PAUL FARMER

AFTER THE MINERS' STRIKE

A39 AND CORNISH POLITICAL THEATRE VERSUS THATCHER'S BRITAIN

VOLUME 1

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Cover image: A39 in street theatre mode at Camborne Trevithick Day, 1985
Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

5. Touring *One & All!*

That first performance happened in what was also our rehearsal space in the Crypt Centre, as if the show had formed itself from extrusions of the stone walls and floor. The transition into public performance was to step forward into another level whilst still in our everyday surroundings. And this seemed analogous: A39 finding its material, its attitude, and its relationships in the everyday of our lives and offering it for an audience to judge the significance of our findings in their history and the stuff of their own contemporary lives. This was how we found our way to a theatre of modern Cornwall, not from the repertoire of the History of The Theatre with big teary-eyed sentimental Capitals, not in the history of art of any kind or any of the other assumptions and accoutrements of privilege, but in our lives on the council estate and cold Cornwall winter lets. We believed there was hope in the everyday people who were our neighbours and targets, whose parents and grandparents had survived and maintained the knowledge of all that past pain. Together we would redeem that history by unlocking it and using it to found hope in the belief that a better world could be made of this one.

That first performance at The Crypt was before a small audience of members and invitees. It was hard to assess its success in these circumstances. The predominant reaction seemed to be surprise at what we'd made. Or that we'd made anything. To continue this investigation, we would need to set out on tour.

Lucy, the administrator of the collective, had been busy contacting various groups with which we could claim some affinity. The Crypt Centre led us to other community initiatives under the aegis of the Bishop's Forum, Social Services, or the Youth Service. Lucy and Mark had been Labour Party members and we contacted local Labour groups, and anyone else we could think of who might arrange a show for us.

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While researching in the Royal Cornwall Museum, we had seen a poster from 1847 headed 'From the Mayor and Magistrates of Helston to the Mining and Labouring Classes'. It was effectively a reading of the Riot Act in visual aid form in the time of riots against food shortages that we dealt with in *One & All!* through the story of Constable Rosevear. I asked one of the staff if a copy was available to buy. Having seen my fascination with the poster manifested on every visit, he simply took it from its frame and photocopied it for me. The man was a people's hero. With the aid of Tippex and Letraset, the lingua franca of 1980s graphic design at the budget end of the market, we turned this into our master poster for the show (see Fig. 15).

Without a phone, postage stamps, phone boxes, and foot-slogging our posters round local shops were our promotional tools. In the times before the web and social media, people were prepared to work at communication, supported by nationalised state structures. I remember posting a letter in Playing Place to George Greene one Friday morning and him receiving it in Falmouth that afternoon. We could get phone messages through The Crypt. Slowly gigs began to assemble.

First, I think, was Hayle Labour Party, who organised a performance one evening at Bodriggy School, the primary in the council estate above the town. Again it went OK, but the interval was a pain. There was nowhere to go and nothing to do except mill about. Intervals are pointless without merchandise, even if it's just tea and coffee and a few saffron buns, and we didn't have the time or inclination to organise that. We hadn't done all this to become caterers, though it would have helped with our finances, especially as we felt we should keep our tickets cheap. To our surprise, there were members of 7:84 England in the audience. Goodness knows what they thought; we didn't ask, aware that these were early days and things weren't yet what they would come to be. Every aspect of everything we did was part of a constant experiment to discover what it meant to be a Cornish political theatre company, to be a revolutionary theatre company, to be a working-class theatre company, to avoid all assumptions of what theatre had to be. We wanted to discover the least it was so we could make it do the most work with the minimum of wasteful tradition, with the most intensity and efficacy; to cause people to fight for change in the real world. We wanted it to be a part of everyday discourse.

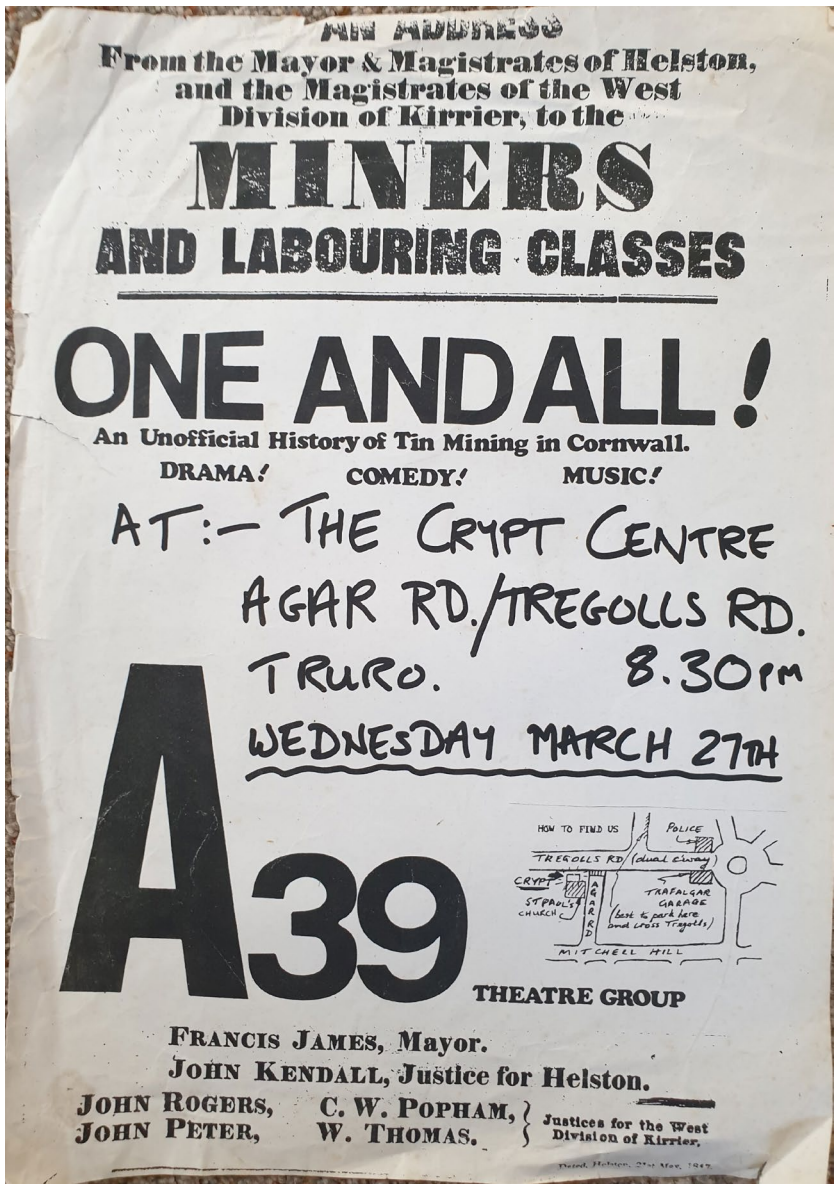

Fig. 15. *One & All!* poster for A39's first performance at The Crypt Centre, Truro, March 1985.

One aspect of this experiment was already demanding urgent attention. We had sought performance spaces that had their own controllable, aimable lighting because we did not have our own. Bodriggy School's hall had such lighting of a very basic kind, but the late-spring evening light streaming into the circular hall from unreachable windows up in the roof rendered them all but entirely ineffective. It is important in community venues to be able to take over the space. That moment when performance happens is easier to evoke when there are signs it is happening. Later, we learned to give other clues and could conjure it anywhere, but theatre lighting helps the human mind to focus its attention and jettison what is not intentional in the event. It is this psychological facet that explains why a successful piece of theatre can look dead and pathetic when it is filmed. We can imagine even when sitting on a tiny chair in our kids' school hall that we are sharing a space with a nineteenth-century woman who has lost her man to a mining disaster, or a man choking to death with pneumonoconiosis in the garden of a 1920s bungalow in Illogan Highway. We can ignore the children's paintings on the walls around us, the notice board with its inspirational motto, the accoutrements of school dining; but insert a lens and a screen and time between us and the enactment, and our ability to focus our attention and with it our creative imagination is taken from us and involuntarily delegated to the medium. We can watch it on our own television and block out the wallpaper alongside it and the framed photos of our dog and the noise of the street outside, but our mental and optical equipment relinquishes control of the image on the screen and allows its meanings to be dictated to us. This is why the art of film relies so heavily on framing: the close up, the two-shot, and on expert control of the depth of field, on the grade, or look, of the image—all so that the focus of our attention and the emotional resonance of the action can be precisely provided for us. But the equalised light of everyday auto video, with its tiny lens aperture allowing no focusing clue with regard to what is crucial and what is accidental, leaves us to notice all the wrong things. We don't suspend our disbelief.

Unfortunately, in this instance the circumstances of performance in the translucent light of West Cornwall in the all-too familiar context of a school, charming though Bodriggy is, left us stranded in a circumstance and an atmosphere I later came to associate with Theatre In Education (TIE): an excellent pathway to professional acting, no doubt, but to my

eye institutional and constrained. (For me it would come to seem that TIE was one of the ways—along with Equity contracts, Arts Council respectability, and a misguided quest for parity with 'proper' theatre—by which alternative and political theatre campaigned themselves into organisational vulnerability and out of existence.)

So despite our desire to oust the unnecessary in the self-referential ritual of theatre, we decided we needed to carry our own theatre lighting. Such discoveries were all part of the experiment but this one came with a substantial sinking feeling. This equipment was very expensive—far more expensive in real terms than it would be now, perhaps partly because it was seldom paid for by those buying it, but rather by public grants or institutional funding, which were not available to us. At that time, the nearest supplier was Stage Electrics in Exeter, and I was well aware of the deluxe status of these lamps and wires and stands and electronics because maintaining them had been one of my responsibilities in Miracle Theatre. Boxes of bulbs would arrive unescorted on the train three hours after ordering by phone to be collected from the train guard on Truro Station platform, invoice to follow by post. Such an unfamiliar world! Fast delivery in a strictly linear manner was one of the services offered by the nationalised railway in a very linear peninsula. I acquired a Stage Electrics catalogue, but no matter how hard I stared at it, the prices remained impossible or at the very least highly implausible. So we contacted the Cornwall Drama Association, the alliance of amateur dramatic societies, and visited their dark technical store in the car park of Redruth Community Centre, famously the kingdom of Mr Don Hill. After discussion of our practice and economic circumstances, he looked out for us two very large ancient round lamps with thick 'Fresnel' lenses and tall, heavy stands. To dim these lamps, there was a pair of huge rheostats mounted on a thick ply board, that inspired in the operator a constant fear of random electric shocks at 240 volts of Alternating Current. Two thick cables completed our technical department, to be operated by a well-insulated Lucy from a seat amongst the audience. Now we could be seen, albeit by a means more brutal even than Brecht's beloved Steel Blue gels. And it was all still transportable in Lucy's car, now substantially down on its springs.

We removed the interval, and with a tightening and editing process the running time of *One & All!* now came in at seventy-five minutes, on the 'always leave them wanting more' principle. When it comes to

live entertainment, most people like short. They are grateful for short. If they've hired a babysitter, they also get a chance to go to the pub, often with us.

We made a programme, twelve pages of A5 pasted-up from images photocopied at The Crypt with text typed on a manual typewriter, then cut and pasted together. It was intended to form a useful adjunct to the play and it included considerable content, including the ethos of the whole work:

> ... (W)hen an industry has dominated an area as tin once dominated Cornwall, its rises and falls must surely be as deeply felt in the culture and the character of the people who live there as in the landscape around them. The lives of the tinners were blasted every bit as much as the hillsides around Twelveheads. From this fact arose the main issue of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike in the British coalfields; and also the show *One & All!*[1]

There was a bibliography of source material for the show and useful statistics from the 1984 report of the Cornish Chamber of Mines, from which audience members could learn that the total production of tin concentrate by Cornish mines in 1984 was 5047 tonnes, with 7159 tonnes of zinc, 756 of copper, and 2.58 of silver; and that the industry directly employed 1521 people and brought £27m into the local economy. Production, they were informed, was the highest for sixty-nine years and the average wage for mineworkers was £205 per week—a very good wage indeed for Cornwall in the 1980s. This section concluded, 'Concern was also reported over the large reserves of tin currently held around the world: 250,000 tonnes, compared to an annual world production of 160,000 tonnes.' This 'concern', it turned out, was more than justified and would lead to significant reformulation of both the programme, the show, and thousands of people's lives within a matter of months. Meanwhile, this first version of the programme culminated in a section called 'The Future–RTZ and ITA'.

RTZ is Rio Tinto Zinc, the company that had come to dominate the Cornish industry—owning, through their subsidiary Carnon Consolidated, Wheal Jane, Mount Wellington, South Crofty, Wheal Pendarves, Wheal Maid, and a twenty per cent stake in Geevor. The

1 Paul Farmer and Mark Kilburn, *One & All! Programme*, 1st edn (Cornwall: A39, 1985), p. 3. Author's holdings.

section began with a quote from Sir Auckland Geddes at the 1937 AGM of Rio Tinto: 'Miners found guilty of trouble-making are court-martialled and shot.'

The ITA was the International Tin Agreement. We would all soon be hearing a great deal more about this.

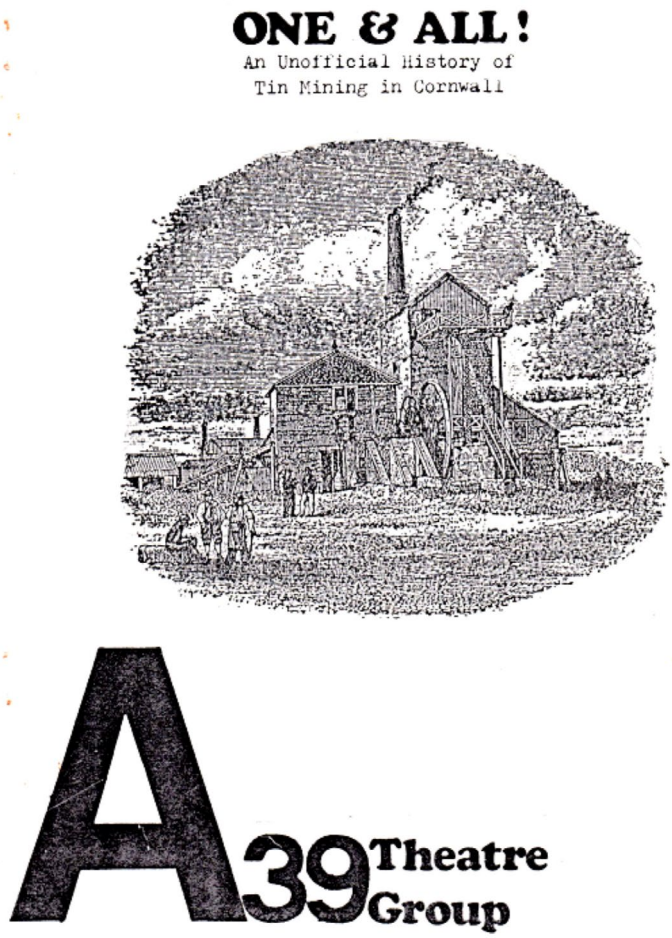

Fig 16. *One & All!* programme cover. Cut and paste, Letraset and photocopying: state of the art 1980s alternative publishing!

With practice came fluency—as we did more performances, we became better at delivering the show, which had considerable dynamics and yet was absolutely full of words. But it wasn't dull. Each section fed into the next. We used narration to cover screened costume changes so audiences were shown a large number of characters in a chronology of exploitation and decay while also enjoying the element of play in the play, the flaunting of the pretence. In village halls and schools and pubs and community centres, we presented this cocksure quick-fire conjuring act, a history that was also Cornish folklore transmogrified into drama in a way that did not accord with anything seen here before. Political theatre and cabaret turned out to work well in Cornwall, where you could say anything you liked as long as you were entertaining. There began to be some feeling of ownership of A39. After shows, in the pubs, audience members could come up and discuss things with us. People liked this. We might have foreign accents, but we took Cornwall deadly seriously—we believed in her experience, we argued her significance every night. We were proud to do it. In our research, we had discovered what A39 must be and had written the company into being Cornish no matter what anyone else might think. We never asked for permission to delve into Cornwall's deepest depths because we were implicated too.

We began to be approached by quiet people representing what is now known as the Cornish cultural movement. In those days they were just dismissed as 'nationalists', a useless word. If you so much as flew a Cross of St Piran, the beautiful Cornish flag, you were considered a dangerous lunatic by all the powers-that-be. Now it is everywhere, systematically invoked by those powers-that-be. A39 would come to perform at conferences and festivals dedicated to the discussion and display of the very essence of what Cornwall was and should become.

We had not anticipated this aspect of the A39 'hinterland', but we embraced it. The Cornish cultural movement is predicated on the conservation and development of what is of value and distinctive in the cultural ecology. It is a celebration of communities, of its people's relationships with work and with their part of the planet. These were too the causes for which the Miners' Strike had been fought. Our commitment to the movement was to continue the struggle for which A39 had been formed, here where it had not yet been defeated.

As socialists our duty was to protect and strengthen these intangibles–ideas and feelings and ways of being without monetary value but worth so much more than money. They must be cherished, because they were our clues to a better way to be; we would need them in a socialist future. Once they are gone, they are gone forever.

Outward signs of Cornish distinctiveness were not hard to spot. There was the language, Kernewek, the revival of which was an achievement of huge significance. Many were by no means unique: there were the brass bands like those of the Northern English mining communities, doomed there now by the defeat of the Strike; there were the male voice choirs shared with Brythonic-Celtic cousins in Wales; there were the ritual-festival events often attended by many thousands, like Flora Day in Helston, Padstow Oss, Hurling the Silver Ball, Crying the Neck, alongside the strength to restore lost celebrations like Golowan in Penzance or even to create new traditions like Trevithick Day in Camborne, or the Gorsedh itself. In Cornwall, Rugby Union and cricket were working class sports, rather than Association Football. Above all there were distinct qualities of community, which are hard to specify but together gave a feeling of reflexivity in everyday life I had never experienced in England: I remember feeling continually affirmed by the simplest encounters. A bizarre concomitant of this was that, in a population of over four hundred thousand,[2] everyone seemed to know everyone else, or at least their cousin or sister-in-law. How could that be? There were zero degrees of separation! Of course, this was illusory: my brother, in Cornwall for a visit and having witnessed various interactions, commented that he could not tell who I had known for some time and who I had just met. For all its grandeur and much-marketed otherness, perhaps the dimensions, plus the persistent historical awareness, of Cornwall encouraged a feeling of inclusivity, of belonging, of integration with a popular whole available to anyone prepared to committedly identify with her. But here we are in the nebulous–that is how quickly we find the need to grope after those intangibles simply in order to describe our lives here, or indeed anywhere else. And how vulnerable that makes the most significant aspects of our lives together.

2 Bernard Deacon, *Population Change in Cornwall Since 1801*, https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10036/19712/PopulationchangeinCornwallsince1801?sequence=1.

Cornwall was (and is increasingly) threatened at its very heart by the inequities of wealth. Cornish homes, indeed entire communities, could be simply bought out for their views, for their access to the sea, for their picturesque qualities, for their 'investment' value. Those from richer parts of the UK simply outbid the Cornish. Though this phenomenon was already recognised, and was named in *One & All!*, Cornwall in the 1980s was still protected to an extent by distance. It was a hard place to get to, and this was one of the reasons it felt radically different from England. West of Exeter the A30 had yet to be dualled and the journey around Dartmoor and into the great length of Cornwall was often a series of tailbacks winding out of sight across the hills. The sheer length of time it took to get here not only inhibited the purchase of holiday 'properties', it rendered it impractical to deliver to Cornwall and return to depots in the M5 corridor in a single tachometered day, discouraging the development of large supermarkets and allowing Cornwall's town centres still to be dominated by local shops–even Cornish chain stores. Cornwall felt like the island it nearly is. One of the first things I remember being told when I arrived was the Cornish definition of a peninsula: 'an island surrounded on one side by England'.

Things changed faster once the roads were upgraded. It was as though Cornwall was moved physically closer to Upcountry, which in terms of travel time it certainly was. Her larger town centres are now dominated by the same tedious chain stores as everywhere else, albeit interrupted by indigenous pasty outlets. And the second home owners swept in like a big tide. Though they meant no harm, they have depopulated their purchases by only coming sometimes. Their inevitable lack of exposure to and understanding of those intangibles of Cornish life meant that, where they prevailed, the culture effectively ceased to exist locally and was damaged generally. Progressively this could threaten everything: there is only so much of Cornwall, so many of the Cornish.

There was a need for education. Only by keeping the awareness of the culture of Cornwall available could others participate in it and avoid damaging it, in the old solution/problem inverse equivalence. By telling Cornwall's history, by retelling her lives, A39 was participating in her defence.

But in this regard, it wasn't all praise. At the comprehensive school in Camborne, a teacher who would later be a great Grand Bard of Gorsedh Kernow complained about our portrayal of the Bard who declaimed the *Ode to Wheal Jane*, at that stage still the penultimate item in the play. Our punk Bard, played by Mark, wore a dustbin liner *sable* with Cross of St Piran *ermine*. The headdress was a tea cosy *azure and or* with Cornish Chough *proper, displayed*. She believed we were demeaning the Gorsedh. For more than twenty years now I have been a Bard, and I have a real blue robe made of a fabric so artificial that it gives me electric shocks worthy of Don Hill's long-binned rheostats; and I have never mastered the headdress. I think there was something to be said for A39's version.

But this demonstrated a difference of viewpoint: we of course supported Gorsedh Kernow and assumed it to be sufficiently secure to enjoy being sent up; she felt it to be fragile enough to be existentially threatened by satire, needing to be caressed with reverence to present an ineffable front to an undependable public and a hostile, mocking State. This may have been oversensitive, but we supported the cultural endeavours of which we saw ourselves to be a part and her feelings deserved respect. There are many ways it is necessary to support the good guys and awareness of their vulnerabilities and sensitivities is one. The Gorsedh has no political power and it has influence only amongst those that respect it. It is not the Establishment. We needed to clarify the basis of our portrayals as well as going for laughs.

On into the summer, we continued to tour intermittently (Mark was also performing in a small tour of *Waiting for Godot* with Miracle Theatre). On at least one occasion some unannounced asset wrote a report for South West Arts—the Regional Arts Association that would function as an agency of Arts Council of Great Britain until 1990—dismissing our work and, because uninformed by any kind of communication, criticising us for failing to do things to which we were specifically ideologically and aesthetically opposed. Nevertheless, the professional arbiters needed our engagement for validation: in the peculiar inverse world of the management of the arts, people sitting in offices on very comfortable salaries are dependent for all this on the continuing activities of artists who are sometimes paid nothing at all. You cannot administer or curate or critique art that doesn't exist. The art industry is a prestigious superstructure tottering on foundations of

the impoverished and even despised. We, with a basis in proletarian politics, saw the entire edifice as parasitic like any other aspect of bourgeois exploitation. That kind of analysis is what we were for. It is true we were not tactful in expressing these views, but what future was there for tactful agitprop? And it would have been ridiculous to criticise the power superstructures and economic base of society in the abstract while ignoring the particulars of our own branch of our own industry.

The distance between A39 and South West Arts (SWA) was geographically one hundred miles, but in more abstract ways it was much further than this. SWA was based in Exeter and assumed a collusion in a concept of England that attached Cornwall as its most westerly appendage. We could not share this assumption and would never refer to Cornwall as a part of a 'South West Region', or to A39 as an English company. A trivial illustration of its cultural remoteness from what we were occurred one day when we crossed the border for some kind of conference at SWA's Gandy Street headquarters, no doubt held to convey some information without relevance to A39, which would never gain the support of its Theatre Department. In such circumstances it was very nice of us even to turn up, though this opinion did not seem to be shared. At the break, we went for a cup of tea in the café (we couldn't afford to eat there) but we couldn't see any sugar. On asking, we were shown a bowl of small brown shiny ovals. 'I'm not putting currants in my tea,' I said, such decadence according entirely with our preconceptions of the Upcountry bourgeois elite. Some aesthete later told us it must have been a bowl of crystallised sugar, which we had never seen in Cornwall and seems anyway to have been only a short-lived affectation even amidst the metropolitan.

In fairness, I should add some context with regard to South West Arts and its Theatre department in that time of all-pervading Thatcherism. To quote the leading British theatre critic Michael Billington, 'Under [Thatcher's] watch from 1979 to 1990 we saw a shift away from public subsidy to corporate sponsorship, a transformation of the Arts Council from an independent agency to an instrument of government, and the growth of a siege mentality in arts organisations.'[3] Robert Hewison specified the two mechanisms for achieving this: 'apply[ing] financial

3 Michael Billington, 'Margaret Thatcher Casts a Long Shadow over Theatre and the Arts', *The Guardian*, 8 Apr 2013.

pressure, in the name of reducing government spending, and us[ing] the power of appointment to ensure that institutions voluntarily bent to the government's will'.[4]

Consequently, according to Robert Leach:

> The Arts Council now became a tool of government policy, constantly trying to reduce subsidy and suggesting companies seek financial sponsorship from the private sector. [....] In 1983 the Council published The Glory of the Garden, outlining its new policy of devolving the funding and reorganising of theatres to Regional Arts Associations, which were now expected to concentrate on 'centres of excellence'. The policy led inexorably to a slow decline in theatre activity and quality.[5]

So the fact that we were here in Exeter rather than arguing our case with the Arts Council in London, with reference to UK-wide policies and discourses, was itself one symptom of Thatcherism; alongside that cited by Peter Cox OBE in his Chairman's Report for the 1984–85 SWA Annual Report, but referring to 1985–86, A39's first year of operation:

> We are in an unprecedented situation. For the first time in its history the Association has received in the current year an increase in its base grant well below the level of inflation, which implies a reduction of grant in real terms.[6]

This was the moment when the true nature of Thatcher's government was brought to bear on the regional arts, at the time it was being visited on miners in the shape of policemen's truncheons. The Chairman's Report in the 1985–86 Annual Report reflects this reality:

> [...] [O]ne is reluctant to claim any feeling of success at a time when so many arts organisations are fighting for their lives and feel inevitably disappointed at the limited support we are able to give them. In

4 Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus: England, Arts and Politics Since 1940* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 229. Quoted in Mathilde Bertrand, 'Cultural Battles: Margaret Thatcher, the Greater London Council and the British Community Arts Movement', *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 26.3 (2021). DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.8435.

5 Robert Leach, *An Illustrated History of British Theatre and Performance: Volume Two–From the Industrial Revolution to the Digital Age*, 1st edn (London: Routledge 2018), p. 697.

6 South West Arts, *29th Annual Report 1984–85* (Exeter: South West Arts, 1985), p. 2. I am indebted to Nick Carter, Senior Officer, Information Management at Arts Council England for providing copies of SWA reports.

> particular, we are disturbed by the real shortage of funds to support a growing multitude of interesting work.[7]

There was a positive aspect to this negative relationship: without grants, we could not be subject to the phenomenon becoming known as 'grant addiction'. In rejecting their judgements we had removed the arts establishment's power to remove us, as long as we could survive without their money. And we had discovered a way to get support from the unlikeliest source for a socialist theatre group: Margaret Thatcher's government, the primary teetering target for our exercises in cultural demolition.

As previously noted, the Thatcher government's ideological attack on its own people, in the form of organised labour and the communities that sustained it, had thrown millions of people out of work, the *One In Ten* of the UB40 hit song. Thatcher's horrible goblins came up with measures to try to massage the embarrassing figures downwards. (Subsequently her successors would not bother, but would massage the media instead; so unpleasant phenomena are not reported or are reported favourably: 'spin'. The transition to this state of affairs was in the 1980s only in its infancy, but I remember reading a *Guardian* editorial that stated, 'The government has won the argument over unemployment', in the same edition in which was recorded another huge rise in the number of people out of work, more tens of thousands of lives ruined.)

One of those statistical massagings in 1985 was the 'Enterprise Allowance Scheme'. You could set up your own 'business' and the government would pay each of you forty pounds a week for the first year of operation. This was significantly more than Unemployment Benefit or Supplementary Benefit, without the need to jump through the hoops of seeming to search for non-existent jobs. Now you could make your own non-existent jobs. It was a nod and a wink to the new reality of indefinite mass unemployment, largely amongst former manufacturing workers as Britain transitioned to a non-unionised 'service economy'—or as the US Ambassador reportedly described it to Thatcher herself, 'making a living by opening doors for each other'. Manufactured goods were now to be imported from places where wages were almost nothing at all, on the assumption that the world would be forever locked in colonial

7 South West Arts, *30th Annual Report 1985–86* (Exeter: South West Arts, 1986), p. 2.

relationships. The British working class would have to compete for jobs with 'Third World' labour, setting wages spiralling ever lower with no more uppity workers using union power to attain better lives. To ensure this, anti-union laws had been introduced worthy of the nineteenth century. They perdure to this day.

A39 of course did not see itself as an 'enterprise' organised by 'entrepreneurs'—the Thatcherite term to describe its adherents, with their embraced image of expensive double-breasted suits with shoulder pads and blow-dried hair, as hymned proudly yet risibly by the BBC Television series *Howard's Way*. Our alternative word for such people was 'arseholes'. But to refuse this income merely to avoid reducing the unemployment statistics seemed irrelevant.

So we attended an inaugural course where we expected to be initiated into the freemasonry of 'business', but were surprised to find it instead to be practical and mostly about the technicalities of achieving the necessary one thousand pounds in each of our bank counts that would qualify us for the scheme. There was even a sympathetic bank manager. Apparently, abstract grands could mysteriously manifest themselves—theoretical, untouchable, and temporary—just long enough for the relevant certification to occur. We did not know that in such deceptions and sleights of hand it was indeed entirely congruent with the indigenous British expression of capitalism. This was a contingent extension of the techniques of the 'Old Boy' network to those usually excluded from it. In fact, excluding those like us is pretty much what it is for.

Effectively, those who worked the Conservative con of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme managed to con the Cons. From a blatant attempt to meaninglessly massage the unemployment figures, thousands of people managed to make concrete their dreams, even if only for twelve months. People do not try to avoid work. They seek it out and find it day by day, minute by minute. It is probably a fault of humans that most are forever busy. If we all calmed down a bit, perhaps we wouldn't mess up the world so much. People took that forty pounds per week pittance and did what they wanted to do, became *pro tem* what they wanted to be—theatre workers or potters, interior decorators or builders, writers, musicians, carpenters. We were presumably meant to take the money and sit on our arses for the year de-statisticated. Instead, we did what the scheme pretended it wanted us to, often very inconveniently.

We set up an A39 bank account and each donated 25% of our payments each week to the company. With regular money coming in we set off—on a European tour!