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THE SALEM SYNDROME

Part 1

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(Investigator 25, 1992 July)

In the days when religion was an obsession, and the fear of the devil was enough to produce widespread hysteria, it was common to charge people with witchcraft. Most of those alleged to have been witches were harmless old women, who, living alone, and with few friends, were easy targets for persecution.

One of the worst examples of this hysteria took place in the Massachusetts Bay colony of Salem Village, in 1692. A number of adolescent females frequented the kitchen of the local minister, Rev. Samuel Parris, listening to the stories told by an old Negro slave of the household, Tituba. Soon, several of them started to display strange behaviour in the presence of their family and friends; screaming uncontrollably, convulsing on the floor, running on their hands and knees, growling and barking like animals. Their behaviour soon spread and other children were soon behaving in a similar fashion.

This type of behaviour, hysterical in its origins, was diagnosed by the superstitious citizens of Salem as something sinister; and the local doctor confirmed their suspicion when he pronounced that the children had been bewitched. The local clergymen agreed that these attacks were due to Satanic persecution. But they went further, they declared that the Devil was acting through human intermediaries, to attack the children. Asked to name their tormentors, the children named three local women, Tituba, Sarah Good and Sarah Osburne.

At a preliminary hearing, to resolve the problem, the children gave a remarkable demonstration, rolling around, apparently in agony, screaming that they were being attacked by invisible creatures which were touching them and pinching them. They were, they claimed, being taunted by imps which sat on the rafters then flew down to peck at them.

Sarah Good and Sarah Osburne were too scared to speak, but Tituba freely admitted her knowledge of the satanic creatures of the invisible world, and the rituals which were used to harness these creatures. She convinced the audience that the infestation of evil was far worse than they suspected and she implicated Sarah Good and Sarah Osburne, and many others, whom she claimed were involved in a conspiracy with Satan against the inhabitants of Massachusetts Bay.

Instead of settling events, the hearing had the opposite effect, it unleashed a wave of mass-hysteria.

To make matters worse, the girls took on the role of oracles and mediums, for they alone were able to point out to authorities the "witches" responsible for the terrible evil sweeping the countryside. The girls responded willingly to this role, identifying anyone they held a grudge against. Then, in turn, anyone who spoke in defence of any accused, were themselves arrested on suspicion of being in the service of the devil. One, Martha Corey, was denounced simply because she expressed her disbelief at the claims being made by these children.

In the end, twenty-two people were executed. Had they continued naming the powerless members of the community there is little doubt that the persecution would have continued for a long time.

However, when the girls named several clerics renowned for their piety, including Samuel Willard, the President of Harvard College, *the magistrates flatly told them they were mistaken*. [1] And from that point "common sense" prevailed, as it was realized that, *people were being condemned on the testimony of a few excited girls*. [2] As doubts increased, the hysteria died away, and no further people were named.

While the Salem children never directly mentioned "sex" or any related connotations of sexual abuse, in the delicate language of that time, the females were said to have been, *Tormented by invisible hands*. [3] Yet it is obvious from their statements, that many of the symptoms described in their hysterical attacks were related to their severely repressed sexual emotions. It is for instance very significant that in all the evidence presented there are no records of young males being molested by these "evil spirits".

It is important that there is a recognition of the fact that sexual energy exists, and is quite strong, in many young children. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to either overlook the latent sexuality in children, or to deny the sexual behaviour in children. As was demonstrated in several recent examples, this type of behaviour, which is entirely normal, is often present but is rarely noted. However, when "therapists" advise parents of "abnormal" behaviour to look for, as evidence of sexual abuse of their children, the parents tend to note "abnormal" behaviour, which has in fact always been present.

There is also a concerted movement by certain individuals to, "believe the children", to assume that whenever a child makes allegations of sexual assault, that the child *must be speaking the truth*, otherwise, *how could they know about "these things"*. This belief often overlooks the fact that, in most of these types of instances, due to their poor questioning techniques, it was the therapists who planted the ideas in the children's minds in the first place.

After Salem, legislators, realizing the danger of accepting such unsubstantiated evidence from young children, incorporated into legislation certain legal safeguards, in order to prevent a repetition of such persecutions. Interestingly enough, while the law included such precautions, it has been clearly demonstrated, in recent times that child welfare authorities, police and prosecutors have frequently ignored such

essential precautions, and virtually taken the law into their own hands and assumed that the offenders were guilty.

Thus, in June 1990, when allegations were made that children were being sexually abused in devil-worship rituals, it triggered a major reaction by social-workers in Rochdale (U.K.). In a series of dawn raids, twenty children from a local housing estate were seized by social-workers and taken into the "care" of the local Social Welfare Department.

Before any determination of the facts could be made, the children were rushed before the court, and the SWD had them made wards of the court (an order which in effect did not really place them under the control of the courts, but rather under the direct control of the SWD).

Despite the protests of parents, and attempts by solicitors representing the parents, the children were held *incommunicado*, totally isolated from their families and friends, forbidden even to receive letters, birthday or Christmas cards since the SWD claimed that cult members could use secret codes, or signs in the mail to intimidate the children.

After eleven months in the "care" of the SWD, during which time the SWD sought to have some of the children adopted, the matter finally reached a court hearing.

After a hearing which lasted forty-seven days, Justice Douglas Brown dismissed all charges against parents and threw the entire matter out of court. He delivered a stinging rebuke to the SWD for *serious errors of judgment* for the manner in which they had handled the affair.

As was later shown, this shameful episode was triggered by a six-year-old dyslexic boy, who had spoken to his teacher about ghosts. As evidence was to show, he was a very impressionable child, and had watched the horror video, *The Evil Dead*, twice the night before he spoke to his teacher.

When he spoke with the teacher he had been confusing events from the video with reality. As a result what he told the teacher, stories of satanic rituals where children had been sexually abused, related to the video, but had been confabulated into his perception of reality. The teacher, concerned at what she was told, quite correctly contacted the police. However, it was at that point that things went horribly wrong.

The police failed to exercise the most basic precautions. Instead of checking the truth of these claims, they accepted them as factual. So, when the child named other friends, claiming that they too had been victims of ritual abuse, the authorities assumed the worst and set in motion procedures which led to these children being seized in the pre-dawn raids on their homes.

The Judge severely attacked the SWD for failing to elicit the truth before rushing headlong into action and seizing the children. He claimed that the social workers involved were so *obsessed with the persecution* that rather than bothering to

determine the facts they had simply accepted what they wanted to hear, and refused to listen to anyone who questioned the veracity of the allegations of this child.

He particularly castigated the senior social-worker responsible for the conduct of the prosecution, for his failure to read the Butler-Sloss Report which examined a previous case of alleged child sex-abuse and clearly set out a number of recommendations for interviewing children in such matters. (Rochdale's director of social services later resigned following this criticism).

In his judgement Justice Brown stated that it was a disgrace that this prosecution had been brought on the flimsiest of evidence and he dismissed all claims that any of the families had been involved in any form of devil-worship, or sexual abuse of their children.

Unfortunately, cases like the Rochdale one are not as uncommon as one would expect. In an almost identical situation in March, 1991, allegations were made of "satanic abuse" of children in the Orkney Islands resulting in nine children being removed from their homes and placed in the care of the local social-services.

There seems little doubt that allegations of Satanism, especially when they involve claims of child-abuse, have a very powerful potential to ignite public fears, a process greatly aided by the media.

In January, 1990 the *Adelaide News* featured, "I was a Bride of Satan." Further sensational exposes were promised, but the issue suddenly "died". On 15th August, 1990 the *Adelaide Advertiser*, in a front-page story, claimed that Satanists had been sacrificing human and animal fetuses; inside they reported on the activities of a satanic cult in Shepparton, Victoria.

The News, on the 20th August, in a page-one headline, claimed, "Woman killed in satanic ritual". Yet, when one read the article, it clearly stated that this was merely a claim being made by the lawyer of a man accused of murder. The accused had alleged that he had been introduced to Satanism that same morning, and he further claimed he had committed the murder, *under the influences of the practices and coupled with the use of a drug*.

On the 23rd August, the *Advertiser* reported "claims" by a Catholic priest that satanic meetings were being held at the Adelaide and Flinders Universities. According to the article, *At the University of Adelaide, a campaign against Satanism by a group of evangelists called Campus Crusade provoked an anti-Christian backlash*.

In fact, as later investigation revealed, it was a strong anti-Campus Crusade backlash which originated, not with Satanists but with ordinary students who were fed up with the activities of the Campus Crusaders who were described as a particularly obnoxious group from the Marantha Ministries, who would descend upon helpless victims and subject them to an impromptu sermon on the evil practices of backmasked rock-and-roll music.

Interestingly enough, the article which triggered this particular response was an item in "On Dit" by Campus Crusader Rory McDonnell, apparently part of a promotion for a CC sponsored film. The article was mainly an attack on rock music, and nowhere did it claim that there was any hint of Satanism at the university. [4]

On the 19th October, 1990 the issue escalated when the Australian Federal Police in Melbourne, announced that *Satanic organizations had carried out human sacrifices throughout Australia. --- We have reliable information from informants that high-ranking members of political parties and high-ranking policemen are involved. These rituals include methods of disposing of bodied which leave no evidence that a sacrifice has been carried out.*

The Melbourne AFP spokesman revealed that they had information about sacrifices in the ACT, NSW, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia, but interestingly enough, very little information about such events taking place in Victoria. Perhaps this is related to the fact that Melbourne newspapers rarely print stories about such rubbish.

Newspapers in the other states tend to publish regular, lurid "reports" about Satanism. Thus, the *Advertiser* on the 23rd October, had a banner headline, *Satanism linked to murdered street-kid*. The story opened with the claim that, *One of two teenagers found stabbed to death last week was petrified she was about to be murdered by Satanists*. Only briefly mentioned in the article was the fact that Adelaide police had said, *they believed there was no evidence to suggest either of the victims had been involved in Satanism*.

Similar stories reemerged in the News on the 29th-30th October, in a special *Fatal Attraction* series. There was no doubt, at least in their opinion, that Satanism was the central and only issue in these crimes. *With no sensationalism intended, those who deal with religion's darker side say Satan worship has reached alarming proportions. Recent events prove its presence---*

As usual, no evidence was presented. The claims were based upon a case which had occurred some years before when a Greek woman had obtained money through false pretenses by claiming to perform witchcraft and black-magical rites, and although the connection was rather tenuous, they proclaimed that this could be, the forerunner to more sinister practices. *Several months ago in Shepparton, Victoria, police, priests and community workers were working to stamp out an outbreak of Satan-worshipping cults.*

Their "evidence" was reports from social-workers and community youth-workers, that such practices were rampant. They repeated the AFP claims about human sacrifices, and printed a claim that *Prominent Catholic theologian, Dr. John Williams, said he had heard of human and infant sacrifices being performed.*

On the second day of this vital-expose, the News repeated their previous claims of satanic cult members holding meetings at the Adelaide and Flinders Universities. Then further in the article they drifted away from Satanism and brought in the subject

of backmasking, tying in this process with teenage suicides, claiming that, *These allegations have even been contested in court. UK heavy-metal band, Judas Priest, went on trial in Nevada. USA, earlier this year, accused of being responsible for the death of two fans who shot themselves while listening to one of the group's albums, Stained Glass.*

The impression given by the News was that two innocent teenagers were listening to the record, and it drove them to grab a shotgun and commit suicide. However, investigation by the Arizona Skeptics revealed that the gun used was a sawn-off shotgun, an illegal weapon.

It appears that all of the media claims concerning Satanism have a similar level of vagueness about them. For instance, investigations by the Australian Skeptics revealed that the Shepparton claims were based upon nothing more than rumours. Some children had claimed that small animals had been thrown onto the railway track as "sacrifices". That claim was sufficient to start the rumours, and from such meager facts, local authorities managed to uncover sinister links with Satanism and also Nazism.

There was a similar hysterical response to Channel 10's series of "exposes" on Satanic cults, which claimed that these cults operated throughout Australia and that they were involved in ritualistic murder, cannibalism, rape and the sexual abuse of children. [5] These appear to be standard charges against Satanists and devil-worshippers.

Channel 10, in what appeared to be a public-service gesture, (but was in fact aimed at grabbing maximum media publicity for themselves), set up a special hotline, with a dozen counsellors on hand. It comes as no surprise that they received hundreds of calls. As a result, *Police said a unit might be set up to investigate the allegations of satanic rituals, including human sacrifices.* [6], and they urged people to come forward with any information they might have regarding such practices.

It is interesting that, while this was a major media item, it died very quickly, and there has been no follow-up or repeat of these allegations. Could this be related to the fact that, despite numerous allegations over many years, it is impossible to find a single instance to substantiate these sensationalistic claims?

Yet despite that, whenever allegation of Satanism, devil-worship, etc. are made, especially when they involve claims of child molestation, there is usually a most dramatic response by welfare and the police. The possibility that these claims, especially when they originate with children, may be false is usually ignored.

As mentioned earlier, in the Salem episode, there is an extreme danger of allowing mass-hysteria to take over control of society. Yet, at the present time there exists widespread evidence that we are in the midst of a similar episode of mass-hysteria.

The worrying aspect is that, just as occurred in Salem 300 years ago, society is again being directed to persecute people by a small group of Fundamentalistic religious

bigots seeking to impose their narrow minded superstitious beliefs on the wider community.

In the same way that any citizen of Salem who questioned the hysterical claims was attacked, these modern witch-hunters are using a skilful programme of propaganda to attack and discredit anyone who does not adhere to their strict religious dogma.

Paranoid about Satanism and the occult, they openly attack anything which they see as "evil", and that especially includes rock-and-roll and heavy-metal music, which they claim is Satanic in its origins [7] containing backmasked messages directing young people to commit suicide and all sorts of other evil deeds. [8]

In the past, Witch-Finders looked for "witch-marks" on suspects. Since almost everyone has some minor defect of the skin, or unusual marks, 99% of the population could be proved to be agents by this method alone. Now, the present day criteria being used by many American police-forces is almost on an equal "scientific" level with that former method used by the Witch-Finders.

Nowadays, police investigations are being influenced by various "loony groups" who are providing police forces with "assistance" in the form of "cult-cops" who hold regular seminars to "train" law-enforcement officers in the detection and identification of Satanic cults and their members.

Investigation of claimed sexual-abuse of children in many police districts is primarily based upon "information" obtained from a check-list, prepared by such Fundamentalistic groups, which contains stereotypical fundamentalistic guidelines of the type of evidence to look for. For instance, does the suspect take drugs? Do they own records by certain proscribed and suspect "pop" groups which could contain backmasked material? Do they own black robes? Do they have pornographic literature or psychic or divinatory implements in their home?

Now possession of such items as graduation robes, or a Playboy magazine is being taken as prima-facie evidence of guilt, and then, in turn, if such items are found, police then look for the "crimes" committed by these "guilty-parties."

It is important to note the manner in which evidence is being obtained, for in many situations of alleged child-abuse, some mention of "ritualistic" activity, whether satanic or not, shows up as a peripheral consideration. [9]

We now find that one of the most frequent areas, in which allegations of ritualistic child abuse are being made, are against child-care workers, especially pre-school teachers.

Notes:

#1. Kai T. Erikson. *Wayward Puritans*, New York. John Wiley & Sons, 1966, p. 149

#2. Erikson. p. 150

#3. Cotton Mather. *Wonders of the Invisible World*, in Samuel G. Drake, *The Witchcraft Delusion in New England*, Roxbury, Massachusetts, p. 80.

#4. To their credit CC have managed to establish what appears to be a lasting impression upon the university. Although the fact that it is an *anti*-Christian impression that they have established, may not give them much joy. As a result of their activities a number of students proposed establishing an Atheists Club. Although this was done merely in jest they had such a large number of students turn up for their meeting that a Humanists Club has been formed.

#5. Incidentally, Channel 10 has been nominated for the Bent Spoon Award by the Australian Skeptics for this particular piece of "journalism".

#6. *The News*, October 29th, 1993, p. 10. "Hundreds call over occult rituals".

#7. The Jehovah's Witnesses recently attacked their number one member, Michael Jackson, for his interest in the supernatural. Certain parts of his Thriller video were perceived as being based upon "sex-crazed Satanism" rather than seeing the truth that it was merely a child's fascination with the things which frightened him the most, girls and ghosts.

#8. Supposedly "hidden" messages on records especially heavy-metal or rock and-roll records, by certain bands, such as Judas Priest, Meat Loaf, Alice Cooper etc., which can only be heard if the record is played backwards. It was reported that Rev. James Brown of the Ironton, Ohio, First Church of the Nazarene, told his congregation that the theme song to the television show, Mr. Ed. when played in reverse contains a satanic message. Played backwards the words, "A horse is a horse, of course, of course," becomes "the source of Satan". Christian Fundamentalists claim that by playing records backwards you become deluded. Strangely enough, there may be some truth in this claim since most of those playing records backwards are Christian Fundamentalist, and it is certainly causing them to have delusions.

#9. Robert D. Hicks, In *Pursuit of Satan*, New York, Prometheus Books. 1991. p. 183.

THE SALEM SYNDROME

Part 2

(Investigator 31, 1993 July)

L Eddie

In our previous edition we looked at some of the similarities between the outbreak of superstitious hysteria three-hundred years ago in the New England village of Salem,

and how we are experiencing a similar recurrence of the same type of hysteria in the present age.

After Salem, witchcraft prosecutions in America almost completely ceased, and American and British legislators introduced numerous safeguards into legislation to prevent people being convicted on the basis of unsubstantiated evidence, especially from young children. However, as we pointed out, in recent times, child welfare authorities, police and prosecutors, have either ignored, or overridden these legal precautions.

This has resulted in a number of examples of children being seized from their homes by various Social Welfare Departments, on the basis of alleged sexual abuse, and, before any determination of the facts could be made, the children were rushed before the court and made wards of the court, (which as we explained. really meant they were placed under the direct control of the SWD, for the children were held *incommunicado*, totally isolated from their families and friends).

These seizures were subsequently shown to be illegal, and *serious errors of judgement*, and that both the police and SWD officials had acted without first determining the truth of the allegations, which had been made by a dyslexic child. It was claimed by the hearing judge that the social workers involved had been so *obsessed with the persecution*, that rather than checking the facts, they had refused to listen to anyone who questioned the claim of this dyslexic child.

There is considerable similarity between this present-day persecution and those three hundred years ago in Salem. During the Salem persecutions anyone who dared question the claims being made by the hysterical females, were themselves considered to be agents of Satan, and that was deemed *prima-facie* evidence of their guilt, and in fact several women were hanged for that very reason. As a result the voices of sanity were effectively stilled.

We are now seeing a repetition of the same type of religious hysteria which swept across Salem three centuries ago. We are experiencing anew social-phenomena, the persecution of certain groups on the basis of hysterical outbursts. The main difference is that the instigators of these current allegations of sexual abuse are not children, they are adults with the minds of children, and their most common targets are people who work with children; and in what is a most bizarre innovation, at least in the annals of modern sexual abuse cases, they have once again turned their attention onto the females, especially female child-care workers.

To examine the various persecutions of this type in recent times would be superfluous. The claims made, and the problems highlighted, are almost identical in each situation. For that reason, it is considered appropriate to examine what is probably the best known example of this type of persecution, the case against Margaret Kelly Michaels, (more commonly known as Kelly Michaels), a Pre-School Teacher at the Wee Care Nursery School, in Maplewood, New Jersey. In 1988 she was sentenced to 47 years in prison, after being convicted on 115 counts of sexual

abuse, against twenty children aged from three to five, students at that centre. These offences were claimed,

--- to have been committed during regular school hours at the nursery --- The Prosecution maintained that she had been able to do all this unnoticed by her fellow teachers, by school administrators, by parents and other visitors to the school, and unnoticed as well by anyone working for the church or attending services at the church—that is to say, unnoticed for nearly 150 school days by an adult. Unnoticed, and on a daily basis, Michaels had also, according to the prosecutors, licked peanut butter off the children's genitals, played the piano in the nude, and made them drink her urine and eat a "cake" of her faeces. For 150 school days not a single child ever said so much as a single word about any of these crimes because - again according to the prosecution - Kelly Michaels had forced them to keep at least 115 terrible secrets. [1]

The Michaels investigation started in 1985, when a four-year old undergoing a paediatric examination had a thermometer inserted into his rectum by a nurse. After a short time the child said to the nurse. "That's what my teacher does to me at nap-time at school." When asked to explain he replied, "Her takes my temperature." As it was to be later shown the child's nap-time monitor was Kelly Michaels.

After speaking with the paediatrician the child's mother was advised to contact the Division of Youth and Family Services, and they referred her to the Child Abuse Unit of the Essex County prosecutor's office. The child was interviewed by the head of this department, Assistant Prosecutor, Sara McArdle and as part of the routine, the child was given an anatomically-correct doll, and according to her report at some time during the interview the child inserted a finger into the rectum of the doll. [2]

Two other children were named. They were then questioned but claimed they knew nothing of such temperature taking. Then a fourth child, who, as it was later suspected, had been pressured by his father, a member of the school board and one of the few parents advised of the allegations being made against Michaels, corroborated the story. Following this "corroboration" a full investigation was undertaken.

Two investigators called on Miss Michaels and asked her to attend for an interview. She was told she would not need a lawyer, a clear breach of her legal rights. On that basis she attended the prosecutor's office where she was interviewed. She was urged to take a lie-detector test, and she willingly agreed. Although she passed the test, this fact was not allowed to be admitted later, as evidence in her trial because the officers did not advise her that she had to first sign a document allowing future use of the polygraph results, a fact she was unaware of.

Two days later the Wee Care administrators sent out a letter to all parents advising them that an investigation was under way involving a former employee. [3] Although there were numerous phone calls from concerned parents, no further allegations emerged. That was not to last. The school invited all parents to a meeting to be advised about the implications of child abuse. At this meeting was Peg Foster, a

social worker from the Sexual Assault Unit at the Newark Hospital and what she told the parents triggered an hysterical response.

She told them that sexual abuse of children is quite common claiming that one-third of children in the United States had been sexually abused, (an, "inappropriate sexual experience" as she described it), before reaching the age of 15. She then encouraged the parents to have their children physically examined for evidence of abuse, and to check the behaviour of their children, indicating that, --- *nightmares, biting, spitting, bed-wetting, masturbation, or for what might be construed in any way as sexual behaviour, or, for that matter, any sort of noticeable changes in behaviour.* [4] She conveniently failed to tell parents that such behaviour is, for many children, normal behaviour, and may indicate other problems.

It never occurred to that mother, or to any of the other mothers, that the hypersexuality of their children might have to do not with Kelly Michaels but with the exhaustive questioning and lurid disclosures to which they were subjected by investigators and their parents.

A week later Lou Fonolleras, an investigator from the Division of Youth and Family Services, attended at the school. It was this psychologist who was to be primarily responsible for the eventual case against Michaels. His initial report reveals something of his character. The church building which was leased by the childcare centre was described by Fonolleras as a "paedophile's paradise", noting that the many *nooks and crannies---would make ideal hiding places for child molesters.* [5]

In his initial interviews, all the children denied any abuse by their teacher. Despite her short time at the school she had been popular with staff and children. Fonolleras was not convinced, he was sure they were lying. He based his suspicions on their body language, and that, "you can't go by what they say." [6] It was Fonolleras who contacted the prosecutor's office recommending further investigations into the matter, and in a two-month long intensive investigation process, Fonolleras, Peg Foster and police investigators spoke to parents, children and staff.

Any evidence which might refute the allegations was quickly and efficiently swept aside. When Michaels' classroom aide supported Michaels the investigators produced a tape-recording of a child accusing *her* of abuse. [17] The aide quickly began to remember things about Michaels that she had "overlooked" before, *Michaels suspiciously even temper, how she seemed to be in a dreamlike state at times, and the like.* [8]

Only one person, Wee Care's head teacher, Diane Costa, refused to be swayed against Michaels, describing her as a "model teacher". But once again the authorities circumvented legal process,

Costa herself was indicted on a charge of failing to report child abuse, which meant that she could not testify oat Michaels' trial without placing herself under the threat of prosecution. The indictment effectively silenced the one authoritative voice that was capable of undermining the state's case. [9]

Fonolleras conducted numerous interviews with the children. In retrospect these are highly suspect. He did not tape-record the conversations, and any notes which he might have taken, he claimed were later destroyed, because he saw no reason for keeping them.

These sessions were interrogations, not interviews. They were conducted in a manner completely alien to normal legal process. Later interviews, which were recorded, reveal that the children have very little to say of their own initiative. Rather, it was not so much what they said as what Fonolleras recorded.

Listening to tapes of the interviews, one might be struck by how little the children actually confided on their own and also by the wholly fantastical nature of so much of what they did say. Most of the children were confused, had nothing to say or flatly denied that anything had happened to them. It was also clear that what a child had actually said during the questioning often carried little weight with the investigators. If a child persisted in denying that anything had been done to them, Fonolleras or another investigator would typically write: "At this time Hugh denied victimization. It should be noted that during the interview, Hugh was victimizing an anatomically correct doll."

As a rule, the children were given knives and forks and then asked to show – on an anatomically correct doll – where Michaels had hurt them. --- a child's response more often than not was to poke the doll in the eye or the neck or a knee. Invariably, the listener then hears the voice of Fonolleras, urging, "Where else? Uh-huh, where else?"

After a succession of "where else?" responses the child winds up poking at a penis, or a vagina, or an anus. Here, the "where elses" stop. Later Fonolleras's official report would note how a child "described" the penetration of her vagina or anus.

Fonolleras was quick to praise those who confirmed his suspicions. "Boy, you're doing so good." But he was stern with those who said no. [10]

The prosecutors, lacking proper evidence of assaults, were obviously well aware that their principal hopes for success lay in the emotional nature of the case. To this end they stirred up public outrage. As the months passed and preliminary hearings followed, each with their dramatic media reports, public outrage intensified, and peer pressure was exerted on anyone likely to support Michaels. Social and peer group pressure created a belief where none had previously existed.

One Wee Care parent, grateful for the kindness Kelly Michaels had shown his child, did write to express his faith in her innocence. Still, the months of group meetings with investigators and other parents eroded his faith. At the trial the father took the stand as a vocal witness for the prosecution. [11]

Then during summer of 1985 parents were asked by the authorities to prepare record details of any "symptoms of abuse" which they might have noticed in their children.

One of the more noteworthy symptoms of abuse listed on the charts was, "Child won't eat peanut butter". The children's lack of appetite for, peanut butter, the

prosecutors contended, was proof of the charge made by the children that Michaels had spread peanut butter on their genitals and then licked it off. [12]

While the allegations appeared quite horrendous, particularly given that the sexual abuse of young children is seen as a particularly obnoxious type of crime by most people, nevertheless there developed a growing number of people who believed that Michaels had been unjustly convicted. In retrospect people saw that the prosecution case against Michaels had been extremely biased. The prosecutors were themselves swept up in this hysterical atmosphere to a point where they lost all sense of objectivity and were quite willing to accept the most incredible evidence, obtained from very young children, and all of it totally unsubstantiated except by other evidence of a like nature from other young children, accepting such flimsy material as "corroboration" of the allegations.

The last time in American history that such uncorroborated evidence had been accepted in a court of law had been at the Salem witch trials.

Like the Salem trials, the Michaels trial, --- *took place in the midst of a national hysteria about the crimes of child abuse* --- [13]. In particular the McMartin case had been headline news since February 1984. Given these circumstances, it would have been almost impossible for her to receive a fair, unbiased trial.

It is perhaps significant that the Court of Appeal, in Great Britain, recently overturned a life sentence imposed on two sisters, after ruling that the media coverage was, *sensational, inaccurate and misleading*. [14]

In our first chapter we looked at several claims where the local media had been involved in the "investigation" of Satanism, and how such public requests triggered a deluge of "alleged" stories of Satanic cults abusing children. It seems that many of these same elements were in operation against Michaels. Not only was the media against her, but in a travesty of justice, the law of the land was used, --- *to sustain the decrees of fear and superstition*. [15]

In effect what was occurring was widespread public hysteria, sweeping aside all common sense and justice. Significantly, her prosecution was almost identical to the prosecutions of "alleged" child molestation, brought against several owners and workers of other day-care centres, at about the same time in other parts of the United States. Although only about half-a-dozen resulted in prosecutions being instigated, investigations took place into hundreds of others alleged cases.

The accused people in these situations tended to be people who had a direct involvement with children, especially teachers, and counsellors. In every situation the prosecutions were based upon the testimony of small children, too young to be aware of the concepts of fact, and whose testimony ordinarily would never have been accepted in any court, especially in view of the descriptions of the most bizarre, and lurid acts.

One significant social force, which overrode the normal sensible legal precaution of refusing to accept the uncorroborated evidence of children was the pressure exerted by child-abuse "specialists" and "investigators". These self-appointed vigilantes of social mores, pressed home their own personal belief that over-and-above all else, (despite any suggestions of alternative explanations), the "children had to be believed". This belief was backed up by a powerful advocate group, the *Believe the Children Organization*, a basically fundamentalistic group which openly promotes the idea that these types of child abuse cases are all part of a major satanic conspiracy against the American people. No longer are there "Reds under the bed", but instead, demonic representatives of Satan's empire, lurking in wait to destroy young American children.

While it is unlikely for such groups to actively look for an alternative explanation, it does seem incredible that public prosecuting offices in several states, all failed to note the precedents established at the Salem trials, and look for other alternative explanations. If they had done so, they could have saved their respective states a considerable amount of money. [16] Unfortunately, they too were swept along by the pressure of public belief.

Parents, "alerted" by the guidelines of these "loony" groups, were actively questioning their children about their teachers, failing to realize they were sowing the seeds of these very crimes in the children's minds. So it was not surprising to hear that a large number of alleged molestations were uncovered especially amongst teachers, particularly in pre-school centres.

In each instance, the allegations are remarkably similar; a number of children reported that their teachers had dressed up in black robes. These robes were subsequently found to be graduation robes, or graduation pictures, showing them in their robes. Likewise, allegations that teachers were involved in pornography turned out to be that they had in their possession copies of magazines such as Playboy, Cosmopolitan, and other such magazines.

The inherent danger in all this is that the net of guilt is being thrown so widely, that many innocent people are being caught in the mesh. It has almost reached a similar stage to that which occurred in Nazi Germany, when school children were encouraged to report any suspicious remarks to the authorities. The greatest danger is that once a person is accused of these types of crimes, it is extremely difficult to prove your innocence.

Just as in Salem the closer people look at the "evidence" the more concerned they are becoming that, not only might this teacher be an innocent victim of a "witch-hunt," but as occurred in Salem, there may be many others who have been falsely accused, and convicted by the media reading public.

Indeed recent reports indicate that another possible miscarriage of justice may have taken place in New Zealand in recent weeks. [17] Without knowing the full details of the matter it is not possible to say whether or not a miscarriage has occurred, however, the circumstances appear to be so similar to the Kelly Michaels matter, that

one suspects there could be grounds for an appeal.

◁[1] Dorothy Rabinowitz, "Witch Hunt", *GH Magazine*, July, 1990, pp. 91-92.

[2] There is no indication as to whether this was the first orifice the child insert its finger into. What has been established is that in questioning other children, when asked to "show" where Miss Michaels bad "touched them", the children would poke and prod the doll in various places, then after numerous touches to various parts of the doll's anatomy the children would invariably touch the genitalia. This touch was immediately noted, and the other touches to non-genital areas were not recorded.

[3] Michaels had actually resigned from the Wee Care centre four days before the first child had been taken to the paediatrician.

[4] Rabonowitz. *ibid.* p. 95.

[5] Rabonowitz *ibid.* p. 95.

[6] Interestingly enough, they were not prepared to believe the children at this state, but later insisted the children had to be believed!

[7] This type of behaviour used to be quite common in the witchcraft trials of the past. One would have hoped that such abuses of the process of law would have died with the last witches.

[8] Rabinowitz. *ibid.* p. 97

[9] Rabinowitz. *op cit.* p. 97

[10] Rabinowitz, *op cit.* p. 96

[11] Rabinowitz, *op cit.* pp. 96-97

[12] Rabinowitz. *op cit.* p. 97

[13] Rabinowitz. *op cit.* p. 93

[14] "Murder sisters freed after prejudice claim", *Sunday Mail*, 13th June, 1993, p. 20.

[15] Rabinowitz, *op cit.* p. 92.

[16] The California trial in 1989 of Peggy McMartin Buckey and her son. Ray Buckey, lasted over two years and cost the state over thirteen million dollars. Hicks. p. 187.

[17] "Children convict creche sex man," *Sunday Mail*, 13th June, 1993, p. 32.

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