

Scandal of the backdoor baby sellers

By HAROLD LEWIS

BABY selling is causing alarm in Britain.

Adoption agencies have found that more and more babies are changing hands in backdoor deals.

The situation was spotlighted last week in a court case when a woman said she paid 50p for a baby boy.

She was allowed to keep the boy on the order of three judges in the Appeal Court.

Worse

Official adoptions reached a peak of 26,986 in 1968. The figure in 1969 was 26,649—and has been falling ever since.

A spokesman for the Association of British Adoption Agencies said: "The situation is worse now than it has been for the last twenty years."

"Many under-the-car-

pet deals are taking place.

"The heartbreaking part is that couples are trudging from one adoption agency to another, without any hope of getting a baby."

Even some nursing homes and doctors are believed to be cashing in on the situation.

Miss Margaret Kornitzer, of the Association of British Adoption Agencies, told me:

"There is always a certain amount of placing done by doctors. When a doctor does this a number of times you begin to wonder."

In an attempt to cut out the murky practice of baby-buying, adoption agencies have made reports to the Houghton Committee.

The committee was set up to study the law, and procedures regarding adoption.

At present there is nothing to stop one woman giving her baby to another but it is a criminal offence to accept payment.

THIS ODD WORLD

SCOOBY, a Labrador, was "arrested" at Morch, Combs, for stealing neighbours' Sunday joints.

GIRLS staging a sit-in at a shoe factory in Fakenham, Norfolk, spent yesterday knitting.

A GULL was rescued after flying into the lightning conductor on a Brighton church spire.

POLICE at King's Lynn, are trying to identify a man who died in Australia by tracing his dentist.

SYLVIA McCURDY, of Ashted, Surrey, has written a book on her Victorian childhood—at 95.

Easter Parade for women prisoners

CHIEFS of women's jails can now spend £33—a rise of £5—on new Easter Parade civilian outfits for each prisoner.

The aim is to help to restore self-respect.

Wheel of misfortune

DISABLED drivers are hitting at an AA decision to charge them £4.50 a year instead of £1.25 if they change from trikes to four wheels.

Death in the sun

A 14-MONTH-OLD girl died in a station wagon parked in sunlight for two hours near Sydney, Australia.

BACKLASH OF HATE

By KEVIN DOWLING

THEY call themselves The Silent Defenders.

They train in secret and are dedicated to revenge against the IRA.

Last week Sunday Mirror cameraman Robert Rendle and I became the first journalists to meet the hooded men of Ulster, the self-styled leaders of a Protestant backlash.

It was an unnerving experience.

Our meeting was arranged by a Protestant of high professional standing.

He wanted, he said, to show the world the realities of Protestant power.

It was nearly midnight

when we were picked up by a car with blazing headlights on a desolate road near Cookstown.

Two hooded men with pistols leapt out and blindfolded us with black linen bandages.

Then followed a long, silent drive through the night, ending at a farmyard.

Our blindfolds were removed.

We found ourselves in a whitewashed barn decked out with Ulster flags, Union Jacks and pictures of the Queen.

Hoods

I saw seven men, all wearing black hoods. Most of them were armed. An eighth stood guard at the doorway.

Their leader sat at an old table.

He pressed a button on

I meet hooded gunmen sworn to revenge

a tape recorder. A voice boomed out.

"I address you as the commander in chief of the organisation, Silent Defenders," the voice said.

His lieutenants, the voice explained, were representative of the six counties of Ulster.

They would die rather than submit to the bunch of blood-thirsty animals roaming the province.

And, the C-in-C went on, they could command support from all parts of Ulster and across the Irish Sea.

So the voice went on. It uttered warnings against the IRA, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Callaghan, and "Tory traitors."

When the voice had

finished, and as we were being escorted from the building, one of the hooded lieutenants took up his rifle and emphasised the point about Mr. Wilson.

He shot at a picture of the Labour leader which was pasted on a gun target.

The 0.22 bullet punched a hole in Mr. Wilson's temple.

Gunman

"That's what will happen to all traitors," the gunman said in a thick Belfast accent.

We were permitted to talk to volunteers in the unit, who told us that there were few B-Specials in their ranks.

Most of their membership was made up of



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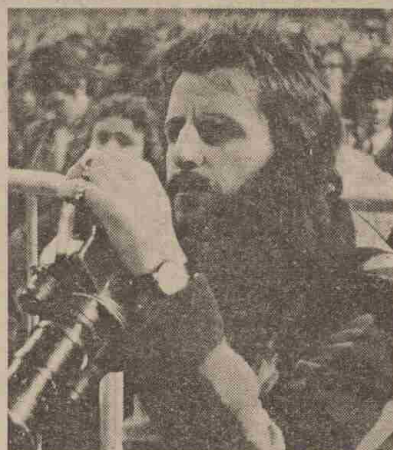
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For other Branch Offices and Agencies see your local telephone directory Yellow Pages



CAMERAMAN RINGO

BEATLE Ringo Starr was back on the pop scene yesterday—but behind a camera instead of his drums. He was at a T Rex concert at Wembley filming the group's lead singer Marc Bolan for a documentary he's making.

