

One black Friday: another look at the Queen Street Riot

Tony Mitchell

In the crowd nobody commands by right, and in the crowd no new strings of command are formed but all of the old ones are got rid of for the time being ... it is not the fragility of objects which attracts crowd violence (the crowd is not brutal), but rather the noise of broken glass, which represents 'fresh life'; windows and doors are broken by the crowd as 'boundaries', obstacles to growth (McClelland 301, 307).

People started throwing bottles at the stage and soon there were bottles everywhere, smashing on the concrete of Aotea Square, all around us. It rained bottles. My friends and I had moved over to near the old Information Centre to try and protect ourselves from the glass missiles. It had huge plate glass windows and this massive angry looking guy picked up one of those old wire rubbish bins and threw it at the window. I was so excited and amazed at this incredible rebellion that I must have been staring with my mouth wide open! The window bowed in and bounced the rubbish bin back. I realised that I was disappointed and that I had actually wanted to see the window smash. The guy picked the bin up again and threw it really hard. The window smashed. It cascaded down like a glass waterfall. It was a stunning effect. Crowds surged down Queen Street, breaking windows and looting shops. Later we caught the bus home and the Police stopped the bus, got on and arrested some people with stolen stuff. The whole day was actually pretty cool, scary but the violence wasn't directed so much at people (at least in my experience) as property (Anonymous 84).

Caught in the crossfire with nowhere to run to/
Moves to the frontline just for
something amusing to do /And it doesn't know his name/
Playing the game/ He's a
loser/ One black Friday (The Mockers).

Introduction: 'Racial and Social Tensions'

7 December 2009 marked the 25th anniversary of Auckland's Queen Street riot, in which police terminated an end of school year rock concert promoted by Triple M 89 FM Radio in Aotea Square featuring local bands Herbs, the Mockers, and DD Smash. During a power cut in DD Smash's set at about 7.15pm, drunken youths on the Bledisloe Road post office balcony began urinating on people below, bottles were thrown at them in retaliation, and police intervened. Skirmishes broke out, eventuating in police ordering 89FM Radio representatives to stop the concert. Riot police then stood in a line, blocking the exit up Queen Street from Aotea Square and forcing people to move down Queen Street, in the

Tony Mitchell, "One black Friday: another look at the Queen Street riot", *New Zealand Journal of Media Studies*, 13.2 (2012): 130-151.

process clashing with some members of the crowd, estimated at 10,000. A violent situation arose, which led to bottles being thrown at police, the smashing of shop windows and widespread looting of shops along Queen Street. By 8.30pm police reinforcements had arrived in support of the initial police contingent of thirty (ironically, Auckland Central Police Station is less than 100 metres away from Aotea Square on the corner of Vincent Street and Cook Street), but rioters continued to clash with police and over 120 arrests were made. Looting and arrests continued until 10.30pm.

This paper examines the riot, considered by Openshaw to be “the most serious [in NZ] since 1932” (“Saving the Windows”, 45), as a media event in the light of interpretations offered by various commentators, journalistic, sociological and creative, and the report of the Mahon Committee of Inquiry into the riot which appeared in December 1984. The riot occurred at the end of the nine-year rule of the Muldoon National government, at a celebration of the end of school term concert in Aotea Square billed as “Thank God it’s Over!” Damage was estimated at six million dollars (Dix 253). In a context of occasional violent encounters in and around Queen Street at the time between Polynesian gangs, street kids, boot boys, punks and police, during the latter days of the Auckland punk rock scene, the riots assumed an added subcultural significance. The riot is still embedded in popular memory, and linked to subcultural youth activities of the time, especially street kids, in ways which are worth re-examining. It was also memorialised in The Mockers’ 1985 rock song “One Black Friday”.

This article argues that the ‘racial and social tensions’ dismissed by the Mahon report into the riot commissioned in 1984 were in fact decisive factors in the riot, together with poor planning and an ongoing antagonism towards police which had built up over three decades, and found an explosive outlet in an alcohol-fuelled celebration of the end of the Muldoon government. It also draws on descriptions of the riot by music industry insiders and commentators whose understanding of the musical and subcultural aspects of the riot have not previously been drawn on in sociological studies (or were overlooked in the Mahon Report), and which offer insights into the causes of the riot and its role in the national imaginary and in mediated memory.

2009: Memorialising the Riot

The 25th anniversary of the riot was commemorated in December 2009 in the *NZ Herald* and on Māori TV, where Māori warden Hine Grindlay, who received a Queen’s Service Medal and an Auckland City Council Good Citizen award for her bravery in attempting to quell the riot, was again featured as a hero.¹ In an article about the riot originally published in *New Zealand Sociology* in 1997, then reprinted in Shuker, Openshaw and Soler’s 1990 edited volume *Youth, Media and Moral Panic in New Zealand*, Roger Openshaw noted rather cynically that Ms Grindlay’s bravery had been “given the ‘High Noon’ treatment by several newspapers” at the time (“Saving the Windows” 47). This continued in both the Māori TV and *NZ Herald* coverage 25 years later, with Ms Grindlay being billed as ‘the hero’, and described in a photo of her striding along Queen Street with a blond youth and two Māori men during the riot as “immortalised with a slightly perplexed but determined look on her face”. She was also reported, but not quoted directly, as claiming rather controversially in retrospect that “The young people who hurled bottles and smashed every window in sight were mainly well dressed, from middle-class families”. This would have made sense in terms of their willingness to confront the police, whereas those with prior experience of police

treatment would have been less likely to risk confrontation. The effectiveness of Grindlay's role in the riot as a warden at the time led to an increase in the use of Māori wardens at such events as they represent not only an effective non-police means of disciplining crowds and subduing violence, but also an important Māori presence at such events which people are more likely to respect.

The 2009 *Herald* article cites the "new Labour Government's economic reforms, high unemployment and the Springbok tour clashes of 1981" as factors linked to the "racial and political tensions of the day", and then goes on to cite the Mahon report, which had been commissioned by Prime Minister David Lange and rushed out before the end of 1984. The report categorically ruled out "racial and social tensions", as a cause of the riot, blaming poor planning and "lawless elements" instead. Openshaw is quoted in the 2009 *Herald* article stating "the riot was a spontaneous event provoked by the crowd dynamics as opposed to deep, underlying causes". Openshaw would thus appear to support the findings of the Mahon report. Openshaw places the riot within the perspective of his and Shuker's book *Youth, Media and Moral Panic in New Zealand*, which traces a history of 'larrikinism', youth subcultures and moral panics in the press since the 1880s, arguably diminishing its significance. But in that book, he argued:

As with the larrikins of the 1880s, the Auckland rioters in 1984 symbolised a period of ambiguity and strain in New Zealand society. From the mid-1970s inequality, unemployment, race relations and economic uncertainty have come to dominate life in New Zealand. ... The ideological foundations for the Queen Street riot were laid well prior to the event itself. During the early 1980s violent street crime, especially urban street crime, received considerable media attention, particularly in the Auckland press. As early as 1983 the *Auckland Star* reported that Aotea Square was often tense as "... street kids claimed their patch" (1990:52).

The Auckland Star was not one of the newspapers monitored in *Youth, Medias and Moral Panics*, and the issue of street kids is not discussed further in Shuker et al.

Grindlay has the last word in the 2009 *Herald* report, blaming alcohol, underage drinkers, and praising the subsequent banning of alcohol from public places and events and the instigation of police powers to search people for alcohol. The *Herald* also persists in referring to the riot in the plural, as it had done in 1984, as does Māori TV, despite the fact that, unlike the Cronulla riots in Sydney in 2006 (see Noble 2009), there was only ever one riot (*NZ Herald* Dec.5 2009 B 11).

The Auckland monthly magazine *Metro* used a multiviewpoint technique in 2009, as it had done in 1985, quoting from a number of different protagonists in and commentators on the riot, producing a fragmented historic retrospective. Parties involved in the riot were again interviewed, including Grindlay, the then Auckland mayor Cath Tizard, senior police sergeant Rod Hodgkins, and Dilworth Karaka, the Māori founder member of Herbs, about their recollections, with spectacular rooftop photographs supplied by *Metro* staffer Bruce Jarvis providing a panopticon-like perspective on events. One photo clearly shows (through a cracked window) a small group of police facing a group of missile-throwing rioters, watched by bystanders outside the Odeon, St James and Regent cinema buildings, while another shows police chasing rioters down Queen Street. Others show rioters overturning a car (a

photo which had appeared in a three-part sequence on the front page of 9th December *Sunday News* under the banner headline (SHAME!) and smashing the plate glass window of the Auckland Visitors' Bureau. The 2009 *Metro* coverage also referred to 'riots' in its index, and added little to the event in terms of historic perspective, with most parties simply reiterating their views. Some did this more forcefully, like Hodgkins, who attempted to justify the police action by emphasising the danger involved:

A sports shop on Queen Street got broken into and we were all worried about firearms coming out because the behaviour was absolutely riotous. ...The sheets of glass that were flying, if they hit you the wrong way they would have killed you (*Metro* 2009:82).

This example of panic-mongering ignores the fact, as Russell Brown noted at the time, that "guns in such stores are mechanically disarmed as a matter of course" (Brown 1984:4). Brown also notes that there had been a false rumour during the riot that a gunman was on the loose, and that the *Auckland Star* had emphasised this sports shop break-in at the time.

Former Auckland Mayor Dame Cath Tizard, who had allegedly described the riot to the *NZ Herald* most colourfully as "people dancing like dervishes in an Inferno" (10 Dec. 1984:1), now took the position that there were no political or social causes for the riot:

The whole of the upper town just erupted and there was no reason for it. Nothing was being protested against. It was just mob hysteria (*Metro* 2009:85).

This directly contradicts what she had been quoted as saying in the mid-1980s, where she saw the riot as a shock to New Zealand apathy and an explosion of social and racial problems:

The Queen Street riots [sic] jolted New Zealanders into recognition of the harsh realities of social and racial problems. It saw the end of our self-deluding complacency that we're apart from the rest of the world (in Stratford 2002:40).

In *Metro* in 1985, she had waxed poetic in her interpretation of background causes:

For years now ... the potential for violence has been simmering under Auckland's sunny surface. Like a Rotorua mudpool, a plop or two comes to the surface intermittently, but unlike a geothermal eruption, there were no observable warning signs to this one. The juvenile gang/street-kid problem has been with us for some time now but it seemed to be quietening down (*Metro* 1985:66).

Tizard had blamed "the excitement of the streets" and changes in the reporting of crime as shown on television (presumably in a more sensationalised form), and the fact that "'drink and the misuse of alcohol are part of the traditional kiwi joker's way of life". She had also called for the council to be given "a second hand van to get the 'street kids' out of the city", an inhumane solution to the problem that would only ever have served as a temporary solution. She does not indicate where the street kids would have been taken.

Those who had had to deal directly with the crowd, like Hine Grindlay, tended to be more measured in their views:

We walked up to the rioters in front of the police and there were bottles and cans coming over our heads. But they never struck us; it was all fired at the police (*Metro* 2009:86).

Pat Jackson, an ambulance driver, stated:

We were respected and not threatened. We were tolerated; I guess that would be the word (*Metro* 2009:87).

Barrie Everard, the managing director of MMM89FM, one of the organisers of the concert, remained optimistic, despite having been told by police to stop the concert:

It was a great day, a celebration of the end of the school year. The crowd at Aotea Square were having a brilliant time. No doubt alcohol had some influence on what subsequently happened, but the riot was started by police ordering the concert to be stopped (*Metro* 2009:88).

A former St. Cuthbert's schoolgirl who was there with some school friends at the time expressed outrage at the looting: "It was Walker and Hall that really shocked us, seeing people just grabbing handfuls of jewellery (87)". *Metro* photographer Bruce Jarvis had the final word, as his rooftop photographs, which had not been published before, provided the main justification for the *Metro* story: 'I was up on the roof the whole time ... I knew I had something big' (89).

With the exception of the Māori TV news item, the 2009 media reports tended to play down racial, social and political tensions as a background to the riot, and some of the people quoted had clearly changed their minds about this in the intervening years. A deeper examination of the riot and its apparent causes would seem to be justified as a result.

The Mahon Report

Headed by Auckland barrister Peter Mahon, QC, with Mrs Fanaura Kingston of Tokoroa, a former Cook Island parliamentarian, and John Rose, the principal of Penrose High School, the 39 page Mahon report on the Auckland riot was rushed together in less than two weeks, and based largely on written submissions. It identifies a group of "thirty to forty ... gang members situated close to the stage who were commencing to throw bottles and cans at 'the Mockers' band which was then playing" at around 6.45 pm. There is no mention in the report of Herbs' performance. The report states it is "obliged to assume" that the missile throwers were impatient to see DD Smash (1984:16). If gang members, they could however just as easily have been reacting against The Mockers' lead singer Andrew Fagan's flamboyant and effeminate appearance. The report notes that missile throwing appeared to subside when an unnamed comedian announced that if it continued, DD Smash would not play (1984: 17). Herbs had begun playing at 4pm, followed by the Mockers at 5.45, with DD Smash beginning at 7.30, when there was a power failure halfway through their first song (2003:252). This hiatus lasted for about twenty minutes, during which time the crowd became "restless and abusive" (1984:18). The warning and the power cut created a frame of mind which placed DD Smash's performance in doubt, adding to the volatility of the crowd. According to the report, the urinating and missile throwing incident between the verandah

roof of the Bledisloe Building and the people below took place at about 7.30, when police were given instructions to clear the roof, and began attempting to arrest bottle-throwers. It goes on to state that “[a]t about 8.10 pm the ‘DD Smash’ band was ordered by police to stop playing” (19), and as a result “some hundreds of young people” who were angered by the band being stopped lent support to the bottle throwers heading along Queen Street. By about 9pm looting had commenced. The report states rather conclusively: “If the band had not stopped, the whole crowd would have continued to have listened to the band [sic], and it is probable that the riot would not have developed in the way that it did” (31). It recommends that in future community policing and liquor free restrictions ensure that “adolescents over-stimulated by music and alcohol do not copy the actions of the fringe criminal elements who are sure to be in attendance” (34), an indirect apportioning of blame on “fringe criminal elements” which contradicts Hine Grindlay’s account of the bottle-throwers.

The circumstances under which the report was put together and the time constraints, with the impending Christmas holiday closing parliament, meant that it was severely restricted in its scope. Although music writers such as Russell Brown, who was present at the riot, submitted an insightful report (referred to below), there is no evidence that it was heeded, or that the accounts of any young people present at the riot were taken into account. The Mahon report focused mainly on establishing a clear sequence of events, and emphasised the fact that it was not adequately planned, mostly blaming the ready availability of alcohol, and the police’s over-reaction for the riot. Alcohol was subsequently prohibited at the Aotea Square New Year’s Eve celebrations in 1984/85.

Musical background to the riot

Among a number of other factors, the Mahon report demonstrates little understanding of the musical aspects of the event. As Bruce Jesson pointed out in the *Metro* multiviewpoint piece in February 1985, the weekend before the ‘Thank God It’s Over!’ event, riot police had been used to subdue crowds outside the Deep Purple Concert at Western Springs (1985:68). This concert was also mentioned in the Mahon Report, as it involved “a very serious confrontation between patrons and the police” (1984: 10) who numbered 155. As reported in the *Auckland Star* and cited by Openshaw, the Deep Purple event had involved 2,000 people, with 30 police injured and 78 arrests (*Auckland Star* 1 Dec.84, A4), and was presented uncritically as “unprovoked mob violence against police and property” (Openshaw 1990:53). But the main difference between the Deep Purple concert and ‘Thank God It’s Over!’ is that the crowd conflicts with police took place outside the entrance to the concert, and involved people trying to break into the concert without paying.

The Mahon Report took pains to distance ‘Thank God It’s Over’ from this and other similar events involving rock music:

It should be emphasised that these three bands were “pop” bands and not “rock” bands so that the specific section of the younger community which would be young people of school age and school leavers and the like ... this was essentially a family concert and ... the difficulty of possible involvement of ‘street kids’ was one which seemed easy to surmount (1984:7).

Leaving aside the “scare quotes” around the names of the bands and the type of music used in the Mahon report, the fact that Herbs are obviously a Polynesian reggae band, and that neither the Mockers nor DD Smash could easily be classified as ‘pop’, this begs the question as to whether the Auckland city council or the police had any real understanding of the nature of the event.

The presence of Herbs at the concert provided a direct link to the 1981 Springbok tour, through their mini-album *What’s Be Happen*, which had been released in July '81 during the tour, with a cover featuring an aerial photo of police evicting protesters occupying Bastion Point in 1978. It also featured the song ‘Whistling in the Dark’, which dealt with harassment of Polynesians on the street by police. Herbs are a mixed race group of Māori and Pacific Islander musicians, and according to Dix, were at their peak at the time of ‘Thank God It’s Over!’:

Herbs really hit its stride in 1984. Giggling exhaustively, their audience grew by the month. At year’s end came the debut album, *Long Ago*, evidence of the group’s success in assimilating a genuine Polynesian sound within the reggae/rock framework ... *Long Ago* was as Polynesian a record as any to have emerged in the 1980s ... Herbs had achieved their ultimate aim of producing an indigenous popular music, and the band’s successful stage presentation kept them ahead of the competition (Dix 2003:262).

Herbs had also played a number of school lunchtime concerts, so were well accustomed to playing to school age audiences. In the words of *NZ Herald* music writer Graeme Reid:

Herbs were more than a band, they were a flashpoint. The kids in the hall liked them, those in the staffroom often much less certain what to think. Herbs were special. They were in the vanguard of Pacific reggae, their multi-racial make-up meant they brought various PI sounds to bear, and they were urban Polynesian (Reid 2002).

The band’s Tongan-born manager in the early 1980s was the co-founder of the militant Polynesian Panthers. They were also closely associated with the notorious Gluepot pub in Ponsonby, a hangout for the King Cobra gang. Consequently they would have attracted a significant Māori and Polynesian audience, as well as Polynesian gang members and a notable number of schoolkids.

The Mockers, who played after Herbs, had formed in Wellington in 1980, when they released their first single ‘Murder in Manners Street’, based on the unprovoked stabbing in broad daylight with a kitchen knife of a 20 year old accountancy student by an unemployed chef and paranoid schizophrenic at Perretts corner on the corner of Willis and Manners St in April 1980. Andrew Fagan, the group’s flamboyant front man, was prone to wearing makeup and outlandishly effeminate clothes in glam rock fashion, and took pride in presenting an outrageous image. Their 1984 album *Swear It’s True* had gone platinum in NZ (15,000 units), and they had made a big impact at that year’s Sweetwaters festival, where according to Dix, “Few New Zealand performers have got away with looking so outrageous. ... Because they looked like pop stars, the Mockers were halfway there” (2003:248). Their 1985 single ‘One Black Friday’ was inspired by the Auckland riot, and its success took the

band to Australia. Dix blames the group's decline in popularity after 1985 on "the fickle nature of school age fans" (248), which suggests that these fans turned away from the band after the riot and their move to Australia. It is also clear that they would have not had much appeal to fans of Herbs.

DD Smash were fronted by Dave Dobbyn, forming in 1981 after his former band Th'Dudes had disbanded, and releasing their debut album, the hard rock *Cool Bananas* in 1983, which went straight into the NZ charts at no. 1. The band moved to Sydney, where they released *The Optimist* in 1984, described by Dix as a mixture of "funk, reggae, soul and supper-club jazz" and "the slickest album a New Zealand band has ever produced" (2003:252). The band, which continued to make trips back to NZ, was flown over from Sydney especially for 'Thank God It's Over', where they were unmistakably the headliners, and used the event to promote their most recent album.

After the Mahon report appeared, criticising police tactics, and recommending better police training, the Auckland police, clearly frustrated by its findings, attempted to charge Dave Dobbyn, the lead singer of DD Smash, with "inciting a riot". This charge was later reduced to "behaving in a manner to cause violence against persons or property and using insulting language" (Dix 2003:253). This was based on comments he made to the crowd, which were captured on a tape recording deemed inadmissible at the court hearing: "I wish those riot squad guys would stop wanking and put their little batons away". The prosecution tried to claim that Dobbyn had actually said "I wish the riot police would leave us alone and fuck off" (Dix 2003:253). Dobbyn was eventually cleared of both charges in 1985, leaving the police empty-handed. Ironically, as Karaka points out (*Metro* 2009:84), Dobbyn was charged on the same day that he and the members of Herbs flew to Wellington to record the collaboration song 'A Slice of Heaven', which went on to spent four weeks at number one in Australia in 1986, sold more than 130,000 copies and became a huge patriotic anthem for the NZ Tourist Board.

The oppositional stances of the bands playing at the event was something that police and council members seemed unaware of, and MMM Radio had 'sold' the event as a family pop concert in an attempt to stage a celebration of three New Zealand bands who were at the top of their game and who attracted an audience of not only school kids, but street kids, gang members, Māori and Pacific Islanders, punks, and other youth subcultures, none of whom had much tolerance for the police.

Police vs Punters

The Auckland police had a long history of aggression towards rock music fans since their attacks on punk rock venues in the late 1970s. One of these, which involved riot police, was commemorated in the song 'Riot Squad' by the ska group the Newmatics, released in 1981, which referred to an Auckland Task Force raid on one of the major Auckland punk venues, XS in Airedale Street (Dix 2005:229). It also became something of an anthem for the 1981 anti-Springbok tour riots. As John Dix wrote in his history of New Zealand rock music, *Stranded in Paradise*, police had been in open conflict with youth subcultures and rock music fans in Auckland since the late 1970s:

In December 1984 the Auckland Task Force was notorious among local rock fans. They'd been methodically harassing punters since the late 1970s. Any pink-haired punk

would sooner walk into a roomful of bikies than be questioned by those boys in blue. Many a peaceful night had been disrupted by the arrival of the task force, stalking the room with menace, pulling out patrons to demand identification ... Something snapped that evening, shocking the police, public and media, but definitely not the rioters themselves. Gang members, street kids and rock punters alike joined forces in an anguished cry of 'Enough!' (Dix 2005:253)

Political commentator Bruce Jesson went further in his criticism of the police and advocated for Māori wardens at such events:

The riot was in a sense the most dramatic manifestation of the process of social disintegration that has been occurring over the last decade or so. Unemployment, economic insecurity ... the laws against marijuana ... Maybe the police are the wrong age, the wrong sex and often the wrong race for day-to-day work with young people. A different concept is needed, more along the lines of the Māori wardens or the volunteer schemes operating around Ponsonby ('After Aotea' *Metro* 4 Feb.1985: 68).

Given the pro-active role Hine Grindlay took in the riots, it is difficult to disagree with this, and Openshaw unwittingly supports this argument by stating that "some Māori had been involved in attempting to stop the violence, either as wardens or, more forcefully, as police" (2000:48).

'You gave us riot police – we give you a riot' : wild boys breaking glass

The sponsor of 'Thank God It's Over', Amco jeans, had written to the principals of sixty-five secondary schools in Auckland to advise them of the concert. The only member of this target audience for the event to have reported publically about the riot, a sixteen year old Howick school girl, Julie Roberts, led off The *Metro* report in February 1985 with an evocative report, entitled 'Wild Boys':

The band is really hot. A fast up-tempo beat. The rhythm is good and DD Smash is in full swing. I feel warm and receptive. The smell of stale beer, sweat and marijuana dull my senses. I'm captivated by the moody vibes around me. Suddenly I'm shoved forward and crushed against the kids in front, Squashed, as people behind fall back on me ... Eight policemen in full riot gear, batons extended, are approaching the crowd (*Metro* Feb.85 'After Aotea' 65).

Roberts' title comes from the eponymous track by 1980s British group Duran Duran, which had been playing on a ghetto blaster as the police charged the crowd. It suggests that both street kids and riot police are involved in conflict right from the beginning of DD Smash's set, and she observes: "All around me people are picking up cans and bottles and hurling them at the police who are standing in a line, about 100m in front of us". All of the violent confrontations she details in her report involve Māori and police, and it is "primarily Māori and Polynesians" who charge the line of police. At the same time, "a lot of people are actually enjoying themselves ... Not only are they taking part, but they laugh and shout as they march down the street chanting". She also describes meeting two members of the ACP (Auckland City Punks), Idle and Slug, who are unimpressed by the behaviour of "the filth". Later, surveying the destruction of shop window displays along Queen Street, she notes:

The kids around me generally agree that “it’s the pigs’ fault” but I’m not so sure. I approach a bunch of street kids and ask them if they know how it all started. They do. *They started it* (65).

Finally, amidst the “crockery, glass, coat hangers, plastic bags, ring cases and watch stands, all empty” she notices the display of the new DD Smash album *The Optimist* untouched in the window of 256 Records on Queen Street. This detail was also mentioned in other recollections. In the 2009 *Metro* report, Mike Chunn, general manager at the time of Mushroom Records NZ, who had released the album, notes:

There was a big window display for DD Smash in Record Warehouse and that window wasn’t smashed. We did think, “Oh, they’re showing respect to Dave by not smashing his window” (*Metro* December 2009).²

In an interview in *NZ Musician* in 2007, Chunn claimed that “one of the main men at MMM 89FM at the time said ‘We’re putting on a show in the Aotea Square area to promote the station. We’re hoping it’ll be a riot’”. He also commented:

I knew something was up when I saw a queue of about 20 guys aged between 18 and 20 waiting to buy beer from the Civic Tavern. Each of them walked out with around 24 bottles of Steinlager. This was about 2pm. And the three Mongrel Mob lads all standing at a rubbish tin pissing into it looked rather menacing. That was about 2.30pm. ... The first true ‘distraction’ that led to people ignoring the stage during the DD Smash set was two guys pissing onto the crowd from the top of a building. That (along with spasmodic fights) led to the arrival of the riot squad and a rain of green beer bottles sailed out and smashed all around them. They attacked. Yes, Dave [Dobbyn] dropped his guitar to the stage and it went ‘Claaanggg!!!’ but why would he bother continuing? No one was taking any notice. Whether he had stayed there or not it wouldn’t have mattered - all hell broke loose (Chunn in Reekie 2007).

These observations, from someone with a vested interest in DD Smash’s performance, suggest that disturbances leading up to the riot were already well under way by the time DD Smash started playing, and the crowd’s attention was not on the band’s performance. This contradicts the Mahon report’s claim, supported by photographic evidence, that “up until the time when the ‘DD Smash’ band was stopped at 8.10 pm, 95% of the crowd, possibly a slightly higher percentage, were concentrating on the band” (1984:24). Russell Brown, in another first-hand account of the riot published in the music monthly *Rip It Up*, identifies the moment the music stopped as the beginning of the riot: “it wasn’t until the music stopped that I turned around and saw the police in riot gear just behind us. Everyone’s attention turned away from the stage and that’s where the trouble really started” (Brown 1984:4). He argues:

While alcohol was undoubtedly a major factor in what happened, this wasn’t the drunken, surly violence that sometimes crops up at such events. Violence was directed only at riot police and nearby buildings and the mood among onlookers from the square side seemed more one of bemusement and interest than fear. I walked up among those doing the damage and the mood seemed to be one of “you gave us riot police –we give you a riot” (1984:4).

Brown found “a weird sense of purpose among the cross-section of young people doing the damage”, and he uses a description of “sportily clad young men” throwing missiles at the Information Centre to prove that “the rioters weren’t all gang members and street kids”. He also acknowledges that the riot took on a “sad, senseless” dimension when youth smashed up a lunch bar, and concludes: “The actions of the rioters were unquestionably selfish – but then the last half dozen years have been increasingly selfish times” (1984:4). This chimes with McClland’s view, paraphrasing Canetti, that the momentum of riots are spurred on by the “noise of broken glass, which represents ‘fresh life’; windows and doors are broken by the crowd as ‘boundaries’, obstacles to growth” (1989:207).

Sociological views

A number of sociologists commented on the riots in retrospect. In their 1993 book *Violence in New Zealand*, psychologists Jane and James Ritchie describe the riot rather hyperbolically as “reminiscent of European football stadiums, or the streets of Belfast”, and as

a cultural phenomenon designed by the elements of a New Zealand pattern of violence ...The police were not blameless, but it was not gangs, unemployment or communist subversion that instigated that Queen Street riot. It was the bad behaviour of drunken larrikins that acted as a catalyst for too many people crowded into an inappropriate setting for a Friday night on the town (1993:58).

While “communist subversion” had never been suggested by anyone as a cause for the violence, the language used here contains both exaggeration and bias. The Ritchies devise a ‘formula’ for these “elements of violence” as consisting of release from school, high alcohol consumption, “a euphoric crowd with a few alpha males acting like alpha-prime apes” (hardly an objective or helpful comparison), a ‘knee-jerk’ response by police, blocking control mechanisms (ie. stopping the concert), ineffective attempts at crowd dispersal, and finally, ‘a festival’, apparently assuming that festivals are inherently endemic to violence, even though this was not a festival but a one-off concert. This is anything but a constructive or helpful account of events. They go on to cite “[t]he pattern of anti-authority, anarchist, and pro-violence themes prominent in youth culture, and especially in the lyrics of some ‘heavy metal’ rock groups” as “part of this scene” (1993:59), further alienating themselves from any understanding of the youth culture of the time. Their use of inverted commas (or ‘scare quotes’) for anything to do with rock or pop music reproduces the approach of the Mahon report, while their views largely reproduce its findings. Their use of the term ‘larrikins’ is an archaic malapropism, even if the inappropriateness of the setting for an alcohol-fuelled event is undeniable, and the Ritchie’s attempt at an analysis of the event merely expresses an uncomprehending bias against youth.

The most extensive commentary on the riot came from Roger Openshaw, although he leaves a number of unanswered questions. In his analysis of the moral panic generated by what he claims “should not be lightly dismissed as a non-event”, and what he describes in *NZ Sociology* 1987:138), but not in Shuker et al (1990:45) as “by world standards, a rather small riot”, divides the media and politicians’ responses rather simplistically into ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’. This leaves no space for a number of more radical interpretations, or observations by music industry insiders and observers, for whom the riot came as little surprise. The ‘liberal’ views he canvasses are largely confined to the *NZ Listener* and *Metro*.

He claims the conservative response, “which became the dominant view, saw the riot as a break down in law and order” (1998:48), while liberal views, “which were to remain minority opinion”:

shared an opinion that New Zealand society had somehow deteriorated within the last decade, with social harmony being replaced by social discord. The catalysts which had finally brought on the Queen Street riot were identified, variously, as being the 1981 Springbok tour, the introduction of centralised policing, and the alienation of youth, particularly Māori and Pacific Island youth (1990:47).

This unequal division of views, he claims, reflected the conservative domination of the media after just under a decade of conservative National government under Robert Muldoon, the perpetrator of the infamous ‘dawn raids’ on Pacific Island immigrant ‘overstayers’ from the mid 1970s to the early 1980s. (A number of interpretations of the concert’s title ‘Thank God It’s Over’ read it as referring to the end of the Muldoon government as well as the school year.) Despite his polarisation of perspectives, Openshaw cites as ‘liberal’ Lesley Max, a decidedly non-liberal *Metro* staff writer, who delivered a scathing attack, reminiscent of the 1954 Mazengarb report, on the decline of morality in young people, on punk rock and fashions and local music television programs *Shazam*, *Ready to Roll* and *Radio With Pictures*, which “teach Aotea apprentices to stomp and spit and pout and strut and do masturbatory things with guitars”, creating a “frenzy of toddler/teens trying to shock parent society into caring or at least reacting”. Max cites the Boomtown Rats, whom he claims in popular wisdom are simply ‘different’ from Beethoven, and goes on to quote the Ramones’ song ‘Today your Love, Tomorrow the World’, completely missing its ironic contrast of a Nazi shock trooper with “a little German boy being pushed around”, and claiming it is “beloved of the punk oi-boys, whose racism, originally Paki bashing in Bradford is now Poly-baiting in Auckland” (Max, ‘After Aotea’ 1985:72). Amidst his petulance, anger, contempt and hopeless confusion, Max cites the Ritchies and others as having provided a warning of the riots, asking rhetorically:

Are we happy to let the debate be shared between the political malcontents of the radical left with their questionable agenda, and the ultra-conservatives pining for a return to God, Queen and lash? When will middle New Zealand assert itself ... (*Metro* 1985:72)

This suggests that there may have been a middle ground between Openshaw’s ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ that was yet to make its voice heard, although Mex clearly positions himself among the ‘ultra-conservatives’. Tim Shadbolt, who had just become Mayor of Waitemata at the time, also qualifies in Openshaw’s terms as ‘liberal’, despite his open renunciation of the term (“the reason I want a better deal for the socially oppressed isn’t because I’m a bleeding heart, wool-spinning liberal from Titirangi” (*Metro* 1985:66)), and his decidedly radical past. Shadbolt claims unemployment as a major cause, stating “a massive proportion of those arrested were unemployed” (*Metro* 1985:66) (2). This is something of an exaggeration; according to *Metro* writer Bruce Hucker, “Of the 120 arrests, 55 were Caucasian, 44 Māori and 21 from Pacific Island backgrounds ... 42 persons, or 35% of the total, were unemployed; ... 58 had low status jobs, 6 higher status jobs” (*Metro* 1985:72).³ The Mahon report also notes that “of the 122 arrests, 78 had previous convictions” (1984:22). These figures hardly represented a “massive proportion of unemployed”, but they did contain a high proportion

of Māori and Pacific islanders, as noted by race relations conciliator Hiwi Tauroa, who described the riot as “an unpleasant storm in a teacup”:

rioters included ethnic groups towards whom, in recent times, there has been a feast of denigratory comment ... Unemployment and an opportunity to challenge authority were contributing factors. ... There is no doubt there is a rift between police and some members of society ... There are faults among both parties. Youth learned the secrets of confrontation during the 1981 Springbok exercise. They learned too, that numbers and anonymity are an ally; that confrontation could be excused if in their opinion, a moral issue was involved (*Metro* 1985:68).

But, as Mark Scott noted in the *Listener*, plenty had happened before and after the Springbok tour to cast the police in an even dimmer light:

No police force in the world can operate without the consent of the people it serves, and it is fatal to mistake fear for respect. For many in that square, it is a mistake they feel the police have made before- from the days of Gideon Tait’s task force, in the pubs, the streets, the concerts, the nightclubs, in the enforcement of marijuana laws, in the environment of youth generally. The middle-class shock of the Springbok tour doesn’t even come into it (*Listener* 19 Jan 1985:8).⁴

In Queen Street, Scott concludes, in a situation where 30 police officers were trying to deal with a crowd of 10,000, “[o]n bare tactical grounds it was bound to fail and as an exercise in crowd psychology it was unmitigated disaster” (1985:8).

Attempts at sociological analysis of the riot tended to be equated with left wing views, following the lead of the Mahon report:

We fully appreciate that there are underlying sociological problems of the kind to which that we were so frequently referred, but it is not within our terms of reference to enter upon any inquiry of that kind ... In our view, it is clear beyond a doubt that this was a riot without racial or social motivation (1984:32-33).

Hucker commented on this lack of sociological observation in the Mahon Report:

No member of the Mahon Committee was able to frame the appropriate sociological questions. ... As a result the police were able to reinforce an impression that the disturbances were simply an outbreak of hooliganism lubricated by drink (1985: 70-71).

The conservative leader of the Opposition, Jim McLay, took advantage of this view of sociology:

In the aftermath of the riot I got some stick for suggesting that those who excused the riot because of unemployment (most of them, in fact, had jobs) were talking “sociological claptrap”. I stand by what I said (*Metro* 1985:70).

This effectively attempts to close down any sociological interpretation of events, even though McLay’s citation of the unemployment figures was patently wrong (35 per cent of

those arrested is still a significant figure). What is lacking from sociological views of the riot is any degree of sympathy or understanding for the young people involved. Arguably opposing views, rather than falling into Openshaw's 'liberal' and 'conservative' camps, tend to line up behind those who thought there were 'sociological' issues of race, social inequality, unemployment, police brutality and youth frustration fuelling the riot, and those (including the police) who dismissed it as a simple case of 'hooliganism' and too much freely available alcohol.

The Aftermath

Russell Brown described Queen Street the day after the riot:

The next day Queen Street was quiet and clean, although still a little shell-shocked. Glaziers' vans dotted the footpath and new widows went up – Centre Point fabrics even had neat letters, reading 'Riot Sale' on their new glass (Brown 1984:4).

Twenty years later, in a blog following a 2004 television programme, *Close-Up at 7*, about the riot, Brown referred to the tape recording of the riot made by "Californian Ron Kane, a New Zealand music completist who recorded everything", which clearly recorded Dobbyn's fateful words:

The snatches of conversation caught on the tape were quite vivid: the music stopped (on the order of the police, as it turned out) and thousands of people who had been facing the stage turned around to see a line of riot police blocking their exit from the square. I don't recall the actual words, but there were expressions of disbelief, and then anxiety or anger.

And thus, by shutting off the music and blocking the exits, the police turned a disturbance into a riot.

...

Something way out of the ordinary was breaking loose. I saw the young guys trying repeatedly to put a bin through the windows of the vacant DFC building. It would be dishonest of me to say it wasn't exciting.

...

a whole confluence of factors converged on Aotea Square that Friday; not least among them a sense of release with the end of the Muldoon era. Society was shifting and something was due to blow (Brown 2004).

He also recounts how three weeks after the riot, a senior Māori police officer at his parents' house in Hutt Valley admitted that the police "blew it".

Ultimately, although there are numerous different perspectives on the riot according to how closely involved people were in it, how they attempted to make political capital from it, how they regarded it in terms of police behaviour, and whether it was seen in political and historical terms, or just an outburst by 'larrikins'. It remains a significant event which had considerable social impact, and had a far-reaching influence on the way such events were planned and organised thereafter, especially as regards the availability of alcohol.

The Street Kids Factor

In his 1982 Review of Literature on Street Kids, written to supplement a report to the NZ Department of Justice, Colin Bevan noted that there had been 'no major piece of quantitative or qualitative research done on street kids in new Zealand' (1982:45), and nor has there been since then. The prolific New Zealand-born Australian criminologist Paul R. Wilson published a book on the subject with Josie Arnold, *Street Kids: Australia's alienated young*, in 1986. This was based on case studies of thirty-six teenagers living on the streets in Sydney and Brisbane, and extended interviews with 120 runaways, and is divided into sections dealing with alcohol, drug abuse, prostitution (male and female), suicide, and serious crime, including gangs. Wilson and Arnold argue that there are four different types of 'runaways':

adventure-seekers who became bored with their home lives and ran to find stimulation and excitement in places which they defined as exotic; **refugees** who ran to escape the problems in their family lives which they considered insoluble and unendurable; **escapees** who were already in trouble with the law, either indirectly or indirectly, and so they ran from institutions or foster-homes; and **problem-solvers** who saw running away as a way to solve their own personal crises because the resources at home did not help them deal with their traumas (1986:24-25).

In their case study, conducted in 1982, only 13 percent of the teenagers had had contact with the juvenile justice system, 68 percent eventually returned home, and 58 percent found themselves "repeatedly involved in serious criminal offences" (25). Only one person was Aboriginal, a female, most of the others being Australian, British or New Zealanders (whether Māori, Pacific Islander or Pākehā was not stipulated), and all aged between 14 and 18 (29). This means the applicability of the study to New Zealand, where there is a high proportion of Māori and Pacific Island street kids, is limited, although there was a common basis in all cases of unemployment, which "featured consistently as the focus of anger and frustration and the source of all problems" (104-5). Sniffing of inhalants was also seen as a problem, but only amongst early adolescents (109).

In his study, Bevan provides a comprehensive survey of newspaper articles, periodicals (such as the *Listener*, *NZ Social Work* etc.) and journals a transcript of a television programme on street kids between 1973 and 1982. Newspaper reports start in June 1977, with coverage of 20-23 'runaways' in Porirua, aged between 13-15, including an unspecified number of pregnant girls (46). The Wellington *Evening Post* is cited again in August 1978, reporting Māori elders picking up more than 100 Māori children from Auckland city streets and taking them to Te Uunga Waka marae in Epsom (47). Although it is not stated, clearly the majority of these 'runaways' in both Auckland and Wellington are Māori.

Between November 30 and December 31 there are a number of newspaper reports about 'disco kids', a police raid in Auckland called 'Operation Disco'. An *NZ Herald* article quotes a female police youth officer stating

The changing trend of disco children is that they are beginning to live in rundown city flats and resort to crime to support themselves, whereas previously their visits to the city were only overnight ... In the past fortnight police have found two large

groups of juveniles, aged between 14 and 18, living in houses in Hepburn Road and Symonds Street (47).

On December 1, 1978, the *Auckland Star* ran an article under the headline 'Disco Kids Only Part of Sad Side of Juveniles' which quoted the Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Police saying it was a 'worldwide trend'. An editorial the same day expresses the hope that the 'pre-Christmas' police interest in 'disco kids' also involves "an interest in the home conditions that permit some of these children to roam wild" (48). The following day the *NZ Herald* reported a police 'swoop' on "Fun parlours, discos and inner city doss houses" and a "crackdown on roaming young people' living in 'crash pads' and supporting themselves by crime" (48). An *Evening Post* editorial on December 4 questioned whether New Zealand was "such a great place to bring up children, when juvenile crime is rife". On the same day the *NZ Herald* reported 8 arrests of 'disco children' by youth aid police officers and 'local J-teams'. This also involved 12 street kids who were taken into welfare and 4 state wards returned to their homes, all in one night's work (48). Three days later, the *Herald* reported that since November 30, 60 children "have either been charged, placed in the care of the Social Welfare Department, warned or reported for investigation" (49). More figures were given in the *Evening Post* on December 11 as a result of 'Operation Disco', in which "21 young people have been placed in welfare homes ... eight missing state wards have been located ... two arrests of juveniles ... (while) 23 other children have been warned and returned to their homes" (49). The *Herald* reported the police operation had also involved "the usual follow-up with parents, schools and other agencies" (50), and that "about 140 youngsters have been dealt with in the three weeks of the 'disco kid' campaign", most of them being returned to their parents.

There was even a report in the *Herald* of police searching "caves in the Whatipu – Huia area and bivouacs north-east of the Mangere sewage ponds" but no indication that they had found anyone, although the *Evening Post* of December 23 reported five boys and three girls aged between 15 and 16 had been "found by police in a World War II gun turret above Auckland's Tamaki Drive" (50). Having established the basic scenario of 'street kids' in the inner city, newspaper reports tended to become more and more sensationalised. Bars were reported placed over a "rubbish-strewn Eden Terrace culvert" frequented by derelicts to keep out "the Auckland disco scene"; A "Fagin-type Family" of six boys and 5 girls between the ages of 11 and 17 was discovered living in a Christchurch cemetery; in Otara and Mangere in South Auckland "dozens of children are believed to live in makeshift camps", and petrol sniffing was reported to be a common activity. On March 20, 1981, the *Star* reported an unspecified number of youngsters, "some of them only 10 years old", begging in Aotea Square, leaving a bad impression on "many of the 80,000 tourists who visit the spot" (51-52). On November 19 both the *Star* and the *Evening Post* reported "some of scores of runaway children" living in concrete pipes under Karangahape Road, a story the *Post* embellished by claiming they were "eating dog food" (53). The *Star* quoted a public health nurse stating the street kids were "victims of ... psychological warfare" (53) and reported a police discovery of 14 children aged between 14 and 18 living in an empty florist shop near a bus shelter and adjoining a disco in central Auckland (53). This was followed by an *Evening Post* report of Auckland police finding "11 children in a dilapidated shed where they had slept rough for three weeks, including Christmas and New Year", all from Mangere and "groggy from sniffing petrol" (54). This was followed up by an article in the *New Zealand Times* quoting a social worker claiming that "the majority of people in [South Auckland] were usually from a

Polynesian upbringing which encouraged large families which made it difficult to properly supervise each family member” (54). The *NZ Herald* provided some Christmas cheer for 1981 with a report of a Christmas lunch provided by the Māori community centre in Auckland for more than 60 ‘street children’ (54).

On January 20, 1982, the *Herald* referred to “attacks ... by an inner-city group of ‘street kids’ who have been traditional enemies of punk rockers and ‘boot boys’ and quoted a social worker “who worked closely with the ‘street kids’, punk rockers and ‘boot boys’ that “there were signs of a major black-versus-white conflict developing between these groups” (55). This is the only report in this time period of youth subcultural conflict. By 1982 there were more reports about attempts to solve the ‘street kid’ problem along with sympathetic statements about their predicament. The *Evening Post* of January 20 quoted the director of the Wayside Chapel in Kings Cross, Sydney, commenting on “young children wandering around the Square in Christchurch late at night” and the “enormous pressures our children are under ... the kids want rigid security and the parents want freedom” (55). On February 3, the *Post* quoted comments by a social worker on a Wellington exhibition of photographs of destitute children taken in the 19th century, estimating there were about 80 kids living rough in the city at any time, aged 12 and upwards, and most of Polynesian extraction, “living in old, deserted houses and on beaches ... like London last century ... [they] shun official bodies as if they were the plague” (55). An editorial following this story claimed that “it is not sufficient to blame delinquent parents for delinquent children” and that street kids are “somebody’s responsibility”. The editor cites as possible causes, a sense of ‘devilment’, failure of parents to exercise control, being thrown out of home, and a misguided sense of adventure. On February 6th it announced the study of ‘street kids’ by the Working Party of the Department of Justice, and on February 12th that the Minister of Social Welfare planned “secret visits” to street kids in Auckland and Wellington to “talk to them about their ‘lifestyle’”, and expressing concern for them on behalf of the “government and the people” (56). On February 15 the *Post* published an interview with the National director of Barnardo’s New Zealand expressing the difficulty of solving the problem, and mentioning a “community house” for street kids in Porirua run by Mrs. Madge Ruahihi. A notable fact is that most of the initiatives taken and “half way houses” mentioned were run by Māori, although the drop-in centre referred to by the *Post* the following day, which needed more money and volunteers, appeared to be run by a Pākehā. Summarising his account of this press coverage, Bevan commented that most the newspaper reports emphasised the discovery of street kids rather than the causes of their homelessness, and the emphasis on crime as a result of police information. He notes that “alternative views to those derived from police information, one suspects, are aired only when an agency, organization or individual concerned has contacted a newspaper” (55). A common factor also was that most of the street kids were either from Porirua or the Southern suburbs of Auckland, although many of them gravitated to the inner city, and that most were Polynesian.

Bevan’s coverage of articles in periodicals and journals stressed that most of them were accounts by social workers of schemes they were personally involved in. These included 6A in Christchurch, a drop-in centre run by the YWCA which catered for “that elusive sub-culture best known as ‘drop out’”, an article by A. Ross which appeared in *NZ Social Worker* in 1973, which examined the causes of truancy among mostly Māori and Pacific island young people – family breakdowns, solo parents, fluctuating de facto relationships, institutional care, loveless or abusive homes, both parents working, as well as a generational breakdown

in which parents cling to ancestral values and children adopt European-type values. This led to language difficulties, cultural differences, illiteracy, and being sent to “correctional institutions”:

They fall into a sub-culture, living how and when they can and mostly by their wits – at risk to themselves and placing the community at risk from them (Ross 1973:47).

Other organizations featured include Youthline, Youth Aid, and the proprietors of a house for young people in Ponsonby who catered for up to 40 young people at a time, mostly Polynesian. An article based on a speech by a Henderson judge at the Waitangi seminar claimed there were up to 200 street children in Auckland, mostly absconders from welfare or foster homes:

I believe we have in Auckland the potential for racial violence or at least an upheaval that will manifest itself as racial violence to an extent and degree never before present in our society. For one tragic and stark statistic is that the majority are Māori (*Northern News Review*, August 1981:1)

Bevan’s review, which also includes literature surveys on street kids in the USA and the UK, and numerous appendices, concludes that despite significant differences, there are common causal factors between US, UK and NZ street kids, namely “family breakdown, conflict between old and young, sexual abuse, misguided sense of adventure, maturation of youngster, and attraction of life on the streets” (73). The ‘typical’ New Zealand runaway, he notes, “is generally aged between 12 and 15, is equally likely to be male or female, is usually of Polynesian extraction and probably from a working class background” (73). Their basic need is shelter, but they are usually suspicious of any interference by adults or authorities. He emphasises the importance of upholding section 4 of the New Zealand Children and Young Persons act of 1974, which states that the interests and welfare of the young person are paramount, along with a satisfactory relationship with family, domestic environment, and the community at large, a principle not always upheld by the official response.

Creative Responses to the Street Kids Issue

There have been a number of fictional accounts of New Zealand street kids. A 1982 *Listener* article cited in Bevan’s report profiled novelist and playwright Sue McCauley, whose award-winning 1982 autobiographical novel *Other Halves* explored the relationship between a middle class separated 32 year old Pākehā woman, Liz, and a 16 year old Māori street kid, Tug, whose gang moves into her house. It was filmed in 1984 by John Laing, with Lisa Harrow as Liz, and Mark Pilisi as Tug, now a Nuiean street kid. The film was described by Nicholas Reid, in *A Decade of New Zealand Film*, as a “sincere reflection on racial encounter, but unwittingly highly patronizing” (1986:137). Other reviewers were more positive. The *Listener* article described McCauley’s work with street kids in Christchurch, “before welfare authorities acknowledged the existence of street kids”, whom she provided with food and shelter,

battling welfare departments on their behalf, helping them to apply for jobs and teaching them to read at least enough to go for a driving license and to comprehend the situation vacant columns (Russell 1982:44).

McAuley's work with street kids in Christchurch clearly informed her novel *Other Halves*, which was closely based on her own experiences, and her anger with institutions and their incapacity to deal with "the crippling enormity of social and educational disadvantage" (Russell 1982:44).

In 1985 idiosyncratic Auckland folk-jazz singer–songwriter Ross Mullins, using the moniker Last Man Down, released an album entitled *State House Kid*, the cover of which features Mullins in a 1950s school uniform standing in front of a burnt-out state house in outer suburban Auckland. A poster of the 'Thank God It's Over' concert is attached to a lamp post nearby, making a direct reference to the riot. A child's tricycle hidden in the grass suggests it may have been his family home. The song 'State House Kid' portrays an alienated teenage girl growing up in a state house in 1980s Auckland, who escapes to the bright lights of the city on a Friday night:

Brown-eyed girl on Queen Street, stepping out for Friday night,
Angel in denim, stops, asks a stranger for a light,
And boys whistle in the crowd,
But she holds her pretty head up proud,
And she's only 15 but she keeps it hid,
She looks 21, this state house kid.
...
She's so tender and so unafraid,
But there's an ugly world out there,
And they're waiting for her,
Like cops on a dawn raid.

<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/sound/state-house-kid-album>
(Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 6-Jul-2009

The disaffected teenage girl in this song seems representative of some of the audience at the event where the riot took place, for whom Queen Street is a haven of escape from suburban dreariness. She is also portrayed as a potential street kid, and as such prey for the police. The song is clearly influenced by the riot, and the clash of teenage street kids with the police.

Rosie Scott's 1988 novel *Glory Days* was set in Queen Street and K Road and partly about street kids, especially in one scene in which the protagonist, a female rock singer, and a transvestite take an overdosing teenage girl to hospital, where she dies, and they are subjected to police harassment as a result. In 2005 Ted Dawe, a teacher at a Foundation College on Karangahape Road in Auckland, published *K Road*, a novel about street kids, surfers and graffiti taggers who live in an abandoned house on K Road, and whose nocturnal activities take in Aotea Square.⁵ As Shuker et al. (1990) indicate, there was a moral panic throughout 1980s New Zealand about street kids, but this is never discussed directly in *Youth, Media and Moral Panics*, apart from a few indirect references in Openshaw's account of the Queen Street riot.

The term is still widely used, often to refer to Maori and Pacific island teenagers living on the streets; as in James Ihaka's *New Zealand Herald*, 'Street kids shown better direction'. This

profiles a reformed 16 year old West Auckland Pacific Islander youth and former street kid, pictured in a reverse baseball cap and hoodie, covered in home-made tattoos, who has a criminal history of assault, burglary, unlawful assembly and disorderly behaviour. His life has been 'turned around' by a 20 week MYND (Male Youth New Direction) programme, which claims a 60 per cent success rate.

Conclusions

In retrospect, the immediate causes of the Auckland riot are fairly obvious, and largely due to the police closing down the concert, and barring the exit, and the easy availability of bottles as missiles. The Mahon report led to a Local Government Amendment bill which was rushed through parliament in four days, giving councils the right to close down venues, as well as increased security measures such as the right of police to search people suspected of carrying alcohol without a warrant, and much-needed restrictions on alcohol in bottles at outdoor events, which are now the norm. In the light of the London riots of 2011, looting can be regarded as an opportunistic by-product of riots, in which, as Canetti comments, windows and glass can be regarded as "obstacles to growth" and breaking them as signs of "fresh life" (McLelland 1989:307). Evidence appears that there was a subcultural element involved in the riots, especially gangs, punks and street kids, together with a widespread animosity towards aggressive police tactics. Unemployment seems less of a direct casual issue, although racial tensions were definitely a feature in the arrests and in descriptions of the riots. The role of Hine Grindlay also strongly suggests that Māori wardens would have been a more suitable form of policing, and that the aggressive deployment of riot police simply increased crowd anger.

Tony Mitchell is a senior lecturer in Cultural Studies at UTS with a long-standing interest in all aspects of popular and 'serious' music, especially global hip-hop, as well as cultural representations of race and ethnicity, film, television, youth subcultures and popular culture. He can be contacted at Tony.Mitchell@uts.edu.au.

Notes

¹ The Māori TV footage, broadcast on Te Karare news on December 7, 2007 in Māori with English subtitles, with an interview with Hine Grindlay in English, is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNcpyHCv_1M. (accessed 20/10/2012). The subtitles conclude: "even though this is an ugly part of Auckland's history, it can serve as a lesson for police that if people are trying [sic] to be intimidated, they will fight back".

² In his exhaustive list of 'Lost Record Stores' in Auckland from the 1960s to the late 2000s, the Opinionated Diner notes that the Record Warehouse was situated in various locations, and took over the site of Peaches Records in the Corner, now Whitcoulls, on Queen Street, "around 1980 and it closed shortly thereafter". Roberts is probably right in identifying 256 Queen Street as the site of the DD Smash display. <http://opdiner.com/tag/record-stores/>

³ Although the unemployment rate in 1984 was 7.186%, the highest of the decade, it dropped substantially in 1985 to 3.922%.

(http://www.indexmundi.com/new_zealand/unemployment_rate.html) In *The Dirty Decade*, Stephen Stratford's survey of the 1980s in New Zealand, unemployment figures are referred to as reaching 83,597 in January 1984 (Stratford 2002:37).

⁴ Gideon Tait was chief superintendent of police in Christchurch in the 1970s and assistant commissioner of police from mid 1974 to the end of 1975, and known for his hard line on gangs. In 1978 he published a book entitled *Never Back Down* which outlined his policy on 'bikies', and claimed his two greatest achievements were the mass arrest of bikers under a

new mass assembly law in 1973, and a massive co-ordinated police attack on demonstrators at Harewood, a US airforce base south of Christchurch.

⁵ Stephen Oliver, a Wellington-born 'Transtasman' poet, a former newsreader and journalist, published his poem 'Queen Street Riot' in the leading New Zealand literary quarterly *Landfall* in 1985. Expressing a panopticon-like perspective in which both the crowd and the police act as single units, it repeats the line "*The breaking of the shield*" three times, possibly a synecdoche referring to the riot police being overwhelmed by rioters. The police are described as "moving from side-streets under shields, riot police moving in one black net to catch Auckland", while the city itself is "the doll-house city broken on /the black and white screen of Aotea Square", an image repeated as "The Lady Mayor walks by flashing cameras", a reference to Cath Tizard's high-profile appearance at the riot. Images of clouds, pohutukawa, and an "overturned moon" are invoked, suggesting chaos, as the sound of gongs "boom the length of Queen Street", marking an ominous sense of time and occasion. Taking a distant view of the riot rather like an aerial photo, the poem expresses an orderly perspective at odds with the chaos of the riot, but appears to sympathise with the rioters (Oliver 1985).

Acknowledgments

This article is based on a paper first given at the Sociology Department at Auckland University in 2009. It was later modified in a paper at the International Association of Popular Music Australia-New Zealand branch at Victoria University, Wellington, in 2011.

References

- Anon. "After Aotea". *Metro* 44. February 1985. 64-72. Print.
- Anonymous 84. "Queen Street Riot 1984: Community Contributions", *New Zealand History Online*. Web. 14 July, 2009.
- Bevan, Colin. *Review of Literature on Street Kids*. Monograph Series no. 5, Planning and Development, Department of Justice. Wellington, 1982.
- Brown, Russell. "From Calm to Confrontation". *Rip It Up* 89. December 2-4 1984. Print.
- "Not Any Friday". *Public Address* <http://publicaddress.net/hardnews/not-any-friday/> 2004. Web. 20th January 2012.
- Dawe, Ted. *K. Road*. Dunedin, Longacre Press, 2005. Print.
- Dix, John. *Stranded in Paradise: Rock 'n' Roll in New Zealand from 1955 to the Modern Era*. Auckland: Penguin. 2003. Print.
- Jesson, Bruce. "You can imagine the stories circulating in the city's high schools". "After Aotea". *Metro* 4 Feb.1985. 68.
- Ihaka, James. 'Street kids shown better direction'. *New Zealand Herald*, 21 February 2009. http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10557886.
- Mahon, P (QC), Kingstone, F, and Rose, J. "Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Riot at Auckland on 7 December 1984". Wellington, December 1984. Print.
- Masters, Catherine. "Queen St riots: courage in the face of mayhem". *NZ Herald*, 5 December 2009. B11. Print.
- McClelland, J.S. *The crowd and the mob: from Plato to Canetti*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989. Print.
- Mockers, The. "One Black Friday". 12 inch single. Sydney, RCA. 1985. Vinyl Record.
- Murray, Sarah. "Riot Goin' On: 07.12.1984" *Metro* 339. December, 2009. 82-89. Print.
- Newmatics, *Riot Squad*. Auckland, Festival Mushroom CD. 2002.
- Newmatics, 'Riot Squad' video <http://www.nzonscreen.com/title/riot-squad-1981> Web. 9

- November 2012.
- Noble, Greg (ed.) *Lines in the Sand: the Cronulla riots, multiculturalism and national belonging*, Sydney, Institute of Criminology Press. 2009. Print.
- Oliver, Stephen. "Queen Street Riot".
<http://www.trout.auckland.ac.nz/journal/9/oliver/oliver02.htm.1985>. Web. 20th January 2012.
- Openshaw, Roger. "'Saving the Windows': The Queen Street Riot 1984". In Shuker, R., Openshaw, R. and Soler, J., *Youth, Media and Moral Panic in New Zealand (From Hooligans to Video Nasties)*. Delta Research Monograph No. 11, Palmerston North: Massey University. 1990. Print.
- "'Saving the Windows': Reactions to the Queen Street Riot, 1984". *New Zealand Sociology* 2:2 November 1987. 128-139. Print.
- "Queen Street riot 1984". <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/queen-street-riots-1984>. (Ministry for Culture and Heritage). Updated 28-Mar-2008. Web. 20th January 2012.
- Reekie, Trevor. Interview with Mike Chunn. *NZ Musician* 13:7.
http://www.nzmusician.co.nz/index.php/ps_pagename/printversion/pi_articleid/1194. 2007. Web. 20th January 2012.
- Reid, Graeme. "Elsewhere: Another dose of herbal treatment". *NZ Herald* 12th January.
http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=586212. 2002. Web. 20th January 2012.
- Reid, Nicholas. *A Decade of New Zealand Film: Sleeping Dogs to Come A Hot Friday*. Auckland, McIndoe, 1986.
- Ritchie, Jane & Ritchie, James. *Violence in New Zealand*. Auckland, Huia Publishers/Daphne Brasell Associates Press. 1993. Print.
- Ross, A. "Report on 6A". *NZ Social Worker*, 8:4. January, 1973, 45-49. Print.
- Russell, M. "Writing Wrongs." *NZ Listener*, January 30th, 1982, 44. Print.
- Scott, Mark. "RIOT: Thirty against the thousands". *NZ Listener*. 19th January, 1985. 8. Print.
- Scott, Rosie. *Glory Days*. London, The Women's Press. 1989.
- Stratford, Stephen. *The Dirty Decade: New Zealand in the 80s*. Auckland, Tandem Press. 2002. Print.
- Wilson, Paul, & Arnold, Josie. *Street kids : Australia's alienated young*. Blackburn, Vic. Collins Dove. 1986. Print.