

Other Scenes

Wilcock's London

John Wilcock

1968

The London *Times* reports sadly that Britain isn't yet equipped to "retaliate quickly" against an enemy who attacks with germ warfare. As long as nationalistic feelings prevail over humanitarian ones there'll always be this chess game with expendable lives by leaders who remain safely above it all...The U.S. Embassy has been replaced by the Hilton Hotel and the Playboy Club as top targets for stone-throwing anti-American demonstrators... A man who received a civil honor, the MBE, for "services to sport" (giving rent-free premises to an Olympic team) has been requested to return the award after being convicted (of perjury) in a court case: Establishing the principle, of course, that you're judged by your future activities rather than your past...

Infra-red binoculars equipped with two-way radio transmission (anyone equipped with another pair can be talked with as well as seen) have been devised by a military research group... Recent revival of an old anarchist paper, *The Black Dwarf* (50¢ from 7 Carlisle Street, London W.1) by Militant Pakistani student Tariq Ali and writer's agent Clive Goodwin has successfully enticed more than \$1,000 in donations from Establishment figures. Early issues are promising but a little solid and overly serious, geared to but one theme as the similar Peace News... British Hospital Journal says this country is becoming such a nation of form-fillers that sometimes it's necessary to fill in forms to apply for forms to apply for forms to fill in.

Visitors to rural resorts in Cornwall are being enticed into the cinemas with advertising such as, "The world explodes and plunges you headlong into a whirlpool of forbidden experiences you will never forget" and "Scenes never before allowed on the screen" to advertise a series of French, Danish and Swedish sex and nudist movies screened by the Duchy Cinema chain...

For \$6 weekly you can share a room in an English community living project at Gypsy Hill, 17 miles from London, whose director, Emmanuel Petrakis (15 Camden Hill Road, London S.E. 19) also heads the Sexual Emancipation Movement ("shared living and loving")... British phone system is advertising that it plans to become "the best in the world" but has a long way to go. A recent report revealed almost a third of calls go astray; operators take an average of about one minute to answer; some people must still go on waiting lists for phones. British Railways, on the other hand, has made giant strides: an imaginative logo, good food in Station restaurants, zippy advertising films and the sponsorship of the new hovercraft that crosses the Channel to France (20-odd miles) in half an hour.

Toughest new paper in London is *The Hustler* (\$4 annually from 194 Westbourne Park Road, London W. 11) peddled through the Notting Hill streets by beautifully robed spade chicks and Negro militants. Fifth issue this week, circulation already 5,000... Plastic "key" cards with secret numbers enable clients of London's Westminster Bank to get \$25 any hour of the day or night from special machines outside the bank's branches. American banks are planning to copy.

American congressmen, already overloaded with privileges that most of them abuse ("inspection trips" to Europe and Asia that turn into free vacations, paid secretarial jobs filled by wives etc.), are now to receive black diplomatic passports—so they won't have to line up with the common herd... "I smoke a lot of marijuana and am a com-

munist more or less, though an apolitical one, which is to say mystical communism if such exists” (Alan Ginsberg’s self-portrait in *Who’s Who*)...

New York’s quarterly *Avant-Garde* magazine has invited a couple of hundred celebrities to compose their own obituaries, offering an unusual insight into the way notables feel about themselves... “Objectivity is the supposed aim of newspapers but this is obviously impossible; therefore it is hypocritical of the *Times* to pretend that it has achieved it” (from Paul Weaver’s analysis of *The New York Times* in *New York* magazine. Scientology sounds about as interesting as any other brain-washing religion but that’s hardly grounds for any government refusing its adherents admission to the country... Writing in London’s weekly *American*, Harvey Matusow says the campaign to lure British tourists to the U.S. breaks down once the visitors meet with typical New York indifference and the near-impossibility of cashing sterling checks... The hysteria that results when “vandals” paint slogans (or their names) on monuments has resulted in burglar alarms being fitted to Stonehenge. If this attitude had existed thousands of years ago, of course, we wouldn’t have had cave paintings or other literary and pictorial graffiti of previous eras.

Current London pastime is making napalm in your sitting room. Straighten a coat hanger and fix it so that the closed door holds it in place projecting into the room. Prepare a thickly twisted strand of polythene (the stuff that’s wrapped, around your clothes when it comes back from the cleaners) so that it has knots in it every two or three inches. Hang this from the coathanger so that it hangs over a big bowl of water on the floor. Now completely darken the room and set fire to the dangling end. Watch and listen!

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