Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1999

Images of Regeneration: film propaganda and the British slum clearance campaign, 1933–1938

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Housing Problems, the classic 1935 documentary on the British slums, has long been hailed as a cinematic benchmark and a 'template'[1] for the British documentary film movement founded by John Grierson. Documentary film maker and theorist, Paul Rotha, singled out *Housing Problems* as probably the first film to represent the stark reality of contemporary social problems without resort to cinematic artifice. 'Audiences were deeply moved by the film, its grim authenticity shocked them. It brought them, perhaps for the first time in the cinema, face to face with unpleasant facts. The term "realist" entered the documentary vocabulary.[2] The documentary's grim subject matter together with its innovative use of location filming, synchronous sound and direct address to camera was led to claims it could be seen as 'a television presentation, only long before television'.[3]

But while *Housing Problems* is undoubtedly an important film, its classic status has tended to marginalise other filmic representations of the housing question in Britain, documentaries produced outside the compass of Grierson's film movement. The reasons for this marginalisation are not difficult to find, right from its outset, the intellectual discourse on British documentary film was dominated by Grierson and his acolytes, other film makers and critics being dismissed as amateurish and inconsequential. Rachel Low typifies this elitist view dismissing *The Great Crusade* (1936), a government sponsored slum documentary, as 'clearly derivative in style and corrective in aim'[4], while *Housing Problems* was 'outstanding and indicated an entirely new direction for documentary'[5]. Redress was made to some extent in the 1970s and '80s with the rediscovery of the work of left wing film makers, such as the Workers Film and Photo League (WFPL), yet Grierson still holds a spell over many academics seeking to uncover the true meaning of the master's work.

The aim of this article is to dispel some of the lingering fascination with Griersonian representations of social reality by focusing attention on those other, largely neglected documentaries on the slums produced in the 1930s by the national government, local authorities and lobby groups. Just like *Housing Problems*, all these films sought to depict the grim reality of the slums and propagate a cohesive and integrated vision of Britain in the near future, a Britain where the 'problem' of the slums would be 'solved.' All these propaganda films claimed the very health of the nation was dependent on the eradication of the slums and the creation of new healthy environments which could nurture a new generation. Viewed in the context of these other slum films, *Housing Problems* offers no significantly different perspective or insight into the housing issue and in fact articulates the same basic themes of nationalism, social Darwinism, pastoralism and environmental determinism found in its lesser known contemporaries.

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The one area in which *Housing Problems*, produced and directed by Arthur Elton and Edgar Anstey, does distinguish itself however is in its conceit and deception. It is the only slum documentary of the mid-30s not to specifically acknowledge that in 1933, the national government had embarked on the largest, most intensive slum clearance campaign in British history aiming to rehouse 1.3 million slum dwellers by 1938. Viewers could be forgiven for thinking slum clearance and rehousing projects were the sole preserve of 'enlightened' local authorities and progressive capitalists and had nothing to do with the unprecedented exchequer subsidy available to local authorities or the national government's massive propaganda campaign championed by the monarchy and church to raise awareness of the slum issue. It is as if the self-styled anti-establishment Griersonians were determined not to give the Conservative dominated national government any credit for enlightened social policies.

The radical and oppositional film makers of the 1930s such as the WFPL, on the other hand, largely ignored the slum clearance issue, concentrating instead on matters of direct relevance to the working class such as unemployment, poor wages and job insecurity. When socialist film makers did tackle housing issues, they did so from a significantly different perspective than that offered by the Griersonians and other establishment propagandists, as we shall see towards the end of this paper.

By the end of the 1920s, it had become apparent that all government and philanthropic attempts to 'solve' the problem of the slums had failed. The housing question had formed a key part of the bourgeois discourse on public health since the 1840s when the threat of disease, decay and social discord posed by the inner city slums became too dangerous to ignore. As Friedrich Engels pointed out in 1887: 'capitalist rule cannot allow itself the pressure of creating epidemic diseases among the working class with impunity; the consequences fall back on it and the angel of death rages in its ranks as ruthlessly as in the ranks of the workers'[5]. Attempts to solve the housing question had focused on the forced closure of dwellings condemned as unfit for human habitation and the provision of new workers housing by local authorities and on a smaller scale by industrial philanthropists in the hope that slum dwellers would be 'filtered up' through the housing system. However, the slums continued to grow and by 1928 the number of people living in slums equalled or exceeded the number of slum dwellers during the First World War when the government promised to build 'homes fit for heroes.' In 1928 the government was forced to reconsider its approach and the National Housing and Town Planning Council established a special committee on slum clearance, chaired by the former head of Manchester's Housing Committee, E.D. Simon, which recommended a change of direction away from simple provision and filtering up towards a concerted programme of slum clearance. The committee's recommendations led to the 1930 (Greenwood) Housing Act which marked a turning point in the history of British slum clearance. The act created simplified bureaucratic procedures for clearance and compulsory land purchases and a new central government subsidy based on the number of people rehoused, procedures which were to form the basis of slum clearance efforts right up until the 1970s.

The financial crisis and acute economic depression of the early 1930s prevented the act from going fully into effect until 1933 when the Ministry of Health declared in its annual report that 'the present rate of progress (of slum clearance) is definitely too slow and that the time is opportune for an intensive and concerted effort to put an end to this national evil'[7]. The Ministry called on all local authorities to estimate their housing needs and draw up a five-year clearance plan for the complete eradication of the slums by 1938. This was to become known as the Great Slum Clearance Campaign.

It was not simply the availability of exchequer funding in 1933 that gave rise the Great Slum Clearance Campaign. A spate of books and articles by health workers, local medical officers, clerics and journalists in the late 1920s and early 1930s revealing the horrors of slum life had alarmed and mobilised middle class opinion to the point where slum clearance was elevated to the top of the political agenda as a matter of urgent national importance. As E.D. Simon, writing in a personal capacity, noted;

> The public demand for the abolition of the slums has persisted in waves of varying strength, alternating with waves of economy, till the present time. Now, in 1933, we are, as it happens, in the midst of the biggest wave of public opinion since 1920[8].

Middle class public opinion viewed the slums as a national disgrace, a threat to national health, security, order and morality, a threat that had to be dealt with urgently and with great moral conviction. The slums were seen as 'evil' and 'Godless' places, centres of filth, disease, sexual depravity and crime, a Sodom or Gomorrah, which would have to be eradicated, smote by the powerful hand of moral righteousness. The slum dwellers themselves would have to be saved and converted to the path of middle class respectability.

The government of the inter-war period had become not only more interventionist in social policy but also more sensitive to public opinion and more actively involved in the dissemination and justification of those policies. The national government's response to the threat to the physical and moral health of the nation posed by the slums and the public demands for action was a massive national campaign that would heal the wounds of national decline and social disorder and recreate a more cohesive, socially integrated and stronger state. In the perceived pluralist democracy of 1930s Britain however, cohesion and integration could only be achieved through persuasion, manipulation of public opinion and social engineering. The public as a whole had to be re-integrated into the system of values and meanings that constituted the dominant national ideology at the time. Film, as a means of mass communication, was seen by government, particularly Conservative led administrations, as a particularly effective in this regard. The vast majority of cinema audiences in the inter-war period were working class[9], a class that had to be reached if the process of social integration was to be successful. Thus while the 1927 Cinematograph Film Act rejected the idea of a state-run industry based on the Soviet model, it did establish a quota system for domestic films and aimed to build a strong independent film movement with discrete but effective links to government under a strict system of censorship.

Health propaganda was seen by the authorities as ideally suited to the film medium, first, because it reached the unhealthiest section of the community, the working class, and second, because the traditional medical curative practices of Nineteenth Century were giving way in the inter-war period to preventative medicine and health education. Film could be used to stress the importance of a clean, healthy environment, physical fitness, proper diet and dental care, all part of building a stronger, fitter and healthier national population.

The Ministry of Health rarely produced its own film propaganda in the 1930s, preferring to contract work out to professional film makers or devolve responsibility to semi-public bodies. However, the ministry always kept a close eye on what was being produced to ensure it conformed with aims of overall national health policy. The pre-eminent example of this approach was *The Great Crusade*, the film dismissed by Low as thoroughly inferior to its more famous contemporary, *Housing Problems*. Pro-

duced by Pathe Pictures in 1936, the film was written by Brandon Fleming with the assistance of J.B. Priestley although the screen play was subject to numerous revisions at the insistence of government and Conservative Party officials. Local authorities played a key role in providing housing statistics for the film while the chief technical consultant for the project was Alister MacDonald, the son of former prime minister Ramsey MacDonald and a well known architect at the time.

The film was not financed by the Ministry of Health or any other government department rather by concerned philanthropists. However correspondence in the British Pathe Library[10] from the film's production manager Fred Watts to potential financial backers made it perfectly clear the film was a high priority project not only the Ministry of Health but for the entire government and that 'prominent industrialists and public bodies.' should consider it their civic duty to contribute[11]. Pathe records show that many companies such as Rowntree, Sanderson Wallpaper and The International Bath Association did make generous contributions to the film's production and post-production but all expected corporate publicity or product placement in return. Interestingly, the British Commercial Gas Association, which was funding *Housing Problems* at the time declined to provide any financial backing for *The Great Crusade*[12].

The film's national health propaganda intent was explicitly revealed in Pathe's glossy publicity material produced to accompany the opening in April 1936. This material, held in the Pathe Library, is worthy of close examination because it not only voiced many of the dominant themes in the housing question discourse in the 1930s but helped frame the context in which audiences viewed the actual film, either directly or indirectly through film reviews in the press which were to a large extent simple rewrites of the publicity hand outs.

The publicity material focused on the urgent need to rescue children and babies from the slums, a constant theme in just about every book or article on the slums at the time. No matter if the author was an avowed environmental determinist such as Joan Conquest or a quasi-eugenicist like B.S. Townroe, all writers agreed that the manipulation of young children was the key to creating a healthier national population. The Pathe publicity brochure states for example that *The Great Crusade*, which features two children, Mollie and Lennie, will show what can be achieved through the provision of:

> well-designed, well-appointed and beautifully laid out flats and villas with tree-lined roads and vast health-giving open spaces. Places where the Mollies and Lennies of slumland can throw off the stigma which characterises the outcast, and progress slowly into the adolescent stage a credit to the nation ... The future belongs to the children of today. Who will refuse these mites the chance to live decent, clean lives? The march of progress depends on an A1 national population.

The above text and the film itself both reveal the fundamental notions of national social Darwinism which still held sway in the 1930s. National social Darwinism erroneously equated the race or the nation with an individual species, seeing other races as inherently different and therefore, to a greater or lesser extent, inferior, blacks and Jews for example were more inferior than say Germans. Natural selection within the race, according to this misreading of Darwinism, would lead to the development of a healthy and superior nation. Emphasis was therefore placed on normal, healthy procreation within the nuclear family unit and the elimination of unhealthy abnormal procreation.

FIG. 1. Frame Enlargement. Slum children in the street. *The Great Crusade*. Courtesy of British Pathé.

George Mosse notes that Darwinism was associated with the concept of 'degeneration' which emerged in the mid-Nineteenth Century as the antithesis of the national ideal of manliness [13]. Degeneration was caused by the moral and physical poison of certain social environments, environments which in terms of the national ideal were 'abnormal.' In the Britain of the 1930s, the slums were very much seen as abnormal and slum dwellers as both physically and morally degenerate. Shots of the slums and slum dwellers in *The Great Crusade* make this point explicitly. We are shown groups of sullen men in slum streets with hunched shoulders, yawning and listless, some with hands in pockets others nervously tapping in a condition reminiscent of shell shock victims from the First World War. These images, the commentary tells us, demonstrate 'the appalling physical effects of slum life, the slow undermining of the constitution, the dull hopelessness bred by filthy, verminous surroundings.' At this point one of the men walks away from his group and spits on to the pavement and then quickly looks up at a passer by and turns away as if in shame. The commentary interjects; 'Remember, none of these men knew they were being photographed,' suggesting just as the gesture of turning away did that the men would be too ashamed to be seen in this degenerate condition.

The crusade against the slums was, as the film and its publicity material make plain, based on the 'regeneration' of the nation through the provision of normal healthy social and physical environments. The rescue of children from the slums basic to the whole process. We see dirty slum children playing in the streets and on a pile of building rubble (Fig. 1) and are asked by the commentary; 'The children of today are the parents of the next generation, unless these breeding places of dirt and disease are swept away, what sort of generation will it be? Are we going to perpetuate a C3 race?'

The question is answered emphatically at the end of the film with a series of images of young children and babies in healthy, light and above all clean new surroundings (Fig. 2). The commentary states; 'if only for the sake of the children we must press on

FIG. 2. Frame Enlargement. Children and babies rescued from the slums. *The Great Crusade*. Courtesy of British Pathé.

... the future belongs to them. Let us see to it they are given the chance to become decent clean living human beings. A race marches forward on the feet of the children,' and the baby and toddler images fade out to the strains of *Land of Hope and Glory*.

The basic narrative structure of *The Great Crusade* is very much bound up with the concept of regeneration, focusing on the transition from abnormality to normality, rejection to acceptance of two children, Mollie and Lennie, as representatives of all slum children. Following a montage of pastoral English images (discussed in detail later) which opens the film, we are introduced to Mollie (12) and Lennie (about six) at their primary school. The voice over tells us 'Mollie and her little brother Lennie are always very happy at school, the class rooms are clean and light and there is always plenty of fresh air.' The situation at home is very different as we see after a tracking shot of Mollie and Lennie walking along inner city streets. Home is one of the worst slums of London, an environment typified by 'darkness and squalor.' We see a cramped interior, damp and crumbling, and air choked with soot, conditions, we are told, that are not even fit for cattle. The family, a single mother and four children only have one bed-room which they have to share with rats and other vermin. At night, we see Mollie putting her three younger siblings to bed (Fig. 3) then lie down on the floor with a coat as a cover. Mollie, being pubescent, could not be seen sharing the same bed as her siblings because such an image would go beyond the bounds of respectability and raise the spectre of incest. Incest and other forms of depraved sexual activity were often synonymous with overcrowding in the housing discourse of the 1930s. Joan Conquest, for example, devotes an entire chapter on overcrowding to tales of incest, homosexuality, prostitution, rape and child abuse[14]. And it was the fear of such depraved behaviour that was the driving force behind the 1935 overcrowding legislation which made it illegal for persons over ten years old, except married couples, to share a

FIG. 3. Frame Enlargement. Mollie putting her younger siblings to bed. *The Great Crusade*. BFI Stills, Posters and Designs.

bed-room with a member of the opposite sex. Again social Darwinism can be seen at work here in the preventing the reproduction of abnormal populations.

The bed-room scene was perhaps designed to demonstrate that even slum dwellers retained a degree of respectability but I would argue it was more likely tailored so as not to overly shock middle class viewers. The images of the slums in *The Great Crusade*, while intended to shock were carefully censored so as not to shock too much. Both the Minister of Health, Sir Kingsley Wood and Sir Albert Clavering, Organising Director of The Conservative and Unionist Films Association considered the original Brandon Fleming screen play to focus too much on the 'gloomy' slum environment and ordered revisions to emphasize new housing instead[15]. One of the scenes considered 'too gloomy' by Sir Albert and subsequently removed was of a large rat gnawing at rubbish by an old dustbin, described by the narrator as, 'A fine big fellow. The only opponent of our campaign. He likes things just as they are[16].

The bright future demanded by the ministry and the party was duly delivered in the final scenes of the film when we see Mollie and Lennie in their new council flat in Wandsworth where the process of regeneration is already at work. Their mother, a dowdy, slatternly woman in the slums is transformed into a smartly dressed, healthy and happy mother in the new home. To really hammer the point home, the mother tells the visiting housing official: 'It's much better than the old place, just like living in a new world.'

Housing Problems not only shares a similar narrative structure but avows the same basic themes of social Darwinism, degradation and regeneration found in its official government contemporary. The 15-minute film opens with an exposition of 'the problem' (slum housing and its degraded victims) followed by an explanation of 'the solution' (rehousing) and concluding with a demonstration of the effectiveness of

the solution (happy, healthy families in their new surroundings). This narrative structure allows the slums to be framed as a temporary, soluble phenomenon or as Brian Winston says, a 'problem moment' in the history of the nation, a moment that will pass[17]. The problem emerged, we are told at the outset by the film's primary definer, Councilman Lauder, (Chairman of Stepney Housing Committee, a middle class authority figure and designated 'expert' on the housing question) because of the poorly designed houses hastily erected to accommodate workers arriving from the countryside which have been neglected and left to decay to the point they have be shored up and are obviously beyond repair. He later reappears to reveal that the solution to this situation lies in slum clearance and rehousing in purpose built local authority accommodation. Lauder is telling the contemporary audience that Britain has not always been like this, the slums are but an unfortunate episode in our history which can be eradicated through the imposition of enlightened social policies.

This problem moment structure was used even more blatantly in earlier documentaries such as Grierson's *Industrial Britain* (1931) and Paul Rotha's *The Face of Britain* (1935) and was popular with the Griersonians, I would argue, because it allowed them to bring social problems to the screen in a depoliticised form devoid of any real social meaning. The narrative is only concerned with surface materiality, the bad physical environment of slum housing compared and contrasted with the good physical environment of new council housing. The working class 'stars' of *Housing Problems* whose address to camera was coached by Ruby Grierson only talk about the physical conditions of their slum housing and the new improved conditions of their council flats. Any other concerns they might have had, unemployment, poor wages, high rents, community dislocation are not discussed[18] The narrative ignores entirely the relations of land, capital and labour; issues of who owns the slums, why slum lords have allowed their premises to fall into neglect and why workers are forced to live in such conditions in the first place are not even hinted at let alone addressed directly.

The lack of real social meaning in *Housing Problems* is further emphasized by its characterisation of the working class not as a class at all but as individual victims. During the exposition, the individual respondents, framed in either mid-shot or medium close up and from a relatively high angle so that they appear small and weak, talk direct to camera about the over-crowded, damp and dangerous conditions they live in. Their anecdotes designed to shock and elicit our pity and sympathy for these 'poor suffering characters,' as Anstey himself described them[19]. The victimisation of the respondents is intensified by their personal pleas to the local authority to be rescued from the slums and placed in clean, new flats and their expressions of grateful contentment, echoing Mollie's mother, once rehoused. As with *The Great Crusade*, the film denies the possibility of class action improving the lives of workers, insisting instead that individual workers have to be saved from the slums by a caring and socially progressive government institution[20]. As Winston says, *Housing Problems is* 'the victim documentary *par excellence*[21].

Another key factor in the process of regeneration articulated in the slum clearance films of the 1930s was the pastoral ideal, a desire to return to a lost age of pre-industrial values before the dark menacing city and the slums contained therein. The bourgeoisie, threatened by the urban monster created by the age of industry and commerce sought comfort and reassurance in nature, all that was good and wholesome in the natural world or rather the English bucolic idyll which represented the natural world. The woodlands, lakes and the patchwork of fields and hedgerows created by the enclosures was considered natural and beautiful and the dark, smoke filled city artificial and ugly.

FIG. 4. Frame Enlargement. Mid-shot interior of new local authority housing. *Housing Problems*. BFI Stills, Posters and Designs.

English cities in the modern era were thought of as breeding grounds of immorality, criminality and physical degeneration. Cities destroyed man's rootedness with the English soil leading to alienation, moral decline and eventually a fall into abnormality. As Mosse has noted[22], the rural–urban duality was very much part of the distinction between normality and abnormality already defined during the late Nineteenth Century in medical and aesthetic terms.

Within this duality, nature and the nation became synonymous, images of nature were national images, an ideal summed up by Shakespeare's oft' quoted phrase; 'This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle, This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, This other Eden, demi-paradise, This fortress built by Nature ... This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England[23]. The loss of nature therefore, represented a loss of the nation, an erosion of the national fortress built by Nature to protect the English race.

The opening scenes of *The Great Crusade* are an evocation of timeless English natural beauty; shots of hills, lakes, a village set in a valley, a horse drawn plough, waterfalls, an oast house, cottages, country lanes and a windmill. This is the green and pleasant land of the English pastoral ideal but as the commentator tells us, this ideal is under threat. The process of rapid urbanisation has meant that now 'only a small proportion of people live in such lovely old houses in perfect surroundings.' The screen then fades to black and we are introduced for the first time to the unnatural slum world of Mollie and Lennie[24].

The pastoral ideal is also clearly evident in *Housing Problems* where the new model housing is designed to provide not just a clean and hygienic interior domestic environment but a total environment where nature's gifts of sunlight, fresh air, open spaces and gardens would transform the pitiful slum dwellers into clean living and healthy individ-

uals. As one of the former slum dwellers, Mrs Reddington, now safely ensconced in her new council flat tells us; 'I can open all the windows now and let all the nice fresh air in in the morning for my children now who are ever so nice and healthier and better.' Mrs Reddington's declaration accompanies one of the film's most significant images, (Fig. 4) an interior, medium close-up, focusing on an open window, light flooding in, curtains blowing gently in the breeze and a bunch of roses in a glass vase on a table adjacent to the window. The image not only demonstrates the curative power of fresh air and sunlight but that the pastoral ideal can even be incorporated into interior environments where high land costs prohibited the building of cottages with gardens. Many new council apartment blocks had communal lawns and flower beds as well as individual window boxes. Even when window boxes were not available, flowers could be placed inside, or as we can see from Fig. 4, images of flowers could be etched on to the net curtains and table cloth. It is also significant to note that the flowers in the vase are England's national flower, the rose. As Mosse has pointed out, the metaphor of the flower was very important in early Twentieth Century England, 'symbolizing home and hearth[25], and enhancing a sense of national identity.

The propaganda value of this image should not be underestimated. For an audience in 1930s England it would appear as a perfectly natural, realistic or common sense image summing up all that was right and proper about middle class domesticity. The occupant of this environment is however a working class mother who has now been integrated into and transformed by the bourgeois ideal and will hopefully bring her children up within that ideal. Yet by this very process of integration and transformation of the working class, the bourgeois ideal becomes amorphous and intangible, absorbed into what is perceived as the natural order. As Barthes writes:

> bourgeois norms are experienced as the evident laws of natural order—the further the bourgeois class propagates its representations, the more naturalized they become. The fact of the bourgeoisie becomes absorbed into an amorphous universe, whose sole inhabitant is Eternal Man, who is neither proletarian nor bourgeois[26].

As we have seen from both films, the rescue and regeneration of children was dependent on placing them in more natural surroundings with fresh air, sunlight and gardens. The concept of a 'garden city' which emerged in the late Nineteenth Century but really gathered national recognition in the 1920s and 1930s was seen as an ideal solution (land costs permitting) to the problem of urbanisation and the slums, putting nature back in the city and cleansing it of the evil that lurked therein. The garden city featured in *The Great Crusade* is New Earswick, the model village housing workers at the Rowntree factory near York[27], where we see 'happy, healthy and contented staff' walking or bicycling home to their cottages with gardens along tree lined streets bathed in sunlight. (The majority of new housing shots in *The Great Crusade* were deliberately over exposed to give the impression of sunlight.) A woman picks flowers in her garden and we see a close up of a garden path with roses growing along side it. Fred Watts' notes to his production crew in New Earswick clearly demonstrate the film makers' awareness of the potency of nature as a symbol of regeneration:

> streets are named after various trees:- Rowan Avenue, Lilac Grove. Mention that Mr Joseph (Rowntree) was a keen lover of nature and it was his idea. A pretty effect could be obtained by filming a spray of the tree in question and 'dissolving' through this into a shot of the street[28].

FIG. 5. Frame Enlargement. Close up of architect at drawing board. *The Great Crusade.* Courtesy of British Pathé.

In the final cut however a close up of the 'Crabtree Grove' street sign was followed by cut to a close up of an apple tree branch.

Despite the fulsome praise lavished on the work of philanthropic capitalists such as Joseph Rowntree, the film emphasizes that the slums are a national problem, stretching to all four corners of the land, and that a national effort is required to solve the problem. Just like the First World War, the crusade against the slums was a 'total war' which required the mobilisation of the entire nation. The national mobilisation is depicted in a three minute section opening with shots of architects and draftsman working at their drawing boards (Fig. 5) preparing plans for new housing which moves into a sequence showing men moving off unemployment benefit into the construction industry to the strains of *Happy Days are Here Again.* Next comes a brick quarry and a metal bath factory with hundreds of baths being turned out each day in manner reminiscent of how the production of shells was depicted in World War One propaganda films such as *A Day in the Life of a Munitions Worker* (War Office Cinema Committee, 1917). The bath which appears in just about every slum clearance film as a metaphor for cleanliness and health could be seen as performing the same role in the battle against the slums as shells did the First World War. Further shots show timber being cut for doors, the mass production of metal window frames, a paint factory and a wallpaper manufacturer, because as the narrator tells us; 'Today there is no reason why the family moving from the slums should not be given the opportunity of choosing their own colour schemes and decorative designs for the new home,' emphasizing the importance of natural beauty within the domestic environment as well as in housing, street and city design.

In reality, the majority of new homes completed during the 1930s housing boom were suburban dwellings for private sale to middle class and upwardly mobile working class families. Homes built specifically for the rehousing of slum dwellers formed only

a minor part of a wider process driven by land acquisition by industrial and financial capital, efficient and cheap industrial building techniques, cheap labour and low interest rate mortgages for first time home buyers. This economic reality is of course not addressed in either *The Great Crusade* or *Housing Problems* where the mechanics of salvation are equally modernist, industrial and technocratic, revealing an environmental determinist ideology and betraying the interests of the film's sponsor, the British Commercial Gas Association. The three and half minute section in the middle of the film describing the solution to the housing problem tells us that 'architects, engineers and other experts' have developed new apartment buildings using modern factory based construction techniques which meet the requirements for modern living. The commentary is accompanied by stills and panning shots of architectural models of apartment buildings, once again stressing the role of professionals and experts so often seen in Griersonian documentaries. The two projects singled out by the film, the Quarry Hill Estate in Leeds and Kensal Green were both prestige developments for the gas industry, having been designed specifically with the installation of gas appliances in mind, and were later featured heavily in other gas industry sponsored films such as *Kensal House* (1937). Just as Paul Rotha's *The Face of Britain*, sponsored by the Central Electricity Board, made the case for the electricity industry in building a better, cleaner Britain, so *Housing Problems* makes the same claim for the gas industry. Industry and capital are thus portrayed as essentially benign, caring, socially progressive and patriotic, seeking only to build a better, healthier future for the people of Britain[29].

This same 'health of the nation' ideology can be seen in the slum clearance propaganda films produced by local authorities in the 1930s, albeit transposed to a local level. Just as the national government became more actively involved in health and social welfare propaganda during the inter-war period, so local governments developed their own film propaganda units to address issues of social concern within their own jurisdiction. The most active local authorities were usually Labour or Independent Labour controlled councils in areas where health and welfare issues were high on the local political agenda such as inner London and Glasgow. The focus of these local propaganda films was not the health of the nation as such, but the health of the borough. Their prime concern was the creation of a good, natural and healthy environment and the abolition of local black spots, centres of degradation and degeneration.

This study will focus on the filmic representations of the housing question by two London boroughs, Kensington and Bermondsey, on the front line in the national war against the slums. Both boroughs had some of the worst housing in London and both were distinguished by their active and innovative use of the film medium in health propaganda.

Today, the Royal Borough of Kensington is not immediately associated with slum housing and even in the 1930s the most common image of the borough was one of grand town houses and luxurious apartment buildings. But in the early 1930s, Kensington was perhaps the most polarised borough in the country, dramatically divided along its west–east axis. According to a detailed survey of London slums in *The Architects' Journal* of October 1933, of the borough's nine wards, the five southern wards were 'upper class' and the four northern wards predominately working class, with the Golborne Ward ranking in the half-dozen most overcrowded wards in the whole of London[30]. Infant mortality rates in north Kensington were twice that of south Kensington, deaths by tuberculosis, two and half times higher, and cases of pneumonia, over five times higher[31].

The Architects' Journal survey estimated that the borough would need an additional 2500 houses to solve the most basic overcrowding problems and a total of 7500 houses if the slums were to be totally eradicated[32]. However, the five-year plan drawn up by the council after the 1933 Ministry of Health circular only made provision for seven clearance and rehousing schemes which would accommodate just over 3000 people. In the same year, the Kensington Housing Association was overwhelmed with applications for rehousing but lack of finance meant the association could only find new housing for about one third of its 'very urgent' cases[33]. The association's lack of funding and ever growing backlog of applications was the prime motivation for the production of its own propaganda film designed shock the wealthier denizens of south Kensington and decent people further afield into providing additional finance.

Kensington Calling, a silent, black and white, 35 mm film produced in 1935 is short (about 10 minutes running time) and very much to the point. The film opens with a scene similar to that envisaged in the original scenario of *The Great Crusade*, a map of the borough, with the blighted areas such as Southam Street, Golborne Gardens and Bosworth Road shaded in black, signifying the diseased centres of degeneration which have to be surgically removed. Then, again like *The Great Crusade*, there is an evocation of a lost age with prints of the Hippodrome and Notting Barns in 1830 and shots of the same location in 1930, showing the transformation from a light and open rural environment to a dense, dark urban environment.

Unlike *The Great Crusade*, however, the makers of *Kensington Calling* did not shirk from providing stark and shockingly realistic images of the slums. The film includes actuality shots of overcrowded interiors, women scrubbing floors, washing their children and clothes with only a basin filled with water fetched from a stand pipe. The constant battle against vermin is shown with shots of a cockroach, a close up of dead rat held up by tail, and an extreme close up of a silvery, slimy slug trail across a loaf of bread, images that still have the power to shock today and would certainly not have made it into *The Great Crusade* or *Housing Problems*. Furthermore, *Kensington Calling* comes a lot closer to directly addressing the root causes of the slums than either of the previous two films. A panning shot of terraced town houses lingers outside one dwelling and the inter-titles ask; 'can you guess how many persons live in this house? 10, 20, 30, 40–48!' We then see a diagram of sub-division, with one family per room, and arrows pointing out leaks in the roof and sewage pipes. No further analysis of why working families have to live in one room is offered but a least this crude schematic provides some explanation of the reality that lies behind simple surface representations of the slums.

The bulk of *Kensington Calling* however, follows many of the same themes we have seen in *Housing Problems* and *The Great Crusade*, rescuing children from slums, the provision of clean, light housing and the role of the architectural expert in planning a better future. After the initial slum shots, the inter-titles tell us; 'These areas are not only blots on the landscape. They deprive their inhabitants of a fair chance of health,' shots of nurse and sick baby and an exterior of Princess House Children's Hospital, 'or even life' a harrowing medium shot of a solemn carpenter finishing a small child's coffin (Fig. 6) Infant disease and mortality are thus represented as the stark reality of slum life, a representation of reality backed up by the statistics of the borough medical officer's 1931 report mentioned above. We see a shot of a woman and her two young children on park bench forced to wait outside because her night worker husband has to sleep at home, and are asked once again; 'Must the mothers of the next generation bring up children in the old conditions?' The bright alternative presented is very

FIG. 6. Video Digital Frame Enlargement. Child's coffin. *Kensington Calling*. BFI Stills, Posters and Designs.

familiar one. An exterior shot of Crossfield House, light, open spaces and individual gardens, with a happy family moving into new flat; 'Are all those rooms ours, Mummy?' a small child asks. We see more architectural plans for three and one bedroom flats, interior shots of a gas cooker, bath tub, storage cupboards and water heater, all icons of cleanliness, good nutrition and nuclear family contentment.

The film ends with a direct appeal for donations and loans to put the unemployed back to work and build houses 'and help erase these blots on the honour of our borough.' Here the national shame and disgrace of the slums discussed above is directly transposed on to the local level with nothing less than the 'honour' of the borough at stake in the war on the slums.

A year after the completion of *Kensington Calling*, the Kensington Labour Party in association with the builders unions commissioned another slum film, this time broadening its scope to look at slum clearance and rehousing work in the greater London area. *Housing Progress*, a silent black and white 16 mm documentary lasting 20 minutes, was made by Mathew Nathan, an independent film maker completely ignored by the Griersonians and too often relegated to only a footnote in documentary histories. Rachel Low, for example, in her previously cited two volume compilation of 1930s documentaries has 12 references to *Housing Problems*, five for *The Great Crusade* and just one for *Housing Progress*.

Unfortunately, I do not have the space here to redress this imbalance, and a detailed textual analysis of the film would be redundant because many of the film's themes, pastoralism, environmental determination and regeneration have been discussed in relation to previous films. *Housing Progress* also adopts many of the iconic images seen earlier, open windows with net curtains blowing softly in the breeze, close ups of flower

beds, interiors of a bath, a child being washed, close up of soap, children playing happily in a light, open courtyard, a little girl walking with a bunch of flowers.

What distinguishes Nathan's work is its lack of sentimentality and emotive appeal to national sensibilities. It is direct and didactic exposition of the housing situation in London and does not paint an overly rosy picture of the future. It stresses to far greater degree the need for careful town planning and demonstrates a much more sophisticated grasp of socio-economic and spatial processes than either *The Great Crusade* or *Housing Problems*. Planning in *Housing Progress* is not the sole preserve of designated bourgeois experts who know best but a tool by which the people, through their representatives in local government can prevent the kind of chaotic urban development that caused the slums, overcrowding and congestion in the first place.

The inter-titles tell us that the solution proposed in *The Great Crusade* and *Housing Problems*, namely the simple provision of apartment buildings in inner city areas is not the be all and end all of the housing question. 'The building of many storied blocks of flats, when it is done piece meal, creates high densities and will result in congestion, traffic problems and the obstruction of light and air.' The development of suburban estates is suggested but again we are warned against creating dormitory towns, what is needed, we are told, is a comprehensive planning process that will lead to the; 'decentralisation of industry and creation of planned garden cities with social amenities.' The final message, just as with *Kensington Calling* is hopeful but far from upbeat. The inter-titles state; 'The future development of satellite towns cannot be left to individual effort ...' and, heralding the comprehensive urban planning of the post-war era, asks will others follow the lead of progressive authorities?

Bermondsey, in contrast to Kensington, has long had a reputation for poor working class housing, urban blight and ill-health. In 1931, the borough medical officer described the housing situation thus;

> Most of the property in the borough is between 70 and 150 years old, and a goodly proportion is frankly worn out, irreparable and scarcely habitable. I suppose that the prime defect in most cases is dampness, followed closely by darkness and inadequate flow of air both inside and around the houses. Bad original design and the decrepitude of age, complete the picture[34].

This recognition of reality led to Bermondsey becoming one of the first London boroughs to become actively involved in environmentalist urban regeneration and later with the creation of the Health Propaganda Department in 1924 to lead other local authorities in the production of filmic health propaganda. During the 1920s and 1930s, the department screened health education films throughout the borough on a twice weekly basis covering such themes as tuberculosis, dental care, the provision of electricity and electrical domestic appliances such as vacuum cleaners and cookers to enhance a clean and healthy domestic environment. Slum clearance was featured prominently in the department's films as part of a wider beautification campaign pioneered by Ada Salter (wife of the medical officer Dr Alfred Salter) who was elected mayor in 1922. Trees were planted on streets, public gardens were built and emphasis was placed on street cleaning and refuse collection but actual slum clearance and rehousing was sporadic and ineffectual in dealing with the high proportion of people living in unfit or overcrowded housing. *The Architects' Journal* survey estimated in 1933 that 6000 additional houses were needed, the council's 10-year plan from 1930 to 1940 only made provision for the rehousing of 10 000 people.

Lack of finance was the prime reason for the failure to rehouse the majority of the

population but a contributory factor was the diversion of funds into obscure health projects which reflected the contemporary scientific and medical pre-occupation with the curative powers of sunlight and fresh air and a more traditional pastoral ideology focusing on 'natural' rural environments as a health alternative to dark, damp and airless urban environments. The borough for example was the only local authority in the country to fund a solarium to combat the threat of tuberculosis and loan bed shelters to consumptives to allow them to sleep in the open air[35]. The council also encouraged and sponsored local residents to spend their summers picking hops in the curative fresh air and sunlight of rural Kent. The council's 1930 film '*Oppin*, opens with shots of dark and airless slums followed by a split screen with a little girl day-dreaming on the left, and on the right same girl hop picking with her mother. The film acknowledges that the work is poorly paid, back breaking work[36] but insists that even exploitation by rural capital is better than being stuck in a dark and unhygienic slum environment. This theme, echoed by Glasgow City Council in its rural holiday programme for slum children, demonstrates just how pervasive the pastoral ideal was in the 1930s when even self-proclaimed socialist councils bought into the myth of the rural idyll.

What is not represented in propaganda is of just as much importance as what is represented. Being 'economical' with the truth and censoring information to enhance a particular representation of reality is a well established and favoured technique of politicians and other professional propagandists. As we saw in *The Great Crusade*, images of the slums deemed too dark and depressing were cut in favour of light and sunny images of new housing, in order to convey a positive and optimistic message. All references to housing projects in other countries were removed in order to stress the national character of the slum clearance campaign. In *Housing Problems*, the role of the Conservative dominated national government in slum clearance was studiously ignored and the working class respondents were only allowed to discuss the physical environment of their old and new housing, any references to other issues of working class concern were excluded. Both films ignored the relations of land, capital and labour which had created the slums and kept working class families in poor housing because to acknowledge such relations would be to negate the central message of the films which was that the housing question could be solved.

From a socialist oppositional perspective, slum clearance was at best irrelevant, at worst dangerous because it sought to integrate the proletariat into bourgeois society without addressing the fundamental issues of capital and labour relations. However, the use of propaganda to directly oppose the national slum clearance campaign was fraught with difficulties. The working class was not inherently oppositional, rather, to use Raymond Williams' terminology, it was an alternative variant of the dominant effective culture[37]. From a working class perspective, the provision of better housing was not something to be refused on the grounds of political ideology. A family living in rat infested squalor would take a lot of convincing that it was not really in their interests to move to a new, clean and light apartment courtesy of the local council.

Left-wing film makers such as those involved with *Kino*, the (Workers') Film and Photo League, and the Socialist Film Council, perhaps realising the problems involved in tackling slum clearance from a socialist perspective largely chose to ignore the subject. In May 1936, the Kensington Labour Party had asked *Kino* to produce its slum film but, as we saw earlier, the project was eventually passed on to the non-aligned film maker, Mathew Nathan. Rather than address slum clearance, left-wing film makers focused first on issues of direct relevance to the working class such as unemployment,

the Unemployment Assistance Board, industrial action, worker and union solidarity, and second, on issues relating to Comintern directives on the Popular Front such as the struggle against fascism in Britain and the Spanish Civil War.

Although the national slum clearance campaign was ignored by the left, housing issues were occasionally addressed but always from a radically different perspective to that seen in mainstream slum clearance films. Two films, *Jubilee* (North London Film Society, 1935) and *Construction* (Alf Garrard, Film and Photo League, 1935) will be examined here but other films also touched on housing issues to a greater or lesser extent. *Tenants in Revolt* (British Film Unit, 1939) dealt with the east London rent strikes of 1939, *Liverpool—Gateway to Empire* (Merseyside Workers' Film Society, 1933) contrasted the marvels of Empire with working class living conditions in Liverpool, and *Peace and Plenty* (Progressive Film Institute, 1939) revealed some of the wealthy members of Chamberlain's cabinet to be slum lords.

Jubilee subverts the symbols of national pride by contrasting them with the stark reality of working class life and claims the only progress being made in Britain is not in social improvement but in re-armament and progress towards war. The film, made during the silver jubilee celebrations of King George V, opens with long shots of east London housing festooned with flags, crowds lining the procession route, police out in force, and the king and queen in an open top carriage. Then, in a brilliant piece of agitprop editing, the film cuts abruptly from cheering crowds, to a close up of a film poster for *The Age of Innocence*, and then back to a long shot of newsreel cameras recording the arrival of the king and queen at a reception. A rapid sequence of inter-titles and images then rams home the film's central message. 'The national government celebrates—25 years of progress' shots of over crowded, dirty and dilapidated slum housing and close up of a hand reaching out from behind fence. 'Progress ...?' shots of dole queues and a close up of a 'no hands wanted' poster. 'Progress ...?' shots of disabled war veterans and a close up of an army recruitment poster. 'Progress—towards war!' Tracking shot of a military parade through the streets inter-cut with banners proclaiming 'Long live the King.' 'Progress.' Long shots of naval ships and military aircraft in action.

While *Jubilee* examined housing in the context of the nation state, *Construction* approached the subject directly from the perspective of construction workers. *Construction* was one of the few left wing films of the 1930s actually to have been produced by workers and union activists. Ironically, it was also the first film to be released after the Film and Photo League dropped the 'Workers' from its title in December 1935 in deference to the Comintern's new Popular Front policy. The narrative centres on a re-enactment of a nine-day strike in October 1934 by workers at the Exeter House building site in Putney over the sacking of a labourers' steward. After the workers down tools and send a deputation to the bosses, the steward is eventually re-instated, an event represented in the film as a great victory for rank and file union activity; 'Carry on lads we've won' the inter-titles say as the labourers return to work. 'Unity Wins.'

The narrative argues, in a series of crudely edited images, that the only way workers can improve their living conditions is through being paid a decent wage for their labour and the only way to achieve that wage is through strong and unified trade union action. We see workers on site queuing to collect their pay and a close up of one worker's a pay slip which reveals his reward for a 44-hour week to be only £2-12-6, considerably less than the average semi-skilled labour rate in 1935. A long shot of the workers walking home through muddy streets to their dark slum housing is followed by the inter-title; 'Only 100% Trade Union will improve our conditions.'

The film was shot by the carpenter and amateur film maker, Alf Garrard, covertly using a hand held 16 mm camera to film both actuality shots of building work in progress and the workers' re-enactment of the strike. As a result, many shots are grainy or out of focus and the camera sometimes suddenly jerks away from its subject. This is exactly the kind of amateurish film making derided by the Griersonians but I would argue it is precisely the film's amateurish quality which makes it so effective. The film has a marvelously subversive feel to it and its very disregard for the professional standards of film-making can be seen as a rejection of bourgeois aesthetics in favour of a genuine working class perspective.

The conscious decision to make a slum clearance propaganda film in the Britain of the 1930s involved a tacit, often unconscious, acceptance of and desire to propagate the dominant effective culture. Official government propaganda, Griersonian realism and local documentaries on slum clearance may have differed in specifics but, as we have seen, several fundamental themes were common to all these specific representations. Of all these fundamentals, the nation state was the key. The main aim of slum clearance was the strengthening of the nation state through the production of a healthy, morally upright and socially cohesive population. This aim reflected the dominant national social Darwinist and environmental determinist concerns of the period, the belief that degenerate populations could be regenerated by placing them in the correct environment. The pastoral ideal, the harking back to a mythical lost age, was a vital component of this national regeneration. The creation of a natural, healthy environment, ironically achieved through the utilisation of modern technology and scientific planning, could once again restore England to its former glory.

A strong nation state needed to be united and socially cohesive. Difference and disunity was seen as a threat to national strength and security and as such, abnormality could not be tolerated. Slum clearance reflected this intolerance although it was often cloaked in the discourse of paternalism as the publicity material for *The Great Crusade* showed in its expression of the desire to help the 'Mollies and Lennies of slumland throw off the stigma which characterises the outcast, and progress slowly into the adolescent stage a credit to the nation.' This desire for social cohesion, the creation of Eternal Man, was basic to the bourgeois solution to the housing question and was reflected not only in the propaganda films of the 1930s but in the wider discourse on the health of the nation dating back to the mid-19th Century.

This bourgeois solution, a technocratic solution to a temporary problem, naturally ignored the relations of capital, labour and land which, from a Marxist or oppositional perspective, were the key to the continued existence of the slums in a mature capitalist society. For genuinely oppositional film makers who recognized those relations, slum clearance was a non-issue, at a best an irrelevance, at worst a threat to working class unity. For Alf Garrard and his comrades at the Exeter House building site, decent wages and union solidarity came before the building of new housing. From a socialist worker's perspective, there was absolutely no point in providing nice, clean and airy apartments if their intended occupants were still subject to the same system of exploitation and repression that had created the slum dwellings they would be moving out from. It is a perspective given credence by the fact that many of the buildings erected in the 1930s as part of the great crusade to totally eradicate the slums in a five year period, were in later decades to become slums themselves.

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NOTES

[1] B. Winston, *Claiming the Real; the documentary film revisited* (London, 1995), p. 43.

[2] P. Rotha, *Documentary Film; The use of the film medium to interpret creatively and in social terms the life of the people as it exists in reality*, Third Edition (London, 1952), pp. 195–196.

[3] Arthur Elton, quoted in E. Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of the British Documentary; The story of the film movement founded by John Grierson* (Berkeley, 1975), p. 62.

[4] R. Low, *Films of Comment and Persuasion of the 1930s* (London, 1979), p. 159.

[5] R. Low, *Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s* (London, 1979), p. 91.

[6] F. Engels, *The Housing Question* (London, 1887), p. 43.

[7] Ministry of Health, 14th Annual Report, 1932–33, Cmd. 4372, HMSO, 1933. p. 87. Quoted in J. English, R. Madigan and P. Norman, Slum Clearance; *The Social and Administrative Context in England and Wales* (London, 1976).

[8] E. Simon, *The Anti-Slum Campaign* (London, 1933), p. 4. Other books and articles of the period on the slums included; J. Conquest. *The Naked Truth; Shocking Revelations about the Slums by an ex-Nursing Sister* (London, 1933). B. Townroe, *The Slum Problem* (London, 1928) D. Morse-Boycott, *Ten Years in a London Slum; Being the adventures of a Clerical Micawber* (London, 1930). E. Maxwell-Fry, Slum and the Land, *The Architects' Journal*, 26 October 1933, pp. 550–551.

[9] J. Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace; Cinema and Society in Britain 1930–1939* (London 1984), pp. 12–15.

[10] British Pathe PLC, Pinewood Studios, Pinewood Road, Iver, Bucks SL0 0NH, United Kingdom. The library (vault no. N8–22C5) includes exhaustive correspondence to and from the *Great Crusade* production team, draft and revised screen plays, minutes of production meetings, production notes, publicity material and newspaper reviews of the film.

[11] Correspondence from F. Watts, 9 July 1934, p. 2. Pathe Library, Vault no. N8–22C5.

[12] Letter from T. Coghlin, BCGA Publicity Officer to F. Watts, 24 September, 1934. Pathe Library, Vault no.N8–22C5.

[13] G. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality; Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison, 1985), p. 34.

[14] J. Conquest (1933), pp. 55–67.

[15] Correspondence from Albert Clavering (3 August 1935) and Geoffry (sic) Shakespeare (23 July 1935) to W. Gell. Pathe Library, Vault no. N8–22C5.

[16] Original Brandon Fleming scenario. Pathe Library, Vault no. N8–22C5.

[17] B. Winston, *Claiming the Real*, p. 42.

[18] The producers claimed *Housing Problems* marked the first time ordinary people were allowed to speak in their own words but prior to the film's release, the BBC's radio documentary unit had made several features in 1934 including a programme on the slums in which slum dwellers spoke directly of their lives and experiences.

[19] Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of the British Documentary*, p. 63.

[20] The Griersonians claimed to be great admirers of the work of the Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein, but Eisenstein's technique of eliciting audience identification and allegiance with the proletariat against the bourgeoisie was conspicuously ignored by the Griersonians.

[21] B. Winston, *Claiming the Real*, p. 43.

[22] G. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, p. 32.

[23] W. Shakespeare, *Richard II* act 2, sc. 1, 1. 40.

[24] An earlier screen play, rejected by J.B. Priestley, stressed the medical duality of normality–abnormality, health and disease, noted by Mosse. The film would have opened with a map of Britain showing slum black spots, the camera would pan back to show a surgeon and nurse looking over the map. The voice over says: 'think of this country as a patient suffering from a terrible disease. That disease is the slums. There is only one cure, the surgeon's knife.' Cut to close up of the 'chief surgeon,' the then Minister of Health, Sir Hilton Young making an address on the slum problem to the nation.

[25] G. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, pp. 119–120.

[26] R. Barthes, *Mythologies* (London, 1993), p. 140.

[27] The inclusion of New Earswick was the result of the £500 paid by Rowntree to Pathe and the final representation of the village was subject to significant input from Rowntrees. Correspondence in the Pathe Library dating from 1933 to 1936 reveals a considerable deference on the part of Pathe towards its principle corporate sponsor.

[28] Pathe Library, Vault no. N8–22C5.

[29] The national character of the slum clearance campaign was further emphasized by the exclusion at the insistence of Sir Albert Clavering (in a letter to W.J. Gell of 1 August 1935) of all references to rehousing projects in other European countries such as Germany and Austria, mentioned in the original screenplay.

[30] P. Massey, London Slum, *The Architects' Journal*, 26 October 1933, p. 538.

[31] Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Kensington, 1931.

[32] It could be argued that the writers' estimates were inflated simply because of the architectural profession's vested interest in rehousing as many people as possible.

[33] Under the association's classification system, 'very urgent' cases included rooms condemned as unfit for human habitation, bedrooms shared by boys and girls over ten or having less than 300 cubic feet of air per person, etc.

[34] Annual Report of the Borough Medical Officer of Health for Bermondsey, 1931. Quoted in *The Architects' Journal*, 26 October 1933.

[35] Bermondsey Borough Council's obsession with the eradication of tuberculosis reflected a radical shift in the European bourgeois perception of the disease in the 1910s, away from heroic romantic suffering toward a degenerate model equated by the physician K.E. Ranke in 1917 to syphilis.

[36] According to statistics quoted in the film, hop picking costs only accounted for about £3 per acre out of a total cost to the farmer of £168 per acre.

[37] R. Williams, Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory, *New Left Review*, No. 82, 1973, p. 9.

Select Filmography

Construction (Alf Garrard, FPL, 1935) 16 mm.
A Day in the Life of a Munitions Worker (War Office Cinema Cmte, 1917) 35 mm.
The Face of Britain (Paul Rotha, 1935) 35 mm.
The Great Crusade; the story of a million homes (Pathé, 1936) 35 mm.
Housing Problems (Elton and Anstey, 1935) 35 mm.
Housing Progress (Mathew Nathan, 1937) 16 mm.
Industrial Britain (Flaherty and Grierson, 1931) 35 mm.
Jubilee (North London Film Society, 1935) 35 mm.
Kensington Calling (Kensington Housing Trust, 1935) 35 mm.
Liverpool—Gateway of Empire (Merseyside Workers Film Society, 1933) 16 mm.
'Oppin (Bermondsey Borough Council, Health Propaganda Department, 1930) 16 mm.
Some Activities of the Bermondsey Borough Council (Bermondsey Borough Council, Health Propaganda Department, 1931) 35 mm.
Tenants in Revolt (British Film Unit, Kino, 1939) 16 mm.

Select Videography

The British Documentary Film Movement Arena for BBC Television (Gavin Miller, 1982) 28 mins.
Sadness and Gladness Flashback Series for Channel Four (Victoria Wegg-Prosser, 1984) 25 mins.
Workers Films of the Thirties (Victoria Wegg-Prosser, 1981) 40 mins.

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