the present age that a TV commentator, on the occasion of a historical documentary about the first great massacre of Jews in Britain in the 12th century, could still reprimand, with sublime condescension, the medieval mentality for interpreting a sadistic sex crime in 1144 as a religious crime, sacrifice, while remaining blissfully oblivious of the same process taking place in social service departments in the late 20th century. The "blood libel" against the Jews - the belief that they commit human sacrifice (the history of this legend is told by Norman Cohn) could even find the otherwise intelligent Ayatollah Khomeini among its gullible believers (see Francis King's The Magical World of Aleister Crowley, 1977, p.101 which quotes his apologia for anti-semitic pogroms). The practice of cannibalism and child sexual abuse are routine accusations against outsider groups of any sort. The early Christians in the Roman Empire were accused of eating human flesh in their Eucharist (anciently by Josephus, himself a Jew, and revived in 1847 by Daumer, who later became a Catholic). The creation of social distances, and fantasies about the cruelty of those we view to have a lesser difference from seem no less prevalent today than at any other time. Self-consciousness about this tendency seems as scarce as it ever was.

Within the increasingly arcane netherworld of radical theory a similar intense rational violence is manifest. Whilst the habitual abuses of their powers by the police have been exposed to an unprecedented degree in their press publicised cases of the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6 (not to mention innumerable less spectacular instances), radicals have exhibited an extraordinary inability to imagine that social work as a practice might occasionally be capable of analogous forms of manufacturing of cases. This blindness - a failure to allow even a reasoned skepticism and demand for evidence that leaves less from any acceptance at face value of the benevolence of the State and its professional servants than from an indubility born of social proximity; crudely the social work movement becomes the same class composition as the radical milieu itself, and in Britain does not eat dog. 25 years ago, the agencies of social control could be intimidated by radical rhetoric for their production of deviance as a routine part of their self-creation as institutions, a thriving school of debunking sociology became sceptics as "moral panics" and "labelling" which are now compulsory topics in social work training. Nowadays, it seems, social work is uniquely immune from any such questioning.

Trapped in the vicious circle of their self-justifying doctrines, and driven to compulsive belief in their social rituals, the moral entrepreneurs of social control who have stumbled blinking into the light of day with tales of demonism and human sacrifice, buggery of animals, and babies in the microwave, represent themselves as explorers of new territories and discoverers of new truths. The stories all start with the same refrain: "slowly, painfully, and unwillingly" they were forced to confront the reality of pure evil; heroically, they describe themselves as boldly cross-firing "new frontiers of disbelief", challenging yet more mechanisms of denial." Always the same demand: you must believe us to display the slightest skepticism is to commit a cruel and dangerous sacrilege. The professional rule of counselling - to believe whatever the victim says is blithely appropriated as the professional's own claims for the same absolute credulity to be granted to their own stories, despite the blatantly self-serving (and self-dramatizing) interests at stake. Was it only 12 years ago that Socialist Challenge (paper of the then International Marxist Group, and thus of a significant element in the social worker Left) published an editorial in defence of the Paedophile Information Exchange? Those with long memories may recall at least one spirited appeal on their behalf by Don Milligan (now writer for the RCP's glossy magazine Living Marxism) at a guest lecture for social workers in the late 70s. The fickleness with which leftists pick and choose their victims for defence should inspire no confidence in those so designated. The great advantage of children, however, for those who would use them as fodder for their campaigns is that, like animals, their voices can be borrowed with less risk of contradiction. Radicals with less malevolent constituencies have time and time again been running when speaking for those who have turned out to have their own voices after all, and one speaking a different language than leftist.

Children can be relied on not to have the power to make use of the rights that their self-appointed mouthpieces keep going on about: they are a special category which can be prevented from contradicting the claims made on their behalf by those who speak for them. The more unspeakable the atrocities inflicted on them, the greater is the authority conferred in those who demand that children be listened to and believed, to determine who will be allowed to say (by direct control over the conditions under which it is uttered through taking into care, as it is called, and by a monopoly over the translation rights). The paradox is that those who decry the lack of rights for children are the same ones who have most to gain from their continuation in this infantilise disempowerment.

To understand the moral forces at work in the Scam/Mythology (hereafter SCAM), the symbolic function of the figure of The Child must be grasped. The Year of the SCAM was, after all, the UN Year of the Child.

In the 19th century the child was the signal of a purity and innocence against which Child Aversion and brutality of society was to be measured. No injustice was intolerable to the bourgeois mind as long as children could be protected from it. Childhood was involved in the embodiment of a weak and defenceless subject whose plight could be dramatised without highlighting the relationship between its weakness and defencesness and the wealth and power of those needing to dramatising it. Individualising tragedy hides collective horrors, and the Victorian middle class needed to exercise its role in producing these very horrors it struggled against. The Victorian journalist W.T. Stead, who spent time in prison for his famous expose of child prostitution, The Maiden Tribe of Modern Babylon, believed that the "English race... has a worldwide mission to civilise, colonise, Christianise, conquer, police the world and fill it with an English-speaking, law-abiding, Christian race... The guttural Child of today may be the founder of a settlement tomorrow" (Stead was also a keen spiritualist and as obsessed with sex as any modern social worker - even Aleister Crowley thought he had "the filthiest mind and the foulest mouth").

The Dr. Barnardo enterprise went furthest in combining Stead's internal and external colonisation in its project to settle the emigrants with a labour supply of slum children, effectively stolen from their families: a social reformers' version of the white slave trade.

The child-saving movement at the end