. (David 25/5/94)

Once the lads have accepted this major plank in the new commonsense that football is a business, in the light of their masculine need for success, it is logical that they should want the club to be successful as a 'capitalist institution'. Consequently, the lads wholeheartedly approve of some of the commercial developments introduced by Edwards and the Board, which have improved the commercial standing of the club in the competitive economy of League football. In particular, the lads are pleased that the club shop has done well and that (other) fans buy the shirt.

I reckon it's really good 'cause no one bashes me over the head when I walk past Old Trafford and say 'Buy this shirt or else'. I mean you only buy it if you want to, don't you? I can understand that like that it is bad with people who've got kids and the kids are under pressure 'cause all their mates have got shirts. I

think that's a bit bad 'cause the parents have got to fork out loads of dosh for shirts but as far as everyone else goes and it's not the kids' shirts that bring in the most money, is it, it's all the rest of them. I've got no sympathy for these people who you see them on the telly every time it's on Granada Report - United bring out a new shirt - and they're all there going, 'It's bloody terrible, they just don't care about the fans' and they're stood there with the new shirt in their hands, aren't they? I mean if you want to buy, then you buy it. I'm well happy for the club to make as much money as it wants. It's not ripping people off. It's ripping people off by charging three hundred and fifty quid for a season ticket...the more money the club has, the better as far as I'm concerned. (Steve 13/6/94)

They [the club] have spent quite a lot and I think they've spent wisely and doing the stadium up. I can't really see why people get stuck into him [Edwards] as they do. It's a lot different at City, where someone like Swales deserved the stick he was getting. I think Edwards has been a bit unfortunate really.

AK : The fact is he's brought success to the club.

That's the main thing. That's got to be the number one concern.(John 29/6/94)

The lads' selective approval of certain commercial developments demonstrates the complexity of their fandom and of its simultaneous relationship of subordination and consent to certain hegemonic notions and continuing criticism of others of the business class's ideas. As we have seen, the shirts, of which the lads approve, are very often worn by the type of people whose presence at Old Trafford rankles so deeply with the lads' notion of ecstatic masculine solidarity. The lads' masculinity welcomes certain commercial developments, which are simultaneously those which they revile.

A similar paradox is noticeable among the lads with regard to the stadium. On the one hand, the new all-seater Old Trafford is criticised because the old solidarities are no longer possible there. On the other hand, the lads have great pride in the ground, which they regard, not without reason, as the best in the English League. Indeed, the lads use the architectural impressiveness of the ground as ammunition in their competition for honour with other men. Manchester City is roundly abused because the stands are so shabby. In particular the new Platt Lane (Umbro) stand is

mocked because it is so obviously cheap. The financial power of United, symbolised in the architecture of the stadium, feeds into the lads' masculine pride. Yet the symmetrical beauty of the ground which fills the lads with pride also condemns them to an etiolated expression of masculinity in their support.

Some commentators have argued that this rivalry between working class men is itself mystified and that sport is a mirage thrown up by the capitalist class to hide the real contradictions within society. Vinnai, for instance, argues in a fashion which echoes some of the work of the Frankfurt School that football communicates ideas which are central to capitalism and to the domination of the capitalist class (Vinnai 1973: 33-40) and in doing this and in offering distraction to the working class prevents the overthrow of the capitalist order (Vinnai 1973:95). This argument is flawed in a number of ways. It is entirely abstract, failing to consider the actual nature of working class life and operating with an ideal image of how all the working class should act together. It fails to recognise the competition for status and rewards which inevitably divides the working class. In the end the problem with these simplistic theories of mystification is that they overemphasise both the unity of the working class and the capitalists. *The capitalist class is not unified itself; members of this class are in competition with one another for profit.* In the light of this inexorably competitive world, it is not mystified for the working class to align itself with a 'capitalist interest' because apart from that alliance the working class is rendered completely peripheral to the economy and politics.

In supporting a football club, working class males symbolically recreate that alignment with a capitalist interest. It is, however, a problematic and, indeed, paradoxical alignment as this chapter has tried to show because it must juggle the

manifest inequality of the lads' position with the benefits which they reap as a result of their subordination. Mystification theory hypostatizes the unity of both the working class interests and capital and consequently arrives at the false conclusion that any compliance must necessarily be a case of false consciousness. I do not deny that the lads comply and that in complying they are accepting a degree of subordination but their compliance is complex. It is informed by the wider interpretive framework in which the new business class' project is possible but the lads also subverts that framework and oppose the new business class's project in their fandom.

4. The Fanzines

In some of the analysis above, I have drawn upon the club fanzines, *United We Stand* and *Red Issue*, to support my argument. This is because these fanzines are written and principally read by masculine fans. *Red Issue*, for instance, focussed very substantially and in scurrilous fashion on the rivalries between United and other clubs. That these club fanzines are the means by which the lads, specifically, articulate their views and monitor their own self-understandings is evinced by a number of facts. Firstly, *When Saturday Comes* banned *Red Issue* from its fanzine list, citing the fact that it was divisive and potentially detrimental to the relationship between the fans. Demonstrating a very different notion of fandom, a contributor to *Red Issue* argued in a recent publication wrote.

There is, of course, a larger ideological split that underpins this sort of spat [the banning of *RI* from the *WSC* list]. All too often, organisations and publications that seek to represent football fans as a whole tend to disparage so called 'sectarian' forces like *Red Ish*, accusing them of dividing fandom and thus reducing supporter power in general. (Kurt 1994:87)

Sure, there may be temporary alliances to halt the more brainless schemes of the senile F.A. or the cretins in Whitehall but there can be no permanent

departure from the natural state of the true football fan that his support of the club is as much shaped by his hatred of others as by his love for his own team. (Kurt 1994:87-8)

WSC and those who write for and read it are 'ideologically split' from the lads because, informed by what Kurt calls 'Marxist' views, they see the primary division of interests not between fans but between fans and the boards. As I have tried to show above, *WSC* are wrong in their interpretation; the 'natural state' of the lads' support is to emphasise their rivalry with other fans, thereby achieving recognition and status for themselves both from these fans and within their own social group. Kurt is, of course, wrong to describe this as 'natural' as the lads' fandom is a historical and cultural phenomenon. The point here is, though, that his statements demonstrate that the club fanzines at United are part of the lads' fandom as currently formulated and defined.

This is further reflected in the readership of the publications. In the past, *Red Issue* had an enormous readership for a club fanzine of 13,000 but this has now declined to about 8,000, while *UWS* began with a small readership but has now reached average sales of 5,000 per issue (Andy Mitten, personal interview). Of course, these fanzines are read by both the new football writing and compliant fans but their principal readership is the lads.

You get a real cross section. You get lads aged 16 'cause I know when I was sixteen I used to love buying fanzines, and you get 45 year old blokes coming up to you and saying, 'That was a great article last month'. I'd probably say 18 to 30 male is the vast majority of the readers (Andy Mitten, editor *UWS* 27/6/94)

As *WSC*'s disdain for *RI* suggests, the club fanzines are principally directed at the lads.

We noted above that the lads have developed a style of dress by which they distinguish themselves. In recent editions both club fanzines have drawn attention to

styles of dress and in this way, they announce to the lads (who should be able to pick up the fleeting references in the text) which clothes are acceptable. In this way, the fanzines are able to communicate a loose interpretive frame to the lads which informs them what constitutes proper masculine support. In an article describing the trip to Turkey for the game against Galatasaray in September 1994, the stylistic distinction is drawn heavily between the lads and the new consumer fans. Any lad reading that article cannot fail to note the rules of membership which are being laid down.

There seemed to be two distinct groups, those who regularly travel on the clubs 'official' trips, invariably recognisable by their United tops, and the rest of us who wouldn't normally be seen dead travelling on the sanitised over priced but nevertheless 'official' trips. If we wore a uniform it was definitely more Ralph Lauren than Umbro. (*RI*, Vol 7, Issue 35)

Another article in *UWS* draws on similar themes.

Better still, we've developed into a swaggering Lauren clad beast that couldn't give a toss about any other club or any other supporters. (*UWS* Issue 41:25)

The club fanzines articulate the understandings of the lads and consequently have a privileged position in the shaping of the lads' style of fandom. Throughout this chapter, I have argued that fandom is both compliant and resistant, playing into the creation of a new hegemony in complex ways. It should be no surprise, then, that I want to argue that club's fanzines, which are an integral and important part of that fandom, should comprise moments of both compliance and resistance.

Most club fanzines emerged in 1989 or after in response to the Hillsborough tragedy and the ensuing transformation of the game in the 1990s. *RI* first appeared in 1989, while *UWS* was first published in 1990. The fanzines appeared exactly when the lads' fandom began to be seriously threatened. As I have suggested above, the fanzines have articulated the lads' specific understanding of themselves as 'true' fans.

This role has been crucial. At a time of major changes and serious threats to the lads' fandom the fanzines have sustained the lads' support during these radical developments, by expressing the lads' own interpretations of these changes and therefore, by re-negotiating the lads' identities to accommodate the transformation of the consumption of football. In this sense, the fanzines have achieved the compliance of the lads to the project of the new business class ; they have effectively made it possible for lads to attend the new ritual of football but to imagine their interpretive practice of support as traditional, even though it has actually had to be thoroughly remade in the light of all-seater stadia. The lads' compliance is in no way straightforward, however, for in sustaining the lads' support, the fanzines articulate a set of understandings which differ from the new business class's notion of an ideal supporter. The lads' support counters the project of the new business class even in its compliance.

Finally, the fanzines themselves may play into the post-Fordist transformation in one important way. Much of this thesis has been concerned with examining how those wider economic understandings have been applied to football. Ironically, although the fanzines oppose some of the developments which have been introduced as a result of the institution of certain types of economic interpretive practice into football, the fanzines, themselves, have finally been crucial in establishing this new interpretive framework.

The fanzines are commercial ventures ; they are normally sold at £1 a copy. Consequently, the editors of the fanzines, which as we have noted sell between five and thirteen thousand copies an issue, can earn quite substantial amounts of (presumably tax free) income. As Andy, the editor of *UWS* said :

I've always been a little schemer. (Andy 27/6/94)

Andy regards the fanzine as an appropriate expression of his entrepreneurial interests.

The commercial and entrepreneurial element of the fanzines has not gone unnoticed by some of the lads.

It's (*RI*) a nice earner. I was with him [the editor of *RI*] when he banked a couple of grand. (Peter 20/5/94)

Andy, the editor of *UWS*, is often the target of jokes which point to the amount of money he is making. Although in jest, there is an element of seriousness to the comments¹⁶. This is not to dismiss Andy's or other editors' serious commitment to producing a publication which the lads both enjoy and find useful as an interpretive resource. However, it is pointless idealising the role of fanzines as fundamentally opposed to the commercial forces which are coursing through football, for, in very real ways, the fanzines are part of these same forces. They are themselves entrepreneurial enterprises which have responded to a niche in the market. Indeed fanzines are classical post-Fordist productions. They use new computer technology to produce a commodity rapidly for a quite precisely defined market (see my discussion of post Fordism in Chapter 2). When the lads purchase the fanzine, they are not simply buying an interpretive manual, detailing the correct method of masculine support. The fanzine inevitably communicates the means and meaningfulness of its production; it announces its post-Fordist and entrepreneurial origins. Thereby, the fanzine both draws on and affirms the growing post Fordist commonsense, whose application in other areas, the development of the grounds, for instance, it would oppose. It is noticeable that the fanzines have consciously drawn themselves into line with other post-Fordist publications by gradually improving their production. Many now have glossy, full colour covers and better type-face. They have adopted the form

of other magazines to improve their sales, thereby, displaying themselves quite consciously as commercial (and post-Fordist) enterprises.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to examine the state of masculine fandom in the light of the new consumption of football in the 1990s. The discussion has situated itself within the contemporary sociological literature of fans and audiences, in that it has attempted to supersede the simplistic dualism of resistance and mystification, which that literature does much to undermine.

In going beyond that dualism, this analysis of the lads has attempted to demonstrate how the lads' practice of fandom has played into the new consumption of football. Despite the lads' overt opposition to the new business class and its project, their masculine desire for status and honour (earned through football support) has led them to positions where they support the very developments which, at other moments, they resist.

The lads' paradoxical compliance to the new business class' project has been crucial because as the failure of the merger schemes in the 1980s demonstrated, the owners of football clubs are finally dependent on the fans. It is only insofar as fans attend games that the new business class has a valuable commodity. Despite its contradictoriness, the lads' fandom ensures that they continue to attend games and therefore crucially that they have sustained the project of the new business class and the new consumption of football.

This chapter has drawn upon my experiences of one particular club. The concentration on a single club is not a particular problem *per se* as the lads of all clubs

share much the same culture - a fact that is reflected by the lads' comprehension of the actions and songs of the opposition's lads. However, the fact that I carried out my fieldwork at Manchester United is, perhaps, significant because that club has been inordinately successful in transforming itself. It already had a huge fan base with which to operate. The lads at Old Trafford have faced the project of the new business class at its strongest ; other clubs in England will not be able to discard substantial parts of their masculine support with nearly such ease. Nevertheless, despite the extremity of the process in operation at Manchester United, it is not by any means unique to that club. As the demonstrations and complaints in practically every fanzine attest, the reformulation of football consumption by the new business class to the detriment of the masculine support is a phenomenon which is sweeping through every club, which ushers in the post-Fordist social formation ¹⁵.

NOTES :

1 Clarke and Critcher's work contains an interesting account of the historic construction of leisure in bourgeois society but around the pages indicated, it is implied that subordinate classes must be mystified to have accepted leisure forms which are derived from a capitalist hegemony and which support that system both culturally and economically.

2 It should be noted that Taylor changed his opinion in the 1980s and no longer regarded hooligans as 'resistance fighters' (1987).

3 Steve D provided an insight into the way that the lads use the pub to create this ecstatic solidarity when he described his visit to Blackburn in October 1994. He proudly described how United fans had been packed into a pub and when the time to leave came they spilled out onto the pavement and drifted to the ground, singing euphorically, to the bewildered looks of the Blackburn fans who were making their way quietly to the ground on the other side of the street. (Steve D, fieldnotes 29/10/94)

4 Mark is not part of the lad category, being a the head of the Manchester branch of the FSA but this description seems valid since he has spent many years attending games and therefore has a good insight into the fans' views and practices. He is also a City fan.

5 (a) The centrality of masculinity for the male fan to their identities and practices has been noted in much of the literature on fans, and especially hooliganism (see Dunning et al. 1988:16, Dunning 1986:87, Williams et al. 1990: XXV, 115, 132, Marsh 1978:105, Holt 1989:330, Mason 1988:32, uford 1992, Ward 1990, Allan 1989) (b) The masculinity of the male fan could be usefully analysed in some detail by connecting it to ideological frameworks which have characterised modernity in the west. I have attempted this analysis elsewhere ('Outline of a Practical Theory of Football Violence'). Theweleit's quite brilliant discussion of the masculinity of the Freikorps soldier male in 1920s and 1930s Germany (1987) and Mosse's analysis of sexuality and nationalism (1985) provide key framing arguments for the analysis of the lads' fandom. Through an analysis of their songs and use of space it is possible to trace similar conceptual forms and, crucially, the same boundaries between normal, acceptable masculinity and the sexually and racially 'depraved' in the both the fans' classification schema and that which is common throughout western modernity. Theweleit's analysis includes a very illuminating passage in which he demonstrates that the Nazi Freikorps' masculine categorisation is not an aberration on masculine conceptualisation since the Enlightenment but, on the contrary, wholly consistent with it (1987:270-360). I have had to set this interesting discussion aside here for reasons of space and relevance. It is possible to discuss the lads' reaction to the transformation of the 1990s by reference to a quite general notion of masculinity rather than concentrating upon the finer points of this state of mind.

6 See King 'Outline of a Practical Theory of Football Violence' (forthcoming, *Sociology*, Nov 1995)

7 Failure to buy drinks for others is regarded as a fault in an individual's social ability (and masculinity).

8 Andy W, one of the new football writing fans, whom I interviewed, suggested that in one sense he would like to see United get relegated to prove that football was not just about money and that the new business class had not succeeded. In other words, just as the lads want the game to facilitate the expression of their identities, the new football writing fans would like to see their political beliefs expressed through the game.

9 Coventry became all-seater in the mid-1980s but due to fan protest had to remove some of these. QPR had very small standing areas before it finally went all-seater for the 1994-5 season.

10 Dunning has provided a statistical table of the lads showing that the hooligans of the past were generally drawn from the Registrar General's classes 4 and 5 (semi-skilled and unskilled workers) (Dunning in Sir Norman Chester Centre 1988:16)

11 The lads whom I interviewed and with whom I carried out the fieldwork were employed in the following jobs ; Andy Mitten, student (journalism) at Preston College; Grant, unemployed but working in informal economy selling T shirts etc. ; Mitch, student (Business), Manchester Metropolitan University; Graham, crane driver; David, ex Royal Navy, taxi driver; John, worked for DHSS; Steve P, skilled technician with Plessey; Steve D, clerk at a firm, booking storage room; Peter, student; Hugh, administrator with Further Education Council; Tony, plumber; Jason, trainee accountant; Mick, cleaned factory machines on night shift; Rob, ex-Army, unemployed, informal lorry driving work (see Table 2, Methodological Appendix).

12 The figures take into account the 1,000 to 1,500 away allocation at Old Trafford.

13 Two interviews (Andy W and Rose) described the Stretford End at full of 'dickheads' (young lads trying to be hooligans) (Andy 25/5/94) and women and children (Rose 1/8/94).

14 United fans sometimes sing a song to the tune of Culture Club's 'Karma Chameleon' with the words 'Karma United Road' (!).

15 The recent development of independent supporters' organisations at many clubs has been an important development in the opposition of the lads to the new business class. These organisations are coalitions of new football writing fans and the lads and are likely to be more successful than the FSA in the long-run since they are supported by the lads - mainly because they do not ask the lads to re-negotiate their opposition to the fans of other clubs.

CHAPTER 12

NEW FOOTBALL WRITING ¹

1. Textual and Social Composition

The first rumours of new football writing fandom occurred in the 1970s with the publication of the first football fanzine, *Foul* (WSC 1992: introduction). In the early 1980s fans at certain clubs began to produce fanzines, notably Bradford's *City Gent*. However, new football writing as a self-conscious practice of consumption, informed by a recognisably set of understandings and projects did not emerge in a full sense until after the disasters of 1985. New football writing eventually comprised the national fanzine, *When Saturday Comes*, the fan organisation the Football Supporters' Association and in the 1990s, Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch*. It was therefore a fandom which was principally produced by and directed at public sector service class professionals and intellectuals.

The publication of *When Saturday Comes* (WSC) in March 1986 was a critical moment for the development of new football writing. WSC was originally an amateurish magazine created by a Chelsea fan, Mike Ticher, which sought to give the fans a place in which to air their discontents about the game in the mid-1980s. Originally, Ticher printed only a hundred copies of the first edition with very rudimentary publishing techniques. However, within days of a review in *The Guardian*, Ticher received nearly a hundred requests for the next issue and, consequently, produced one thousand copies of the next edition (WSC 1992: introduction). The extraordinary response to WSC demonstrated that latent existence of a large body of fans whose consumption of the game was similar. It is this loose fan

group, to whose understandings *WSC* responded which constitutes what has become 'new football writing' in the 1990s.

In addition to *WSC*, the Footballers' Supporters Association has been a central part of new football writing as a style of fandom. The FSA was established in Liverpool in August 1985 in response principally to Heysel. Articulating the widespread outrage which was felt by football supporters towards that event, to the media's representation of football fans, the treatment of fans and the government's proposal for reformation. The government's proposals for reform (laid out in the Football Spectators' Bill and principally involving the introduction of a national identity card scheme) became the FSA's main focus of attack. Through their opposition to this scheme they provided the fans with some unifying project and, as a result of the FSA's campaign against the membership scheme, the Association was able to recruit some 20,000 members (*The Times* 6/12/88:40h). The FSA was never able to articulate such common sentiments among the fans after the demise of the national identity card scheme and during the 1990s, and membership dropped off to below two thousand. However, although membership had dwindled since 1990, the public profile of the FSA has remained disproportionately large in comparison with its formal size; the FSA is frequently required to express their opinions on the television, radio and in the newspapers. Despite the formal loss of support, then, the FSA is still able to articulate its views to an audience well beyond the etiolated constituency of its own members. In this way, the FSA is able to re-affirm the existence of a particular style of fandom which is informed by a specific set of understandings about the nature of football.

The final and crucial moment in the establishment of new football writing fandom was the publication of *Fever Pitch*, the humorous autobiography of an Arsenal fan, in hardback in 1992 and in paperback in 1993 : 30,000 hardback and 246,000 paperback copies were sold by March 1995 (Nick Hornby, personal communication 1/3/95). Although, as I will point out more fully below, many of these copies were bought by fans who accorded more closely with *the lads'* style of fandom, the text itself expressed the sentiments of the emergent style of 'new football writing' fandom². Drawing on the success of this first book, Hornby's edited volume, *My Favourite Year* was published in 1994, by which time 'new football writing' fandom had become a self-conscious practice of consumption³.

The term 'new football writing', then, is intended to describe that new style of consumption which is based around *When Saturday Comes*, *Fever Pitch* and the Football Supporters' Association. The coherence of this new fandom is revealed by the connection between the individuals behind these three key elements in new football writing. *WSC* has shown its support for the FSA by offering reduced, dual subscriptions, which offer membership of the FSA at the same time as a year's supply of *WSC* (*WSC* No. 90:38). Furthermore, in an effort to promote the FSA, whose membership has fallen off drastically in the 1990s, *WSC* now features a monthly column written by members of the committee of the FSA (e.g. *WSC* Feb. 1995, No.96:8).

Nick Hornby shares a similar, informally close relationship with *WSC* For instance, *WSC* declared of *Fever Pitch*.

the book gets closer to what *WSC* is about than anything we've come across before. (*WSC* No.18:30)

While Hornby demonstrated that this commonality was mutually beneficial.

From my point of view *WSC* made the book a lot easier because I think that that [*WSC*] probably changed the way some football fans looked at my book. (Nick Hornby, personal interview 11/8/94)

The significance of this comment is that it demonstrates that the new practices of consumption which *WSC* communicated reflected those which Hornby meditated upon in his own fan autobiography. That shared imagining led Hornby and *WSC* into a more formal partnership in which the two parties produced a volume of collected writings, *My Favourite Year*, which expressed their style of fandom. Nick Hornby revealed that when he and *WSC* were planning the book.

They had talked about what it should be and what kind of people we would like. We agreed on half of their [*WSC*'S] regular contributors and half my posh friends, as they call it. (Nick Hornby, personal interview 16/8/94)

The term 'new football writing' becomes a *useful concept* in the light of this collaborative effort between Hornby and *WSC* because it demonstrates the informal but close coalition of the set of writers and publishers who have come to represent a wider fan group.

One of the principal insights of the sociological analysis of literature is that the text cannot be looked upon as the pristine production of the individual, the timeless product of genius, but rather that the text is embedded in a cultural context, which gives birth to that text (e.g. Eagleton 1976). Postmodern critiques have gone as far as to demand the 'death of the author', where the individual act of creation is regarded as wholly irrelevant because the text is not only the product of its cultural milieu but finally only exists in its consumption. Consequently, the intentions of the author are irrelevant. Although it is certainly true that a text only has meaning insofar as it is read, to deny the relevance of the author is a dogmatism which seems as naive as the early canonisation of the author's genius. Authors actively and creatively mediate the

cultural surroundings in which they find themselves, and that creativity should be acknowledged in our reading. Furthermore, to demand the death of the author is finally to misread the text for the very cult of the author has been a central feature of the meaning of the modern text. I want to foreground the central finding of the sociology of literature by highlighting the cultural background which gave rise to new football writing as a form of fandom but to do that, it is necessary to establish the authors' social location.

In the previous chapter, the aversion of the lads towards *WSC* was noted - they regarded it as too serious - which, as I argued, actually implied a not insignificant divide between the lads' and the new football writing's style of fandom. *WSC*'s own marketing data⁴ on their readership confirm that its readership has a very different social location from the lads. Although the readership was overwhelmingly (97 per cent) male, aged between eighteen and thirty four, and, therefore, similar to the sex and generational composition of the lads, the readers of *WSC* were generally likely to have attended higher education and to be employed at the upper end of the labour market in professional jobs. 63 per cent of the readership was classified as being from classes ABC1 that is, from higher professional down to skilled manual worker. A further 15 per cent were students, almost all of whom were likely to go on to employment at the level of skilled manual work or above.

The (relatively) high class composition of the *WSC* readership is emphasised by the newspapers which its readers buy ; 35 per cent buy *The Guardian*, 27 per cent *The Independent*, 20 per cent *The Mirror*, 15 per cent *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 per cent *The Mail* and 10 per cent *The Sun*. The dominance of the broadsheets and especially *The Guardian* as the preferred newspaper of the new football writing

fandom distinguishes them from the lads ; *The Guardian*, for instance, is the preferred paper of the professional public sector service class. Furthermore, all of the three most popular papers are left-wing or at least in the case of *The Independent*, potentially acceptable to a left-wing audience. It would be wrong to suggest that the new football writing fan can be simplistically divided from the lad or the new consumer fan simply on the grounds of political alignment. Although the more violent elements of the lads tend to be racist and sometimes align themselves formally with extreme right wing groups, such as the British National Party, many are committedly left-wing.

However, the combination of the higher class position of the new football writing fan and its liberal or leftist political persuasion (as suggested by the favoured newspapers) gives the new football writing fandom a distinctive complexion. The new football writing fandom is principally, though not exclusively, situated among the politically left-wing or liberal professional classes. Hornby confirmed this social composition of the new football writing.

they [*WSC* readers] are traditionalist and conservative as well as being Labour voting and liberal in their views. (Hornby, personal interview 11/8/94)

Indeed, as he freely admits himself in *Fever Pitch*, Nick Hornby, himself, is an example of this London-based, professional, educated and generally left-wing milieu. Hornby was brought up by solidly professional parents in suburban Maidenhead, studied at Cambridge and taught for several years before becoming a writer.

Hornby's social background is actually typical of the other writers who have been central to the production of new football writing. The authors who feature in his anthology, *My Favourite Year*, consist of similarly educated and professional individuals. Of the thirteen contributors, including Hornby, five are professional writers, three write for or edit broadsheet newspapers (*The Times Higher Educational*

Supplement, The Independent on Sunday, The Sunday Times and The Independent), one teaches at university, one is a pharmacist and one is the Managing Director of a market research company (Hornby (ed.) 1993:219-220) ⁵.

The social composition of new football writing as an emerging style of consumption in the late 1980s and early 1990s, is very specific. Both the producers (writers) and consumers (the readers) within this style of fandom are drawn principally from the well educated service classes or are themselves professional writers who essentially provide a service in the form of books for that class fraction itself. In this way the sociology of the new football writing reflects Fowler's findings in her analysis of women and romantic literature in the twentieth century (1991), in which she argues for the existence of a 'legitimate cultural group' (1991:122). This legitimate group is immersed in what is widely regarded as the classical canon of English literature and searches this literature for underlying truths about people (Fowler 1991:142). Fowler's subsequent discussion of this group provides an interesting parallel to my analysis of new football writing. Fowler's legitimate group shares a substantially similar class position to those individuals who are part of the new football writing.

most strikingly, I have drawn attention to a new stratum which possesses such educational resources and which is found mainly in public sector administration and professional occupations. (Fowler 1991:170)

2. Italia '90

In Chapter 8, I argued that the 1990 World Cup, Italia '90, was a crucial moment in the new consumption of the game. Italia '90 transformed the public perception of the game and enabled football to interpellate a new section of society

which had previously been uninterested in the game, which since the 1960s had connoted meanings of violent masculinity. As I have argued, this sea-change in the representation and understanding of the game in Britain was not accidental. Rather, the media, and the press, in particular, for whom football was a crucial sign-value, wanted football to express meanings which would allow it to appeal to a wider market. The press's demands for the reform of the game in the 1980s were inspired out of this need to widen the market for football and the press's promotion of Italia '90 was part of this marketing strategy. In particular, the press, as we saw in Chapter 8, attempted to interest the private sector service class - professionals working in private (and often multi-national) companies - in the game. Henry Winter, the football correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph* (and formerly of *The Independent*), demonstrated this connection between the press and the development of a potentially new or, at least wider, audience for football.

Since 1990, and the World Cup was in Italy, and you know there was good music... and Gazza had a great World Cup, football became fashionable dinner party conversation. Half the people who watched the semi-final in Turin against West Germany were women. So suddenly football's focus totally changed and the middle classes basically got interested.

Winter continued.

The sea-change was that the middle class people who didn't know about football suddenly started talking about it. The middle class people who do know about football and you've only got to look at the figures released yesterday to realise how many wealthy people go to games and you only have to go to Eton School to see actually see how many football pitches they've got they've got as many football pitches as rugby pitches. All the sort of public schools are mainly obsessed with football because they pretty much invented it. So there are two strands of the middle classes. (Henry Winter, personal interview, 16/8/94)

The relationship between new football writing, the press and a wider, middle (service) class audience for football is not unidirectional, however, especially since the press is

highly differentiated even within titles (as I discussed in Chapter 7). The press did not single-handedly interest the service class in football through its coverage of the World Cup. Rather, members of the service class who were not interested in domestic football were drawn into watching the World Cup because of the scale of the spectacle. Furthermore, it is probable that the nationalism of some of these individuals added to the attraction of the event because they could identify with England in this global competition. Thus individuals, who had little interest in English football, were drawn into watching England and the World Cup out of particular notions of themselves which were not implanted by the media. However, once these individuals were watching the World Cup, for reasons which were substantially independent of the media, the latter could influence their perception of the event since this audience interpreted the World Cup according to media representations. They might reject the implications of these representations but these representations could not be simply ignored.

Nick Hornby's work, *Fever Pitch*, was the crucial point of connection between Italia '90 and the media's attempts to re-position football and new football writing. It was very unlikely that Nick Hornby's book would even have been commissioned (or written at all) in the mid-1980s. The transformation in the public perception of the game, which was substantially achieved through the media's representation of the World Cup, encouraged the publishers, Victor Gollancz, to commission *Fever Pitch* on the evidence of the first chapters (Hornby, personal interview 11/8/94). It can be inferred that this publishing house recognised the potential market for this book in the light of the new cultural position of football.

Fever Pitch, then, the most important single contribution to new football writing, was published in the light of the transformation of the perception of football, which itself had been partially achieved by the British media. Although new football writing had come into existence before *Fever Pitch*, in the form of *WSC* (and the *FSA*), a crucial moment in its establishment was, therefore, substantially determined by the marketing needs of certain media conglomerates. Ironically, then, although new football writing was chiefly opposed to the project of the new business class and to much of the new consumption of football, this style of fandom served the important cultural purpose of interpellating professional individuals, who were positioned in the well-paid and secure employment of the service class and was, in fact, very substantially dependent on the marketing needs of certain capitalist publishing houses. Furthermore, whereas *WSC* and the *FSA* appealed to individuals situated in the public sector (or left-bank) section of the service class, *Fever Pitch* ensured that football became meaningful across the professional classes more ; it was read among the private sector service class as well.

Fever Pitch was then a response to the new cultural position which football attained after Italia '90 and the outstanding success of the book played dialectically back into the establishment of football's new cultural position, in which the work had its origin. After the publication of the book (and its wide acclaim), new television programmes and other (new football writing) books⁶ began to appear which confirmed the transformation of the consumption of football. Nick Hornby cited an example of this dialectical influence which *Fever Pitch* had on the cultural position of football.

It's hard to talk about [the influence of *Fever Pitch*] without being poncey about it. All I can say is after a few months, a lot more started to be written about football after the book. Certain things on TV probably wouldn't have happened without it. (Hornby, personal interview, 11/8/94)

Specifically, Hornby revealed that a programme called *There's only one Brian Moore* was commissioned after one unnamed individual had read *Fever Pitch*⁷.

3. The Principal Features of New Football Writing

In the last chapter, an attempt was made to demonstrate that the lads' particular style of fandom, although leading them into opposition with much of the project of the new business class, finally ensured their compliance to that project. I want to make a similar argument with reference to new football writing to show that, despite the overt stances of resistance which have been articulated in this fandom, that new football writing finally contributed to the new consumption of football and to the project of the new business class. Crucially, as I have already suggested, new football writing emerged with particular clarity after Italia '90, was related to the media's new representation of the game and played into the transformation of football's cultural position. Thus new football writing assisted in the development of the new consumption of football by widening the potential market for football.

In suggesting that the lads and new football writing fans finally contributed to the project of the new business class, it is not therefore being implied that new football writing complied to that project in any simple way. Some degree of compliance is finally inevitable if the lads or new football writing fans are to remain fans but that compliance is not necessarily, and indeed, as these two chapters are intended to show, is not the kind of compliance which the new business class has necessarily had in mind.

The complexity of the relationship between new football writing and the project of the new business class, in which new football writing contributes to this project but not necessarily in the way that the new business class envisaged, is revealed by an examination of the central ideas in new football writing culture, which informs this group of fans' identities. In particular there are two central elements to new football writing : the notion of the 'golden age' of English football and the idea of authenticity.

A. 'The Golden Age'

In the previous section, I have tried to highlight the social specificity of new football writing. This style of fandom is located among the male, professional service class (and often public sector) supporters. However, a second principal feature of new football writing which has to be recognised is its historic specificity. The social and historical origins of new football writing substantially determine its interpretive frame and therefore its response and contribution to the new consumption of football.

Although new football writing arose in response to the crisis of football in the mid-1980s, its roots lay in a period of English football which preceded that crisis by some two decades. New football writing was germinated in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the boyhood experiences of those males, who would go on to become central figures in the creation of new football writing. Not only was the late 1960s significant because it was imagined to be a golden age but it also saw the rise of a new style of fan culture, hooliganism, with all the concomitant moral panics which that phenomenon provoked. Both the quality of English football on the field and the

development of a curious and new fandom off it proved to be central to the development and subsequent form of new football writing.

The memory of early experiences of football are almost always tinged with a romanticism for any football fan, whenever that first experience of the game might have been. However, for future new football writing fans the late 1960s and early 1970s have been especially privileged in their memories. For them, this early period of affiliation constituted a 'golden age' of English football - the League contained numerous good and entertaining teams, with many skilled players, while England itself had won the World Cup in 1966.

In an interview with *WSC*, Eamonn Dunphy, the retired player and professional writer, was explicit about the specialness of this period, as was *WSC*.

A lot of *When Saturday Comes* 's readers grew up watching football in the late Sixties, early Seventies and for them that is the 'Golden Era'. Do you think it's a simple case of childhood memories being romanticised or was the standard of play higher then?

I think standards were higher and there are solid reasons why. Before then, players were never properly paid, they were never as fit as they should have been, there was a lot of sloth and sort of stupid thinking, that's what Busby capitalised on really ; that's why his team that died were so successful, it was a poor era in the game. Then the maximum wage was removed and players felt that they were getting rewarded properly for the first time. They became fitter and harder, but at the same time the individualism and the talent that had been around in the game before then was still present. So there was a period which I would claim, the golden age, when all the factors were evenly balanced. (*WSC* No.58:16)

Although the new football writers point to the quality of play as an essential factor in their sanctifying of this period of English football, it is noticeable how they reference the fact that the players were rewarded 'properly'. The implications of this notion of a proper reward are significant, if we consider the discussion of the abolition of the maximum wage in Chapter 3. New football writers approved of the scale of

professional footballers' pay in the late 1960. Chapter 3 demonstrated that players' pay scales in this period were related to the principles and understandings which were central to affluent Keynesian Britain and we can, therefore, infer that new football writing's approval of the level of players pay was also implicitly an approval of the values which determined that level of pay. In other words, new football writing valorised this period because players' contracts seemed to be mediated by social democratic sensibilities. Footballers were properly rewarded for the communal benefits which they provided the whole of society but they had not yet exploited their full market potential to the detriment of the paying spectator.

For new football writing fans, then the 1960s represented a mythological past in which their political understandings, which were under increasing assault in the 1980s, were affirmed on the very pitches of the Football League ; the period of the best English club and national team performances were conveniently coupled to wider political understandings in the imagination of the new football writers. The articulation of political preference and playing success was necessarily an act of imagination because at the time of the 'golden age', the future new football writers were boys and could surely not have been aware of the political symbolism with which they would later invest this period.

The location of new football writing in the imagined reminiscence of boyhood experiences does not invalidate this form of support. However, the identification of new football writing as an imaginary construction which is founded upon certain political understandings is important because this imaginary construction informed new football writing's response to the transformation of football in the 1990s. New

football writing's myth of origin provided the interpretive framework by which this group of fans has understood and responded to recent developments in the game.

B. Authenticity

New football writing's invention of the late 1960s as the golden age of English football was also related to the terrace culture in which these boys watched the game. Their interpretation of this culture constituted a second strand in new football writing which was central to this fandom's contribution to the new consumption of football. From the beginning of the 1960s, when pitch invasions started to become more common and were reported ever more widely in the press, but more especially after 1966, hooliganism began to appear as a regular feature of fan culture. Hooliganism involved not only violent confrontation but a particular nationalist and masculine consciousness which made that violence meaningful⁸. From the mid-1960s, this consciousness was expressed in the development of elaborate songs and codes of practice, such as the symbolic occupation of the ends behind the grounds and the use of flags and banners to denote this occupation. The masculine fan culture which developed in the 1960s and in which hooliganism became possible was both a new development in the consumption of football and added a peculiar intensity to the game.

New football writing fans' first experience of the game was in the context of this new terrace culture and their understanding of what constituted proper football fandom could not avoid being influenced by their earliest imaginary experiences which the ecstatic celebrations and visceral experiences of the terrace stimulated in the bodies of these boys, some of whom went on to become central figures in new football writing. Nick Hornby recognised the importance of the terrace culture, which

developed in the 1960s, in which both hooliganism was possible, and the new football writing fans' notion of and attachment to the game was forged. In a discussion of his reaction to Heysel, Hornby lays out the problematic connection of new football writing to the lads' hooligan fandom.

The perpetrators [of Heysel] were not the kind of people that the rest of us understood, or identified with. But the kids' stuff that proved murderous in Brussels belonged firmly and clearly on a continuum of apparently harmless but obviously threatening acts - violent chants, wanker signs, the whole petty hard act works - in which a very large minority of fans had been indulging for nearly twenty years. In short, Heysel was an organic part of a culture that many of us, myself included, had contributed towards. (Hornby 1994:156-7)

New football writing is a fandom which, despite rejecting the violence of the lads' style of support, has been substantially dependent upon the latter. The dependence of new football writing on the lads' practice of fandom has played into the interpretive framework of new football writing. In particular, that interpretive framework has operated around notions of the authentic support of the traditional working class. New football writers imagine that their earliest experiences of football were not only the 'golden age' of English football but that the terraces in those days were populated by a mythical authentic working class and by standing with these individuals new football writing fans were experiencing the same traditional practices as these authentic individuals. New football writing has mistakenly taken this new style of support for the authentic experience of a traditional working class.

Nick Hornby comically deprecates this mythological recreation of himself from the suburban son of respectable professional parents into one of the authentic working class in *Fever Pitch*, arguing that individuals from similar backgrounds as himself have to invent themselves as something else because the world in which they are born provides them with no obvious identities to assume.

The white south of England middle class Englishman and woman is the most rootless creature on earth; we would rather belong to any other community in the world. (Hornby 1994:47)

Thus the children of the suburban service class adopt identities. Although Hornby contradictorily denies that football should be seen as a working class sport and that therefore, individuals from other sections of society should feel neither ashamed of their background nor somehow worthy that they have lowered themselves to attending the game, Hornby confesses that, in fact, his attendance at Highbury was due to this need to create for himself an 'authentic' identity. Thus Hornby argues on the one hand that.

Football, famously, is the people's game, and as such is prey to all sorts of people who aren't as it were, the people. (Hornby 1994:96)

However, at the same time as dismissing those individuals who attend the game because it is a working class sport, Hornby, reveals himself to do exactly that.

I have dropped as many aitches as I can ; the only ones left in my diction have dug themselves too far into definite articles to be winkled out and I use plural verb forms with singular subjects whenever possible. This was a process that began shortly after my first visits to Highbury, continued throughout my suburban grammar school career, and escalated alarmingly when I arrived at university. (Hornby 1994:48)

If we were to take both Hornby's self-confessed strategy of aligning himself with the working class and his argument that this is a disingenuous way of consuming football seriously, it is difficult to draw any other conclusion than that Hornby is in bad faith. He knows that he enjoys football because he imagines that it aligns him to the working class - he starts to speak with a cockney accent after his first visit to Highbury - and yet he cannot admit this imagined connection. Hornby's imaginary affiliation to the working class becomes even more clear in the comic climax of this section of the

book, when he describes his attendance at a local FA Cup tie between Reading, eight miles from his home town, and Arsenal, whom he supported. Standing in the home end, Hornby is befriended by a blue and white rosetted and bescarfed family who are taken in by Hornby's cockney accent.

My assumed Cockney sounded to my ears flawless against their loathsome burr, and our relationship was beginning to take on a gratifying city-slicker-meets-from-the-sticks hue. (Hornby 1994:50).

Unfortunately, the father asked Hornby where he lived, to which Hornby replied, Maidenhead, thereby destroying his mythic identity.

It was the most humiliating moment of my teenage years. A complete, elaborate and perfectly imagined world came crashing down around me (Hornby 1994:50)

WSC has played upon similar notions of authenticity, in which football is seen as a sport which represents the true working class and through which the leftist elements of the professional service class can legitimate their own cultural and political position. Ed Horton is a principal figure here ⁹. Horton's piece in *My Favourite Year* demonstrates the mythic populism of new football writing and, therefore, its putative attachment to the working class, despite his denial of the validity or importance of such a relationship. In that piece, Horton described the 1991/2 season when the Maxwells were forced to relinquish their ownership of Oxford United. Horton's populism peeps through very briefly at the end of the article when he declares that ;

We took back what was ours, if only for a matter of months. (Horton 1993:73)

The question which this sentence raises is who is the 'we' and what was the 'ours' to which Horton refers. Obviously, Horton means the fans at Oxford who were united by their opposition to the Maxwells and the club itself. Horton then speaks for this group.

Yet as these chapters on the fans are designed to show, any club's fans are a very problematic and differentiated body. To call them 'we' so easily denies that differentiation, especially since Horton's own relationship to the game is likely to be very different from many of the lads who also attend the game. Yet Horton easily slips into an unsustained populist claim that all the fans felt like him. Horton, therefore, falls into the very trap which Hornby (and Horton himself) consciously mark out as erroneous ; that of seeing football as a populist working class sport, but which provides the professionals with an opportunity to experience and attach themselves to the working class. Despite their denials, new football writing constructs itself as speaking for the ordinary (mythical traditional working class fans) and legitimates its fandom and its argument for the protection of this fandom by mythic popular appeals.

In line with this rhetorical strategy, Philip Cornwall, one of the editors of *WSC*, employed a populist appeal to the game's constituency as the traditional working class in arguing against the development of all seater stadia and the increase in ticket prices.

They are trying to tie in a different kind of football supporter and there's nothing wrong with bringing new people into football but because of the way it's worked, combined with the Taylor Report, to actually drive away the traditional fan by pricing them out. (Cornwall, personal interview, 16/8/94)

The appeal to the 'traditional fan' returns us to the previous discussions of the lads' arguments against commercialism. There is no need to repeat the argument which was made there at length. However, as I argued there, the tradition to which Cornwall appeals is no more than an invented one as the constitution of football crowds and the culture of fandom has fluctuated throughout the century. In the past, however, the transformation of the crowd has been neither so radical or abrupt and so has

remained un-politicised. Cornwall politicises the exclusion of a particular type of fan, the poor working class or unemployed male, on the grounds that this ignores the game's authentic support. Yet the authenticity of this support exists ultimately only in the consciousness of new football writing which is curious in that, despite its being a fan style which has been developed by individuals from another class, it attaches itself to and is dependent on the lads' fans practice.

The social and historic origin of new football writing within the leftist sections of the football supporting professional service class in the late 1960s, which has produced the creation of a mythic affiliation with the traditional working class among this fandom, has determined new football writing's position in the discourses of reform around football. Although new football writing has a curious dependence on the lads' fandom, new football writing fans have a very different notion of the ideal meanings which they would like to see articulated through the game. Despite sharing the preference for the terraces with the lads, the new football writing fans do not see football primarily as a site for the demonstration of masculine honour and status. For, although most new football writing fans are men, their masculinity is of a very different order to the lads.

New football writing fans want to see football express their (leftist) political views just as the lads wanted the retention of the terraces because these concrete spaces facilitated their demonstrations of masculinity. New football writing fans want football to express their Labourist and, ultimately, Keynesian preferences and these fans oppose those changes which threaten their mythical creation of the sport as the authentic site of working class solidarity. The political project of the new football writing fans has been explicitly recognised by new football writing.

the way they're [those in charge of the game] taking the game is the very opposite of what the *WSC* people and all that would want out of the game. (Hornby, personal interview 11/8/94)

Other fans express similar sentiments, demonstrating that they want to consume a football which accords with their political project.

When I get really bitter and twisted about [Manchester] United, I half wish that they got relegated so that it clears out all the shit, including the shit that are running the club and so that there's some sort of purging really. Let's see where we are, let's see who's still going to watch them then. And that's why at the end of this season, I was, I've no not got any particular allegiance to Oldham, Ipswich or Sheffield United but I'd much rather see a big club go down than a smaller club. (Andy W, personal interview, 25/5/94)

Officials in the FSA were equally explicit in their aims. Mark Glynn, the Secretary of the Manchester branch of the FSA, hoped that by campaigning the FSA could sneak socialism in through the backdoor (Mark Glynn, personal interview 14/6/94) ¹⁰.

While Johnny Flacks, the FSA's representative to the FA, revealed the basis for his affiliation to the association.

The FSA suits me perfectly because it gives me an opportunity to combine two things, if you like the love of football and the love of social justice. (Johnny Flacks, personal interview, 8/6/94)

New football writing operates around a particular imaginary notion of football. These notions of authenticity and of the golden age have been imagined by new football writing fans as a result of those fans' own social experience and political persuasion. For new football writers, football should articulate an egalitarian and even socialist message. The construction of the golden age in the late sixties is symbolic here because it is temporally situated in a period in which Britain was still informed by certain ideas of equality and universal provision under Keynesianism. New football

writing, therefore, imagines a style of fandom which is then drawn upon to legitimate their arguments against developments which threaten that fandom.

In the opening section of this chapter, I argued that new football writing contributed to the project of the new business class (even despite itself) because it suggested a new cultural position for football. While the notion of the 'golden age' and 'authenticity' has been imagined as a result of the social position of new football writers and both expresses and legitimates their politics, the connection which this style of fandom has effected between football and an authentic (working class) tradition has been important to the marketing of the game in the 1990s. This mythological appeal to the past has been important to the new consumption of football because just at a time when the game has transformed *itself more radically than ever* before, new football writing still emphasises the traditional authenticity of the game. The connection with the past legitimates the new consumption of football because it enables the fans to imagine that despite the complete novelty of the consumption of football in the 1990s, it is actually founded in the traditions of the past. In this way, new football writing facilitates those individuals who are not part of new football writing but are situated within the private sector service class to consume the game in the 1990s. The imaginary creation of tradition by new football writing makes the game meaningful to these individuals.

The notion of 'the golden age' and of 'authenticity' are central to new football writing's contribution to the new consumption of football therefore, because these interpretations of football are meaningful to sections of the professional service class who were formerly uninterested in the game. By re-creating the symbolic value of football, new football writing has ironically undercut its own opposition to the new

business class and assisted in the post-Fordist marketing of the game. New football writing has, in the 1990s, expanded the market for football by breaching the divide between low and high cultures and offering up a form of consumption of football which is new and different to either the lads' or the new consumer fans' practice of consumption. The style of fandom which new football writing offers the service class attracts the latter to football as a form of consumption and thereby does away with the restrictive notion of football as a low cultural object. Of course, it is important not to hypostatise either the putative boundary between high and low culture which existed before post-Fordism and postmodernism or to exaggerate the breakdown of that boundary ; members of the service class were interested in football before new football writing while many individuals who belong to that class are just as dismissive of football now as they ever were. Nevertheless, whereas the affiliation of the service class to the game was muted during the crisis of football, in the 1990s that support has been formally articulated. New football writing has been crucial to that recognition and therefore to expanding and differentiating the market for football that is turning football into a postmodern and post-Fordist commodity which appeals in differential ways to different sections of society.

4. The Commercialism of New Football Writing

By extending the potential market for football, new football writing has finally assisted the project of the new business class and thereby it has come into contradiction with its own opposition to commercialism. Furthermore, new football writing itself encourages not only the extension of the market for football through the differentiation of the product but new football writing is, in its own way, explicitly

commercial. Firstly, its primary organs, by which this fandom is both constituted and communicated, *WSC* and *Fever Pitch* are commodities which are produced and sold in the post-Fordist consumer market. The publication of *Fever Pitch* (and therefore the establishment of new football writing as a form of fandom) was the decision of a major publishing house, who saw the potential of the book in the light of Italia '90, while *WSC* has adopted the strategies of that market, by refining its production techniques with the use of ever more advanced computer techniques. Thus the make-shift and primitive products of the first issues have been replaced by glossy-paged, word processed magazines, which in 1995 began to feature colour photographs. *WSC* has consciously conformed to the image of what a national magazine should look like in the post-Fordist era and this transformation can only be explained as a marketing strategy, pursued to improve sales. In the last chapter, I argued that the purchase and consumption of club fanzines was a symbolic act which expressed the post-Fordist origins of these magazines. Consequently, despite the overtly oppositional stance to the new business class, these fanzines actually articulated ideas which were central to the projects and understandings of the new business class. Thus, although oppositional on one level, club fanzines have played into the creation of an interpretive horizon in which the project of the new business class was understandable and legitimate. Despite its own oppositional tone, *WSC* similarly plays into the creation of a post-Fordist interpretive framework in which the project of the new business class.

Furthermore, *WSC* demonstrates additional commercial elements in that it advertises football related consumer goods which are designed to appeal to and affirm the identities of the differentiated service class audience to which the magazine is directed. Significantly, a principal commodity which the fanzine has advertised has

been football shirts - not, of course, the 'mid-Eighties obscenities'¹¹ but rather the shirts which were worn during the crucial years of new football writing's origin in the late 1960s (e.g. *WSC* No. 63: backcover, No. 68:33). The advertising of these traditional shirts, which are made by Arkwright sportswear and The Old Fashioned Football Shirts Company (T.O.F.F.S) is symbolically significant because they are metonymic of new football writings' horizon of meaning ; the notions of the 'golden age' and the meaning of football as a site of authentic solidarity of the traditional working class are woven into these shirts. These shirts have become symbols of particular style of consuming football. They define the borders within a particular fragment of a differentiated market and to wear one of these shirts is to demonstrate allegiance to a particular style of fandom.

WSC consciously operates within a fragmented post-Fordist market, communicating a bundle of symbols which inform individual identities. Consequently, *WSC* has itself become a sign-value in the post-Fordist market which other capitalist interests employ to brand and market their commodities.

We have advertised in *WSC* from the start of our business in 1990. We have not missed an issue and often book two pages in the magazine. *WSC* is an integral part of our past, present and future plans, and is very important in the continued development of our mail order database. Not a bad read, either. (Paul Munton, Leisure Co, *WSC* readership profile)

We have advertised *Melody Maker* through *WSC* and found it an effective way to heightening awareness amongst our target readership. (Robert Tame, IPC, *WSC* readership profile)

Ironically, both *WSC* and the companies which employ it to advertise their own commodities in it exploit the fanzine's oppositional position which attracts a readership of young, male professionals, often employed in the public sector. *WSC*

thus finally becomes a sign-value in the post-Fordist market which can assist capitalist interests in marketing their products to a different (and difficult) market.

Conclusion

In the last chapter, I analysed the contemporary fandom of masculine fans and argued that their relationship with the new business class was neither entirely resistant nor entirely compliant. Rather, through their practices of consumption they mediate their relationship with the new business class, which enjoys political economic superiority. Similarly, new football writing demonstrates this paradoxical relationship with the new business class. Although the new football writing opposes the new consumption of football on one level (informed by notions of the authenticity of the game), their very appeals to authenticity interpellate a new audience to football. Consequently, new football writing contributes to the very project which it overtly opposes. The contribution of new football writing to the project of the new business class is nowhere more strongly highlighted than in the publication of *Fever Pitch*, a critical moment in the establishment of new football writing as a fandom. That work was commissioned in response to the new cultural position of football after Italia '90 - a cultural position in which the media conglomerates had a major role and interest in creating. New football writing was, therefore, both dependent on certain capitalist interests - and it is important to note that both Murdoch's and Maxwell's papers had a major influence over the reception of the game in Britain - and assisted in the project of the new business class ; crucially, new football writing assisted in the widening of the market for football in the core of capitalist society. In other words, new football writing aided the new business class in transforming the football fan into a customer ;

that is in re-positioning football away from the poor, white male of the lumpenproletariat into the affluent core of developing post-Fordist society.

NOTES :

1 The term 'new football writing' to describe this particular practice of fandom by a very particular set of individuals is derived from the sub-title of a volume of collected essays by individuals who were typical of this group and which was edited by Nick Hornby, called *My Favourite Year : a collection of new football writing*. The use of that phrase is not intended to hypostasise either the phenomenon of this literature or its own title. The term was invented in a contingent fashion ; Philip Cornwall emphasised the contingent nature of the term 'new football writing' : 'Although it was on the cover of the book which we did with Nick [Hornby]. New football writing is a bit of a doubtful term. It embraces an awful lot of writing'. (16/8/94, personal interview). However, although it would be wrong to overstate the self consciousness of this fan group and its project, the term 'new football writing' fans seems to be useful because it both communicates the fact that the consumption practices of these fans are new, that those practices are different and that an important element of that practice is literary. The reading and writing of fanzines (of a different style to the lads' fanzines) and books is a central element in the creation of the self understandings of this group.

2 The difference between the lads and new football writing as a style of fandom was pointed up by the lads' reaction to *Fever Pitch*. Although the book was generally well received, some lads were surprised that Hornby changed teams, and spent some seasons following Cambridge United (e.g. David G). This change of allegiance is more or less impossible for the lads since their relationships with other men are mediated by their affiliation to one club. To change clubs would have involved a loss of face and would imply a rejection of the relations which were founded on the mutual celebration of a team.

3 David Bull's *We'll Support You Evermore* (1992) is another example of new football writing which emerged in this period. Although this book is not explicitly connected to either *WSC* or the *FSA*, it can be considered as part of new football writing. It is a series of short pieces by various fans, recalling memorable moments in their supporting careers. In that, it is very similar to *My Favourite Year* and precedes both that volume and *Fever Pitch*. The connection is further evinced by the fact that the social background of the writers is similar to that which is typical of the new football writing. The social composition of the contributors to *My Favourite Year* was reflected in the collection, *We'll Support You Evermore* (1992), demonstrating the very proscribed cultural milieu in which new football writing was both rooted and to which it gave expression. Of the twenty four contributors, including John Major, eleven worked in higher education, a further three taught, two at comprehensive schools and one at a Grammar school, four were professional writers or journalists, three more worked or have worked in local government, one is an MP and one worked in a private publishing company, which, incidentally printed fanzines, including the early editions of *WSC* (Bull 1992:9-12). The authors of the texts which

have been crucial elements in the development of the new football writing fandom constituted then of individuals who were most likely to be members of the service class and, in particular, those fractions of the service class employed in the public sector of the services, especially in teaching, or who were professional writers. The new football writing fandom represents and is derived from the experience of football fans who are employed in the public sector services or who are intellectuals. The social composition of new football writing fandom is reminiscent of Bourdieu's notion of the 'left bank' elite in French society, who have little economic capital but sustain their status through their possession of cultural capital (1984).

4 *WSC*'s readership profile was conducted by Further Thought in April 1992.

5 The social location of new football writing fandom among the professional (and often left-bank) service class was highlighted in an article in the London *Evening Standard* (7/4/94:12-13), 'Putting the BA into football'. The article was written by David Baddiel, the comedian, and 'Cambridge arts graduate with a double first' (The *Evening Standard* 7/4/94:12), and citing Melvyn Bragg's, Martin Amis's, Nigel Kennedy's and Salman Rushdie's open support for the game, discusses the recent attraction of the game to intellectuals.

These are intellectuals who are coming out of the closet, not going into it to see if an Umbro top goes with an Armani jacket. They're coming out of it, singing, crying and clutching copies of *Fever Pitch* because, they feel safe, at last admitting it. (*Evening Standard* 7/4/94:12)

This article then publicly announces the emergence of new football writing as a legitimate form of fan practice and through this type of articulation the new football writing fandom is brought to self-conscious realisation of itself. It is notable that Baddiel deploys *Fever Pitch* as a central symbolic expression of this new practice of consumption.

6 Other books which might be bracketed under new football writing include ; Ian Hamilton *Gazza Italia*, Simon Kuper *Football Against the Enemy*, Jim White *Are You Watching Liverpool?*

7 Television programmes which have been inspired by the recent transformation in the perception of football include ; *Standing Room Only* (BBC2), *Fantasy Football* (BBC2).

8 See King 'Outline of a Practical Theory of Football Violence'

9 Horton's argument against service class individuals using the game as a means of experiencing the working class is quoted by Nick Hornby (1994:97)

10 Mark Glynn made these comments just after I had switched the tape machine off. I use them because he was quite open about this project and on the tape, moments before he made this statement, he declared that he was a socialist.

11 This reference to 'mid-eighties obscenities' - new multi-colour shirts with sponsors' logos on the front - comes from the first edition of *WSC*, in an article in which Ticher argued against both the recent shirt designs and the fact that the retail of these shirts

plainly exploited the fans' loyalty (*WSC* No.1, March '86:3). The point about his arguments were that they were founded on the notion that there was something self-evidently authentic and tasteful about the shirts which he had watched on the backs of players when he first attended games in the late 1960s.

CHAPTER 13

THE NEW CONSUMER FANS

An important third form of fandom emerged in the 1990s - the new consumer fans - and this style of fandom is having a major impact on the new consumption of football. In particular, the presence of new consumer fans in the ground has increasingly threatened the lads and reduced their bargaining position with the new business class¹. Knowing that they are replaceable as supporters, the lads are effectively compelled into compliance themselves, for they either comply and accommodate the change in their fandom or they face complete exclusion.

In the last two chapters, I have emphasised the different values of the two fan groups and the new business class but also argued that, despite this cultural difference, these fans nevertheless finally assisted the new business class's project in complex ways. The new consumer fans, however, share a very similar set of understandings as the new business class. It would be wrong to suggest that this similarity demonstrated a simplistic transmission of ideology from dominant onto subordinate classes but rather there is a congruence which we need to examine here.

New consumer fans, especially those who consume football as a family, indulge in a paradoxically private form of consumption. Even though they attend a public stadium they arrive together, usually by car, go straight to the ground and leave immediately afterwards. It is, consequently, difficult to contact them as a group and thus this chapter is necessarily briefer than the previous ones.

Despite the lads' denigration of the new consumer fans, it should not be assumed that the new consumer fans are, in fact, inauthentic or peripheral to football in the 1990s. On the contrary, the new consumer fans are as 'real' as lads who have

been attending for years. Fandom of any variety cannot be regarded as unreal or inauthentic because fandom is always finally only a matter of imagination (Anderson 1990) ². Through fandom, individuals imagine themselves to belong to a community and through that imagining they actually bring that community into existence. Since all fandom operates at the level of the imagination, fans become fans simply by considering themselves to be so. Consequently, it is impossible to suggest that anyone who thinks they are a fan, is not actually one. New consumer fans believe themselves to be Manchester United fans and, therefore, since fandom is imaginary, they are real United fans. Yet, they are real in a different way to the lads (and to new football writing, it might be added) - their imagining is of a different order. Hence the lads' argument that the new consumer fans are not real is not objectively founded but it is an effective means by which to legitimate their protests against exclusion.

1. The Composition of New Consumer Fandom

New consumer fans are recognisable by their attitudes to the recent transformation of the game, as will be shown below, and by their style of dress, which does not involve the conscious display of certain designer labels - such as Henri Lloyd or Ralph Lauren, for instance, which the lads favour. Most often new consumers wear several items of official club merchandise typically the shirt, the manager's jacket, a hat and scarf. By this general costume style, new consumer fans physically demonstrate their allegiance to the club and agreement with the project of the new business class.

Within new consumer fandom, there are three subgroups which can be recognised and defined. Firstly, there are those fans in the 1990s of both sexes who

have been attending games for a long time but who approve of the changes which have been effected by the new business class. At Manchester United, a significant number of quite elderly single women make up part of this group and it was suggested that this unusual element of United's support was a result of popular reactions to the Munich disaster in 1958, when many individuals became fans of the club out of sympathy for the loss of its potentially great team (Rose C, personal interview, 1/8/94).

Secondly, there are the new family groups which have been consciously encouraged to attend by the creation of a 4,000 seat family stand in the new Stretford End (now the West Stand). Many family groups have not bought season tickets in the family stand but come only a few times a season to Old Trafford, in which case they might be situated in any part of the stadium ; thus there are many more than 4,000 new consumer familial fans in the ground at any game. As I have already mentioned in Chapter 11, Manchester United has cultivated this style of support by favouring supporters who come from outside Manchester in family groups in the postal ballot for League tickets³, because these individuals are more likely to spend money in the club shop.

Thirdly, there are the groups of teenage girls whose presence at games has been more prominent since the 1990s and has been especially noticeable at Manchester United, where the sexual attractiveness of their star players, such as Ryan Giggs and Lee Sharpe, has been drawn upon by the new business class as a quite explicit marketing strategy. In addition to these three main subgroups of new consumer fans, I want to tentatively suggest from some evidence which I cite below that it may be the case that the lads, or at least some individuals who belong to this

style of fandom now, show the potential to move towards compliance. In particular, lads with young families are likely to find the facilities offered by the club to be convenient. If the new business class is capable of winning the compliance of the lads through the provision of facilities for their children, then the free market discourse which we examined in Chapter 7 will have been substantially achieved. The family will have been successfully instituted in post-Fordist football as a disciplined apparatus of consumption, which is efficiently economic since it offers great market potential at the same time as a means of social control. This will have been an important symbolic achievement in Britain's post-Fordist project as a whole.

In the previous chapter, I argued that new football writing can be related to a quite specific section of the service class. Since my analysis of new consumer fans is avowedly more cursory the social location of compliance is more difficult to establish. However, since the new consumer fans approve of the better facilities and are willing to pay more for these facilities and do not make many complaints about the higher prices it is possible to conclude that new consumer fans are generally more affluent than the lads. This is implied (though not proved) by the fact that some of the lads, who could move to a position of compliance by taking their families or at least their children with them to the ground are prevented from doing so by the expense. I would suggest, then, that new consumer fans are generally employed in the well paid and secure positions at the core of post-Fordist society ; they generally work in the low bureaucratic, white-collar stations of the private service industries.

This occupational position is implied by four of the fans whom I classified as new consumer fans ; Neil L was a former laboratory assistant at Ferodo, examining brake pads, who used his redundancy pay to invest in shares, which have shown

returns, Dale R⁴ worked for British gas in a white collar service job, Rose C⁵ worked in an engineering company in Middlewich and Charles B⁶ worked in an administrative role in a textile company in Leeds. Again, it must be emphasised that no definitive conclusions can be drawn from such a small sample. However, at the same time, the fact that all the fans whom I interviewed had secure but lower grade jobs accords with the concept of the new consumer fans advanced.

2. New Consumer Fans and the Transformation of Football

As I have already mentioned above, it is difficult to uncover new consumer fans' horizon of meaning because their style of consumption is more privatised but it is also still in its infancy and its interpretive framework is still partly submerged and unself-conscious; new consumer fans do not have a conscious notion of themselves as a discrete group as do the lads. However, it is possible to at least sketch out some of the central understandings which inform the practice of new consumer fans.

Despite the lads' appeals that new consumer fans (who do not sing), are not real supporters, my interviews with the individuals named above demonstrated that they experienced just as visceral an attachment to the club as any of the lads. It should be noted, however, that all four individuals whom I contacted were part of the first sub-group of which I spoke above. They had been attending games at Old Trafford for years and in Charlie B's case, decades since he had witnessed his first match in the late 1960s. The lads' accusation that new consumer fans are not as dedicated to the club may be more accurate for new consumer fans from the second group and third group; those fans who attend only one or two games a season (often as a family) or only watch games to see Ryan Giggs. However, even in this case, the lads are wrong

to describe these individuals as not 'real' fans. It is simply that their understanding of themselves and their relationship to the club is different to the lads.

The new consumer fans whom I interviewed⁷ demonstrated a remarkable dedication to the club and, indeed, their lives were entirely informed by their notion of themselves as United fans. Neil L started attending home games in 1978, and within five years began to attend away matches. In the last six or seven years he has attended every domestic game and goes to reserve matches as well (Neil L, 31/5/94). Dale R demonstrated a similar dedication, revealing that she did not miss games any more and even attends Reserve, A and B games⁸.

Although the club features as centrally in the identities of these fans as it does with the lads, the new consumer fans are distinguishable from the lads and new football writing by the type of literature in which they are interested. They take little interest in the club (the lads') fanzines or in *WSC*;

I bought my first fanzine last year. And I'd seen them for years, well not years and years. I'd seen people selling them. I thought they were University Rag mags - full of stupid jokes and adverts. So I never bought one. (Charlie B, personal interview, 21/6/94)

I used to get *United We Stand*, which was quite good, but I didn't think it worth me buying - I didn't get enough out of it. I did get *Red Issue* when it first used to be about but it used to annoy me so much. (Rose C, personal interview, 1/8/94)

Their lack of interest in the partially oppositional discourses which are articulated in these publications is reflected in their attitudes towards the recent changes in football. For instance, new consumer fans are not especially disadvantaged by the introduction of all seater stadia.

I enjoyed standing up but seating doesn't bother me. Sometimes seats are beneficial because if you want to have a drink you can get to your seat five minutes before the game and your seat will be there. Standing up you used to be there an hour and you had to be there early to get a good view. So it didn't

really matter to me having seats really. In the end now, I enjoy having a seat.
(Neil L, personal interview, 31/5/94)

Since Neil's support was not primarily based on an ecstatic celebration of masculinity, seating did not threaten his practice of fandom and therefore his notion of himself as a fan. However, he was aware that others may have lost something through the development of all seater grounds. He referred to those fans who used to like 'giving it some' (i.e. shouting and singing etc.). For Neil, seats are merely a more convenient way to consume football ; seats have facilitated his primary practice of fandom, watching the game.

Charles B articulated similar sentiments, for although he always enjoyed listening to the singing, he himself always sat as he was primarily interested in spectating which was to be best undertaken in the stands. So, although he was somewhat ambivalent about the way grounds have improved, he was convinced that this improvement was necessary as grounds had become places which had during the 1970s and 1980s become incapable of performing the function for which they were built ; for watching football.

It's [the state of the grounds] got better. In the Second Division, I can't think of which ground it was but there used to be glass bottles broken, set in concrete on top of walls to stop people getting over. You couldn't get a good view so you had to virtually stand on this glass and you'd feel it coming through your pumps. And then there'd be all these barriers, and you'd be squashed against barriers and you'd be herded around. And there were no toilets facilities and so you did it outside and you could see it all streaming down into the hot-dog stall. It was just filth. (Charlie B, personal interview, 21/6/94)

Since the development of all seater stadia has been very substantially undertaken to encourage the attendance of families, it is not surprising that new consumer fans, who approve of all seating, also applaud the influx of families into the game.

I think it's good, really, 'cause it gets the family out as well. Instead of husbands going to football or vice versa, the families go and then, on the way

home, whatever happens, then can have a talk, instead of husbands just going, explaining something to their wives when they get home. (Neil L, personal interview, 31/5/94)

The introduction of families into football through the improvement of the grounds has been an important strategic manoeuvre for the new business class because there is some suggestion that the lads' masculinity might itself be suborned through this growth of familial consumption.

RS: Families are not being encouraged to go to the game.

MG: All the fucking Stretford End upper tier should be a fucking family stand.

RS: To take the wife, me, 2 kids, you're talking £100. What average family can afford that?

MG: None in fucking Manchester, in the Greater Manchester area.

RS: Not where we come from the average wage down there is £140 a week (Rob S and Mick G, personal interview, 1/6/94)

This dialogue demonstrates that the lads are potentially willing new consumer fans ; they approve of the new suitability of the stadia for the visit of families. Indeed, both argue, families should be encouraged to attend. However, the sort of family which the club has in mind and the sort of family from which lads, such as Mick and Rob, come are separated by a wide differential in wages. For these lads the ground is not open to their families because it is impossible for them to afford the admission charges. Mick and Rob reveal then both that the lads could drift towards new consumerism once they have children but that new consumer fans (at least the second familial subgroup which was mentioned above) are generally more affluent than the lads ; they can afford to take their families.

Paralleling the new consumer fans' approval of the transformation of the grounds and therefore the means of consuming football, there is support for the new business class itself among the new consumer fans. For instance, although we noted

that many of the lads no longer held Martin Edwards in the contempt which he provoked a few years ago, he still finds much more sympathy among the new consumer fans than amongst the lads, or indeed, in new football writing. When asked his opinion of Edwards, Charlie B merely replied ;

Business is business.(Charlie B 21/6/94)

Dale Ross was quite explicit in her support.

Obviously, he [Martin Edwards] does make money but which chairman of a company doesn't make money. And at least he is a United fan at heart and, to me, he made the ultimate sacrifice. That club had been in his family for donkey's years [libelous comment about Louis Edwards omitted] but it must have hurt him because the only way he could raise the cash to build the stadium and finance that was by doing a share issue and actually losing overall control. That is the ultimate sacrifice he gave up ownership of the club he loved. (Dale R, 8/8/94)

These comments are significant because they demonstrate these fans' self-conscious understanding of the centrality of the free market in the reformulation of relations in post-Fordist society and the growing dominance of a new business class within this new social formation. Charles B's brief statement is important because it demonstrates that new consumer fans have accepted one of the major planks in the new commonsense of post-Fordist society. Since business operates according to the 'laws' of the free market and is primarily concerned with profit, Charles both affirms that (post-Fordist) interpretive framework and legitimates individuals, like Martin Edwards, who have risen to dominance within its context.

Dale R's statement operates in a similar fashion to Charles B, affirming the centrality of business as an orientating principle in contemporary culture but she goes further and assents to the legitimacy of a new business class to whom this new hegemony has given rise. Edwards' profit from the club is legitimated on the grounds

that he himself has contributed towards the success of the club. Indeed, in Dale's eyes, he has relinquished a style of autocracy which we noted was typical in pre-1980s football, and re-invented his relationship to the club on purely market lines in the best interests of the club. The compliance to the recent transformations at Manchester United actually presumes an acceptance of the post-Fordist understandings more widely but, since football is principally an arena of meaning, the new consumer fans' participation in this new style of consumption contributes towards this post-Fordism by legitimating and affirming it.

As I have argued in Chapter 10, one of the principal strategies of the new business class, of which Edwards is a representative, has been to expand the commercial operations of the club by producing and selling more merchandise. We have noted the lads' somewhat paradoxical disdain for this strategy and new football writing's idiosyncratic commodification of shirts and books. The new consumer fans, unsurprisingly, support the clubs' commercial strategy more or less unreservedly and are both willing to buy merchandise themselves and approve of others purchasing it.

I think it's [club merchandise] all right, good, yeah. Like any sport, like America, the baseball, they have all the merchandise, don't they? Whatever sport they have, you'll always have this, won't you. I think it's good, yeah. For kids, for anyone really, it's great but for kids it's great ; shirt, socks and shorts - the whole stuff. (Neil L, personal interview, 31/5/94)

Dale Ross was equally approving of the replica kits.

I didn't get the last red one. So I decided to get the new one but I'm really pleased with it. I think it's brilliant the imprint of the stadium in the shirt. (Dale R, personal interview 8/8/94)

Although Dale finds that the shirt gives her the opportunity to express her affiliation to the club and she finds that fulfilling, she also approves of the money which the shirts make for the club. In other words, she approves of the post-Fordist marketing

strategy, which produces differentiated symbolic goods for a wide fandom across a global market and transforms its stock with regularity.

On Wednesday morning [when the new shirt went on sale], they had crush barriers out at Old Trafford for the queues. There were people queuing from five in the morning. You can't expect the club to turn down that kind of money. (Dale R, personal interview 8/8/94)

The compatibility between the club's own strategy and the new consumer fans' understandings of themselves as fans is further revealed by the way that new consumer fans travel to away games. In Chapter 11, it was noticed that one of the lads' principal jibes at new consumer fans was their use of the clubs' official transport to away games. The close affiliation with the club's preferences which the use of the official's transport suggests was demonstrated explicitly by Dale R, when, in the light of the disorder which had occurred the previous year, she considered the prospect of unofficial groups travelling to Turkey for the match against Galatasaray scheduled for September 1994.

You can't be a United fan if you're contemplating [going to Turkey unofficially]I've not missed a game for four years. It will kill me not to go. I'm desperate but when it comes down to it if the club aren't going to run a trip then I'm not going to go on it. (Dale R, personal interview, 8/8/94)

Dale would not go to a game which the club had not sanctioned because to go would threaten the club's reputation and its position in the competition. If fans attended the match in Turkey, despite the club's ban, and there was trouble the club could be ejected from European competition. Dale's commitment to official club policy highlights the decisive divide between new consumer and masculine fandom. Whereas the latter merely regards club directives as an autocratic threat to their practice of fandom and therefore to the notion of themselves as men, new consumer fans have fully subsumed their identities to the interests of the club. They abide by the club's

strategies because the club regards these strategies as likely to bring the most success. Since that success is the focus of the new consumer fans, they submit to those strategies.

Although new consumer fans, like all fans, are subordinate to the Board and its projects, the new consumer fans are not mystified. They submit to the authority of the Board because they believe that they will thereby achieve the most desirable ends for themselves. If anything, the lads and new football writing operate with more contradictory and illusory notions of themselves as fans because, on the one hand, they submit to the authority of the board, invest time and money in the club, but on the other the very project of the board is knowingly at odds with their own self-understandings.

Conclusion

In his *Negative Dialectics* (1973), Adorno argued that concepts are never adequate to their objects and that human knowledge proceeds by the eternal dialectical realisation of the shortcomings of each concept. If we take Adorno's philosophy seriously, then it is important to avoid hypostatizing the concepts by which I have analysed the practice of football fandom in the 1990s. Although, I would, of course, argue that the three concepts of fandom which I have employed here accurately reflect the contemporary state of the consumption of football it must be realised that they are historically specific to the early to mid-1990s. Since each type of fandom has both a history from which it created itself and a future into which it will transform itself, but I have examined only its contemporary manifestation, that analysis must therefore be limited.

Furthermore, the fandoms of which I have written are not the essential properties of individuals. As I have argued throughout, fandom is an imagined community (Anderson 1990) which exists at the ideal level of individuals' self-understandings. Fandom is, therefore, fundamentally fluid - open to the eternal and dialectical workings of the self-conscious. The basis of fandom in the imagination allows fans to transform their practice of consumption. Over their lives, fans can alter their style of fandom so that, as we have seen, it is possible for fans to drift towards compliance. Furthermore, every fan mediates a particular form of fandom to their own particular identities and consequently it is possible for fans to exist in the interstices of the three categories which I have employed here. Fans can exist on the periphery of the fans and new consumer categories, demonstrating features of either style at different moments. Indeed, as I have noted, three of the four new consumer fans whom I have quoted here demonstrate this interstitial fandom.

Throughout a recent collection of essays about fandom (Lewis 1992), a common theme on which the various writers drew was the disdainful dismissal of fandom by orthodox sociology ; fandom was regarded as either trivial or mystified in either of which case fandom was peripheral to the concerns of sociology. These three chapters on the contemporary condition of football fandom should undermine that arrogance. Football fans express self-understandings which are in part drawn from wider values and ideas which inform relations across the social formation more widely. Furthermore, since football is a ritual these relations and the understandings which inform them are magnified in football and thus football assists in their acceptance across the social formation. As I have emphasised throughout, the role which the football ritual plays in communicating ideas is complex as it is the result of many

social agencies (the clubs, the new business class, the media, the fans and the state).

Furthermore, as I suggested in Chapter 1, football is not coextensive with society but expresses meanings which inform a particular social milieu - and one which is principally masculine. Nevertheless, despite the partiality of the football ritual, the milieu which it interpellates is very wide.

Consequently, football fandom as part of this ritual is not peripheral to cultural reproduction but a fundamental practice in which (fractions of) British society constitute and reformulate themselves. Football fandom has become particularly significant as a symbolic practice in which social relations are expressed and negotiated as consumption. The producing and selling of commodities with sign value has become the central economic practice of everyday life in post-Fordist Britain. Football is a prime site of this consumption, expressing identities which are crucial to consumption and identifying products. Fandom is a crucial element of this economic practice and, therefore, fandom itself is fundamental to the economics of post-Fordist Britain. The significance of the analysis of football fandoms in the 1990s goes well beyond the temporal and spatial confines of the game itself. Football fandom constitutes the central mechanism of the emerging class compromise and social formations emerging under the interpretive framework of a post-Fordism.

NOTES :

1 It should be noted that the development of the new consumer fan is at its most advanced at Manchester United, whose glamorous image and recent successes have encouraged the attendance of new consumer fans. Other clubs have not been nearly so capable of dispensing with their masculine support.

2 Anderson's argument that imagining is not somehow mystified and that communities which are imagined are real is laid out in the following text :

With a certain ferocity Gellner makes a comparable point when he rules that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist. The drawback to this formulation, however, is that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'. In this way he implies that 'true' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations. In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face to face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (Anderson 1990:15)

3 Manchester United has a membership scheme of some 90,000, 26,000 of which hold season tickets. The remaining 16,000 seats (there is usually an allocation of about 2,000 seats for away fans) are allocated through the postal application of the rest of the members. This is supposed to operate on a first come basis but, in fact, it is widely claimed that the club has deliberately preferred the application of non- local and familial support.

4 Dale R is not simplistically new consumer as she reads *WSC*.

5 Rose C's fandom is nearer new football writing than compliance in many ways; she is a member of the FSA and reads *WSC*. However, she does use official club travel to away games and likes to wear the official club merchandise.

6 Charles B moved towards the lads' style of fandom during the year of my fieldwork.

7 The new consumer fans, whom I interviewed, were all from the first subgroup in that they had followed United for many years and did not attend with their families. This style of compliance is nearer to both lad and new football writing styles of support than the other two new consumer subgroups.

8 The Reserve team is comprised of the first team squad. The A and B teams consist of junior teams which have signed with the club but are too young to be part of the squad.

CHAPTER 14

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed a particular social development within contemporary British society - the Premier League and the new consumption of football. By consciously situating that specific development within a wider historical context, the analysis has attempted to foreground the social significance of the Premier League and the new consumption of football. In turn, however, the examination of the specific by means of a general framework 'dialectically' throws light on that general framework itself. It is hoped that the thesis will contribute to an understanding not just of the changes in football but also of Britain's more general move towards a post-Fordist settlement.

In order to explain the specific development of the Premier League and the new consumption of football, I have used two principal theories. Firstly, I have employed a hermeneutic theory, which foregrounds the meaningfulness of social action and relations, and which argues that ritual constitutes an arena in which meanings are articulated and relations re-negotiated. Secondly, I have drawn upon Gramsci's writing for a theory of historical change which has operated with the concepts of the organic and the conjunctural. The organic refers to the unself-conscious transformations which arise out of the general course of the social process, whereas the conjunctural denotes those moments when the organic transformations reach a point at which they demand the self-conscious reassessment and re-negotiation of the social formation. In this thesis, Part II examines the organic developments which precipitated the transformation of football from 1985, while Parts III and IV are concerned with the conjunctural developments which determined the particular form of those

transformations. It was also argued that the conjunctural moment was crucially informed by organic developments so that discourses which reflected the trajectory of organic developments were privileged.

Although the two theories serve different purposes in the thesis, they are closely related because historical change - both organic social change and conjunctural transformations - occur at the level of meaning ; historical transformation is finally hermeneutic . Social relations are maintained and transformed by the eternal negotiation which mediates political economic exchanges. That negotiation is finally interpretive (and discursive). Therefore, the two theories which are central to this thesis - of hermeneutics and historical change - complement one another because while one is an ontology of social relations, the other is a theory of how new social relations arise out of old ones. The theory of historical change is based on a hermeneutic ontology.

The relationship between the two theories - that the theory of historical change operates with a hermeneutic ontology - is revealed throughout the thesis but becomes particularly apparent in Part II. There I try to lay out the organic background which constituted a prehistory of the Premier League, facilitating the development of the latter. Importantly, the organic separation of the big city clubs from the small town clubs was initiated in 1960 at the conjunctural moment when the maximum wage itself became inadequate to wider developments : to the internationalisation of the transfer market and to the under-the-table payments made by chairmen. This conjunctural moment of self-conscious discursive intervention precipitated an organic division of the league which worked itself out in complex ways in the 1980s in the debates between the Big Five and the Bates-Noades axis. The organic separation of the big clubs from

the rest of the League and the conjunctural disputes over this separation in the 1980s operated at the same ontological level of meaning ; the clubs negotiated their political economic relations with each other through discourse. The conjunctural moment of the 1980s merely marked the point at which these discourses became especially self-conscious.

Through the examination of the organic conditions which made the Premier League possible and the conjunctural discourses of the 1980s and early 1990s which determined the specific form of the Premier League, Part II sought to explain the emergence of the Premier League, suggesting that this League constituted the political economic institution in which the new consumption of football was possible. The organic developments which were discussed in Part II did not only facilitate the development of the Premier League (and therefore provide a framework for the new consumption of football) but these organic developments themselves promoted conjunctural discourses from the mid-1980s which crucially informed the new consumption of football. The organic trajectory of football, which was precipitated by the reformation of labour relations in 1961, brought the Football League to a point in the mid-1980s when its formal structure was actually inadequate to the political economic development of the clubs. The League had not acknowledged the growing autarky of the big city clubs.

Part III analysed the major moments of these conjunctural discursive interventions .The analysis of the authoritarian discourse, free market discourse and the Taylor Report was designed to highlight the connections between these discourses and wider post-Fordist transformations and to demonstrate the way in which organic developments privileged certain discourses. Thus the political economic and class

realities of nascent post-Fordist Britain privileged the free market discourse, although that discourse preserved elements of the authoritarian discourse in it.

Part IV attempted to examine how these conjunctural discourses (and the organic transformation which were the subject of Part II) informed the new consumption of football in the 1990s. The discussion of BSkyB's development and its successful bid for the contract for the Premier League was crucial here because, as we saw, this satellite network was a profoundly Thatcherite enterprise and therefore, post-Fordist institution ; it was only possible insofar as it accorded with the free market principles of Thatcherism which was central to British post-Fordism. BSkyB's coverage of football was an important nodal moment in the new consumption of football because this satellite station linked football to wider social and political economic developments and to the discourses which informed those developments.

Chapter 10, 'The New Business Class', followed a similar course to the discussion of BSkyB. I argued that the success of the project of this class fraction in the 1990s was the result of organic political economic developments which had brought this class fraction into existence ¹ and created suitable conditions within football for the implementation of their project. Furthermore, the conjunctural discourses of the 1980s had also been crucial in both suggesting the potential of football and in legitimating the new business class's project. The success of that project then dialectically played back into those discourses.

The final three chapters were intended to highlight the contestations which have taken place in football over the project of the new business class. In that, these chapters were informed by the hermeneutic theory of ritual which was laid out in Chapter 1 by reference to Geertz ; the new consumption of football has involved a

metasocial debate about social relations through the practice of football fandom.

These chapters examined the different and complex responses of different fan groups to the new business class's project and attempted to demonstrate that the fans' differential responses were related to the social location and experience of the fans, which substantially determined their self-understandings. In particular, as we saw in Chapters 11 and 12, the lads and new football writing fans draw on their notions of masculinity and authenticity and by inventing a tradition for these identities legitimate their position against the new business class.

It is not only the fans who do this. The new business class itself has employed similar discursive strategies to justify its own project. It has reduced the interpretive and emotive aspects of fandom to a mere economic market relation, in which the fan is but a customer. These different discursive claims are necessarily limited to the social experience of those individuals who articulate them. However, in the negotiation of social relations, all the parties attempt to expedite their position by hypostatizing their own discourse to a level of generality and historical pre-eminence ; the fan groups and the new business class assert that their notion of fandom and the relation between the fan and club is typical of the widest possible section of the support and is historically the most well-established. The success of these discourses then, is not finally decided by their objective 'truth', for they are not statements of fact but the articulations of the way specific groups interpret their social location. Those interpretations substantially constitute that position, rather than merely referring to something which is tangible and already in existence. Consequently, the discourses of various groups cannot be judged on objective grounds. Rather the success of a particular discourse will be determined by certain organic developments ; that is, whether that discourse articulates emerging

the understandings which inform nascent social relations. Discourses will be successful if they do this because they will command the widest support. In relation to the new business class, the success of their project has principally rested on the fact that they have articulated the understandings of a wider section of society than the various fan groups. Indeed, the very fan groups that oppose them at one level, support their project in other moments.

This thesis has analysed the development of the Premier League and the new consumption of football in the 1990s but the fact that the thesis has attempted to trace certain social developments to an endpoint does not imply that the social process has somehow reached its proper destination and future development is unnecessary. On the contrary, social development is inevitable so long as social relations exist. Thus the new consumption of football has already precipitated the organic trajectory towards future developments, it is simply that we cannot see what those developments might involve. As Hegel argued ;

The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk. (Hegel 1967:12)

Having said that, although it is impossible to predict the specific forms of consumption which will develop in the next decades, it is highly probable that the two lower divisions will be entirely separated from the League by the end of this century and that there will be two fully professional football Leagues in England. If this is the case, then it is likely that both leagues will come under the auspices of the FA and the Football League will disappear entirely. Whatever the form of future developments, the new consumption of football will crucially inform those developments and so a proper

understanding of football in the 1990s puts us in a good position from which to comprehend these future developments.

In order to gain a perspective on the potential direction which football will take in England, this thesis has foregrounded the historical transformation of the ritual and consequently the thesis and the evidence which it has marshalled has been arranged in a very particular way. The purpose of this particular arrangement has been to answer the question of how the Premier League and the new consumption of football emerged in the 1990s and to outline its major features. Necessarily, this ordering has pushed other potentially important and interesting issues to the background. Notably, I have not undertaken a detailed textual analysis of fan writing in the forms of either *Fever Pitch* or the club fanzines. These texts have been surveyed more briefly and material in them has been employed to support the wider case which I have been attempting to propose. Thus, *Fever Pitch* is cited for Hornby's construction of an 'authentic' (working class) identity while I have extracted certain passages from the United fanzines which demonstrate the lads' attempts to maintain distinction from the new consumer fan by their styles of (expensive designer) dress. It would be possible and indeed illuminating to carry out a detailed analysis of these texts to highlight their competing and contradictory messages, the methods by which they construct their audience and crucially the ways in which fans interpret these texts to inform their identities. In my interviews with fans, these texts were discussed briefly in the context of the transformation of fandom and so I was able to gain some insight into the meaningfulness of these texts for the fans. However, my investigation into the significance of these texts was not detailed and systematic as the issue was secondary to my primary concern in the fans' roles in and understanding of the new consumption

of football. A close analysis of these texts would provide a greater insight into the particularities of fandom in the 1990s but, crucially, it would also highlight the reason why these texts became so important to fan identity in this period. A close textual analysis would reveal the specific ways in which the meaningfulness of these texts contributed to the new consumption of football by interpellating fans and informing the transformation of fan identities.

The fans' interpretation of these texts leads to a final point about the future direction of research. In the thesis, I hinted at a couple of moments (in Chapter 4 and Chapter 13) that the fans were imagining a new 'post-Fordist' community in their fandom which linked them to large corporations operating in the global market. In other words, a quite new community is beginning to be imagined through football fandom which differs radically from the local working class community of 'tradition' and the intensely masculine identity of the hooligan years between about 1960 and 1990. This newly imagined community is important to the re-creation of British post-Fordist society since the notion which individuals have of the community in which they live is a crucial element in the constitution of that community and the relations of which it comprises. Future research into football could usefully set itself the task of examining the emergence of this new imagining at football games (principally through interviewing members of the new consumer fandom). Not only would this project be illuminating in itself but it would potentially obviate the criticism which is often informally levelled at sport sociology in general and at British football sociology in particular ; that its findings have little interest to wider sociological issues and that the work itself is not sufficiently theoretically informed. By tracing the emergence of new forms of consumer identity in their moments of intense articulation in the football

match, the sociology of football would undermine both these charges in a single coup. Football sociology would have to employ sociological theories of identity and post-Fordism at the highest level and would then be contributing to the wider discipline in important ways.

NOTES :

1 The new business class had risen up on the back of opportunities presented by the collapse of the post-War settlement ; namely, by the creation of new markets for new class formations.

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

In order to address the two central issues of the research - the development of the Premier League and the new consumption of football, I employed three principal methods: participant observation, interviews and documentary research.

(1) Participant Observation:

In order to analyse the transformation in the consumption of football, it was necessary to gain an understanding of the new means of consumption and the perception of the fans, who were most affected by these changes in the means of consumption. To that end, I carried out participant observation at Manchester United during the 1993-4 season, although I did attend games in the previous year and also maintained the contacts I had made in the 1993-4 season by attending home games in the 1994-5.

Manchester United was chosen as a site of research because as a single researcher it was only possible to attain the level of detailed knowledge which I required, by concentrating on one club. Manchester United was in the forefront of the move to a Premier League and to the new consumption of football ; the stadium was one of the first to be converted to all-seating after the Taylor Report.

Participant observation was chosen as a method in advance of a large scale survey for two principal reasons. Firstly, having studied social anthropology at undergraduate level, I was better qualified to use qualitative techniques. Furthermore, as a single researcher the scale of my survey would not have been especially impressive and, indeed, had my survey extended even into the hundreds (which it

would have to have been to be taken seriously) it would have been difficult for me to manage. As it was, I gained very close contact with over twenty fans at United, and made acquaintances with thirty more. My knowledge of the fans' understanding was consequently based on a reasonably large sample. Finally, my research was concerned (though not exclusively so) with a set of fans, whom I have termed 'the lads'. This fan group consists of youngish males between their late teens and forties who attend matches in all male groups. They have comprised the bulk of football supporters over the last thirty years and hooliganism has been a striking feature of their culture. It seemed logical to concentrate on 'the lads' as a fan group as they have been such an important feature of football since the 1960s. This seemed to be particularly the case since many of the transformations which constitute the Premier League (as a site of consumption) have been directed at reformulating, or even, rejecting the lads' style of support completely. The selection of participant observation as a technique to gain an insight into the fandom of 'the lads' was appropriate because 'the lads' have been consistently difficult to attract to surveys and focus groups. By 'becoming a fan' alongside the lads and thereby gaining their trust and building up a rapport with them, it was not only possible to *gain accurate knowledge of their fandom* but it was also probably the only way to gain any reliable understanding of them.

The shortcomings (and concomitant strength of participant observation) of the survey as a method is highlighted by the recent Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research's report for the Premier League (1994). This survey is thorough and throws up some interesting information (for instance, that 12.7 of the surveyed fans were female). However, the survey was seriously flawed by its under-representation of 'the lads', who still comprise an important element of any club's

support, despite attempts to discourage their attendance at some clubs. The questionnaire was distributed via official match day programmes. This method immediately discriminates against many of the lads, whom I discussed above in Chapter 11, do not buy the programmes. Furthermore, I would suggest (in the light of my experience and the evidence from other research) that the lads are the least likely of any fans to complete a questionnaire ¹.

The unreliability of the survey (which belies its apparent mathematical objectivity) because of its blindness toward the lads emerges in the Sir Norman Chester Centre's report. For instance, the survey reveals that Leeds has the least local support, with only 48.4 per cent of its support born in or near Leeds. Such a figure is surprising in the light of the acknowledged nation-wide support of Manchester United and to a lesser extent of Liverpool. However, the apparently anomalous figure at Leeds seems capable of explanation if we are aware of the nature of that club's support. Elland Road, Leeds' ground, is one of the more feared destinations for away supporters. The Leeds fans have for some years had a reputation for violence. This reputation has been developed because Leeds attracts a very high proportion of young male (and violent) fans to its ground. In the light of the constituency of Leeds's support, it is conceivable that the Sir Norman Chester Centre's survey may reflect not the fact that Leeds does not have a local support but that its support is predominantly young and male (i.e. it is made up of those individuals who are least likely to fill in a questionnaire in an official programme). Ironically, it may be that far from proving that Leeds has the least local support, the Sir Norman Chester Centre's survey may reveal that Leeds actually has the *most* local support. It is not inconceivable that the lads who populate Elland Road (and who do not by and large complete

questionnaires) are from the local areas and it is because Elland Road is the local focus of their identity that they are able to make it so intimidating for visitors. Fans, going direct to the ground, not drinking or attending alone, are likewise all likely to be over-represented in the Sir Norman Chester Centre's survey (see Ch 11).²

My criticisms of Sir Norman Chester Centre's survey are not intended merely as a justification for participant observation as a more reliable technique of sociological investigation (although they are that). The failure of survey techniques lies in the fact that they are undialectical. That is, they do not operate by re-examining concepts in the light of new knowledge. Instead the survey must necessarily impose a once and future classificatory scheme on the data which are consequently doomed to repeat this schema, whatever the data might actually be suggesting. The real crime of the survey is not then that it is limited or in error. All research is that to some extent, but the survey condemns itself to perpetual limitation and error. The Sir Norman Chester Centre's survey hides the significance of the lads and never offers any way by which this error might be obviated. *Participant observation avoids this problem, for, it is primarily a method which operates around the constant re-working of our own understandings in the light of new knowledge.*

My fieldwork began at the start of the 1993-4 season. I simply began attending all the games, home and away. I started to travel to away games on coaches organised by the two principal fanzines at Manchester United, *Red Issue* and *United We Stand*. I knew from the previous year attending some home games and two away games that these fanzines were principally written and read by the lads (see Ch 11) and that the coaches would be principally populated by the lads. In addition, in order to gain more direct contact with the lads, I wrote to both fanzine editors to ask if they

required any assistance. Andy Mitten, the editor of *United We Stand*, replied and I assisted him with a couple of issues. He was able to get me a ticket for the first game of the season, at Norwich, to which I travelled on the fanzine coaches, making contact with some fans. United was playing its first game in the European Cup in September against Honved in Budapest and Andy Mitten suggested I go with UF Tours, who were run by a well known United fan and with whom many other 'lads' were travelling. That trip involved a four day return coach journey and I was able to make several very good contacts. Out of these initial contacts, I was able to establish myself in the informal network of lads which operates around the football club. This informal network constituted the principal site of my fieldwork.

Although the main site of my fieldwork was the lads, I did make contact with other types of fan. In particular, by way of attending the meetings of the FSA throughout the 1992-3 and 1993-4 seasons, including the AGM in 1993, I was able to make contact with a very different network of fans from the lads. Above (see Ch 12) I have linked the FSA to 'new football writing' as a new fan group which has its own particular style of consuming football.

Finally, I was much less successful in contacting the third group of fans, whom I have termed 'new consumer fans' (see Ch 13) on account of their apparent satisfaction with the transformation of football in the 1990s. Following the technique of travelling to away games with the lads (which proved successful because it provided a number of hours in which to talk to the lads), I travelled to two away games with the official coaches, on the grounds that a very different (new consumer) fan travelled with the club. On one of these trips, I gave out a form to fans on the coach, asking whether they were interested in being interviewed for the research. I

got no replies and it became clear that in order to establish links with new consumer fans via the official coaches would require as much time as with the lads. I did not have that time and so had to accept that my account of the new consumer fans had to be more sketchy than my account of the lads and the 'new football writing'. I tried one other tactic to make contact with the new consumer fans. I went to the Cliff, where Manchester United trains, and where (especially during the holidays) many fans gather to watch the team. It was difficult to make contact with people at the Cliff but I obtained one interview from it. My sample of new consumer fans is, consequently, far from satisfactory but I include these fans for discussion since they are an important feature of the Premier League and may be usefully targeted as a future topic of research.

(2) Interviews

(a) Fans

After my fieldwork with the lads, I interviewed a selection of my contacts (principally those with whom I had attained the best rapport). This meant that the selection of lads tended to be those who were more respectable, although they knew the more criminally inclined lads who comprised part of United's support. The interviews were informal, although they were focussed on several central questions, and lasted for between half an hour to over an hour. Out of respect for the rapport I had built up, I had to be flexible about how and where I interviewed the lads. Some were interviewed at my flat, while it was necessary to go to others' houses. Others had to be interviewed in the pub (once in a group of two and once in a group of three). The same procedure was adopted for the 'new football writing' fandom and the

new consumer fans. The purpose of the interviews was to provide fans with an opportunity to express their views on the changes which have occurred in football in the 1990s. The interviews were taped and from these recordings I attempted to analyse the way the fans created their sense of identity around Manchester United and how this perception of themselves informed their views of the changes.

In all I interviewed twenty-five fans (although several others agreed to be interviewed but were subsequently too busy). The table below reveals the categories of the fans whom I interviewed.

TABLE 2 : THE FANS

NAME	SEX	OCCUPATION	FAN CATEGORY
Andy Mitten	Male	Student	Lads
Grant	Male	Unemployed	Lads
Mitch	Male	Student	Lads
Rob S	Male	Unemployed (ex-army)	Lads
Mick G	Male	Nightshift	Lads
Graham B	Male	Crane-driver	Lads
David G	Male	Taxi-driver	Lads
Steve P	Male	Technician with Plessey	Lads
John E	Male	Clerk, DHSS	Lads
Tony C	Male	Plumber	Lads
Jason C	Male	Trainee Accountant	Lads
Hugh G	Male	Administrator, FE	Lads *

Peter B	Male	Student	Lads
Andy W	Male	Student, ex-bank clerk	NFW
Mark G	Male	Official, Salford council	NFW
Debbie R	Female	Teacher	NFW
Philip Cornwall	Male	Editor <i>WSC</i>	NFW
Nick Hornby	Male	Writer	NFW
David W	Male	Rep for security firm at Manchester airport	NFW
Paul W	Male	Skilled Engineer	NFW *
Johnny Flacks	Male	Owns textile business	NFW
Neil L	Male	ex-Laboratory assistant, Ferodo	New consumer
Dale R	Female	Clerk, British Gas	New consumer *
Rose C	Female	Skilled worker, engineering company	New consumer *
Charlie B	Male	Administrator, textile company	New consumer *

* Denotes problematic characterisation : individual shows some defining features of other fan group.

Although I did not interview Steve D, a clerk in a warehousing company, I spent most of the 1993-4 season with him and so have included his comments in Chapter 11 and counted him as the fourteenth member of 'The Lads' in that chapter.

(b) Elites: Chairman, FA officials, television executives

The transformation of football in the 1990s was only possible insofar as those individuals involved in football had a vision of how they wanted to recreate the game

and the audience's consumption of it. Consequently, a central part of the research was to uncover these individuals' understandings of the problems which football faced in the 1980s and the transformations which they regarded as necessary and which they, to a great extent, effected in the 1990s with the development of the Premier League. In order to establish the elite's understandings of and role in the transformation of the 1990s, I wrote to these prominent individuals requesting them to be interviewed. The tables below shows which individuals I contacted, their positions and whether they were willing to be interviewed.

TABLE 3 : THE CHAIRMEN

NAME	CLUB	RESPONSE	DATE/LENGTH OF INTERVIEW
H. Ellis	Aston Villa	No reply	
D. Dein	Arsenal	No reply	
J. Walker	Blackburn Rovers	Refused	
K. Bates	Chelsea	Accept	10/10/94, 30 mins
R. Noades	Crystal Palace	No reply	
P. Johnson	Everton	No reply	
L. Silver	Leeds	No reply	
D. Moores	Liverpool	Refused	
P. Swales	Manchester City	No reply	
M. Edwards	Manchester United	Refused	
J. Hall	Newcastle United	No reply	
J. Dunnett *	Notts County	No reply	
F. Reacher	Nottingham Forest	No Reply	

R. Chase	Norwich	Accept	6/8/94, 60 mins
I. Stott	Oldham	Accept	21/6/94, 45 mins
R. Thompson	QPR	No reply	
D. Dooley	Sheffield United	Accept	17/8/94, 45 mins
D. Richards	Sheffield Wednesday	No reply	
G. Askham	Southampton	Accept but too busy in the end	
A. Sugar	Tottenham	No reply	
T. Brown	West Ham	Accept - interviewed Peter Storrie, managing director	25/7/94, 45 mins
S. Hammam	Wimbledon	Refuse	

* Jack Dunnett, the chairman of Notts County, was President of the League from 1981-6.

TABLE 4 : MISCELLANEOUS FOOTBALL ELITES

NAME	POSITION	RESPONSE	DATE/LENGTH INTEVIEW
J. Hill *	Chairman PFA, 1956-1961	Accept	13/3/94, 45 mins
G. Kelly	Secretary, FA	Refuse	
D. Macgregor	Commercial Manager, MUFC	Accept	19/8/94, 25 mins
K. Merrett	Secretary, MUFC	Refuse	
B. Moorhouse	Membership Secretary, MUFC	Accept	27/7/94, 30 mins
R. Parry	Chief Executive, The Premier League	Refuse	
T. Phillips	Commercial Manager, The Premier League	Refuse	

*Interviewed over telephone

TABLE 5 : MEDIA AND TELEVISION ELITES

NAME	POSITION	RESPONSE	DATE/LENGTH OF INTERVIEW
J. Bromley	Former Head of ITV Sport	Accept	23/6/94, 25 mins
G. Dyke	Head of LWT	No reply	
A. Fynn *	Advertising consultant, Saatchi and Saatchi	Accept	11/8/94, 30 mins
J. Martin	Head of Sport, BBC	No reply	
V. Wakeling	Head of Sport, BSkyB	Accept	24/5/94, 30 mins
H. Winter	Football Correspondent, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	Accept	16/8/94, 40 mins

*Interviewed over telephone³: also author of three books about the game, and especially its poor management and marketing.

(3) Documentary Research

Substantial documentary research was necessary in order to uncover the historical origins of the Premier League. Documentary research provided information

about events which eventually brought the League into existence (Football League meetings, television deals and disasters, for example) but it also crucially provided interpretations of those events, which subsequently informed policies and decisions about the reformation of football. It is hoped that the central importance of these interpretations is highlighted in the text. I used three types of documentary resources: the newspapers, books and fanzines.

(a) Newspapers

I used *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Financial Times* and *The Guardian* as sources of information. This selection was dictated by the availability of these newspapers on microfiche in accessible libraries. It is accepted that the fact that I did not make a systematic analysis of the tabloids does constitute a limitation of my research. That limitation is not critical, however, and is justified on the grounds of practicality: it would have simply been too expensive and time-consuming to make a survey of *The Sun* and *The Mirror* in the context of a three year PhD⁴. Furthermore, this limitation is compensated by the fact that I was able to obtain *The Sun's* and *The Mirror's* account of key events on particular dates (e.g. Hillsborough and the setting up of the Premier League). The newspapers were crucial in providing information on concrete events but they were also very useful in providing quotations from the chairmen. In the light of the difficulty of interviewing the chairmen, these quotations constituted more discursive material which could be analysed alongside my recordings of interviews.

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