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DRAWING THE LINE

In London, the battle that erupted over a request from the Orthodox raised questions about the place of Jews in English society, and what kind of society it is.

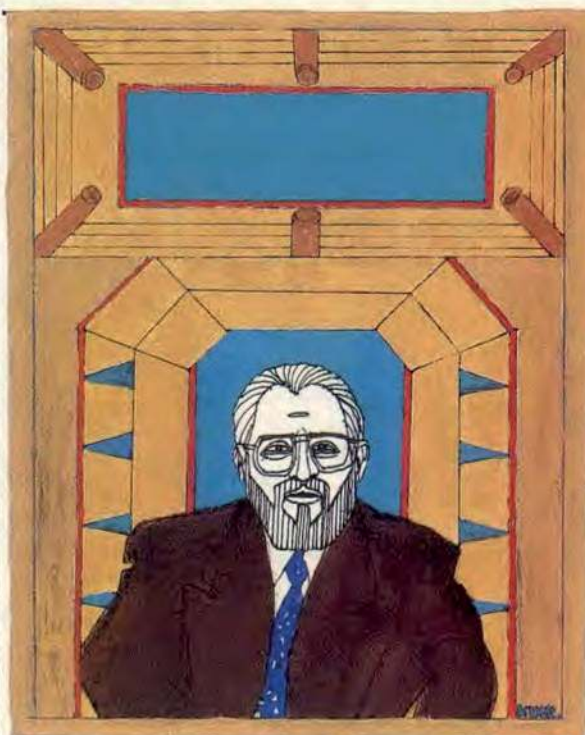
BY CALVIN TRILLIN

MATTHEW LEWIN remembers thinking that it seemed innocuous enough at the time. In Northwest London, the Barnet local council was being asked by a group of Orthodox Jews for planning permission to erect clusters of posts around the area

in the case of the eruv proposed for Northwest London, for instance, existing sections of the Northern Line and the M1 Motorway. In other countries, millions of people were living in eruvim without even being aware of it. There are dozens of them in Israel and in the

United States. Melbourne, Australia, has an eruv. By chance, an eruv established in Washington, D.C., several years ago by the Keshet Israel Synagogue includes both the White House and the Supreme Court.

The six-and-a-half-square-mile area that was to be enclosed by the eruv proposed for Northwest London—it included Golders Green and Hendon and the Hampstead Garden Suburb—has a substantial minority of Jewish residents. Some of the Orthodox among them observe Sabbath restrictions that include a prohibition against carrying anything unless they are within their own private domain. On the Sabbath, for instance, a strictly Orthodox mother can take her baby from the



Of the Sabbath rule, Alan Kimche told officials, "We consider it important, and we ask you to respect that."

for religious purposes—twenty-foot posts connected near the top with fishing line. The idea was to create an enclosure called an eruv, a word that Lewin, who was then a deputy editor and is now editor of the *Hampstead & Highgate Express*, had never heard before. Presumably, most of the *Ham & High's* readers, whether Jewish or Gentile, knew as little about the subject as Lewin did. For planning purposes, the people making the application said, the important thing to know about an eruv is that it exists mainly in the minds of people who believe in it. Most of its boundaries tend to be in place already—

playpen in the parlor and carry him over to his high chair in the kitchen, but she cannot pick him up during the two- or three-block walk to the synagogue. She cannot take a casserole to a shut-in across the street or push an invalid to services in a wheelchair. Pushing, the rabbis decided a long time ago, is carrying.

Since ancient times, procedures have been established for creating what amounts to cooperative private territory—an eruv—so that carrying can extend to a shared courtyard, or a common stairway between apartments, or, these days, a patch of a modern city. A scholar of Jewish law

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would find it unremarkable that the Talmud contains both a prohibition against carrying on the Sabbath and a procedure for modifying that prohibition, but to others the idea of an eruv tended to sound, as the *Independent Magazine* put it, "more than a little weird"—what the average Anglican resident of Northwest London might have called a fiddle. On the other hand, almost any religious ritual—the swallowing of Communion wafers, for instance, or the procedure for having someone declared a saint—sounds weird to a nonbeliever. The point, the group seeking planning permission said, was that those who did believe in an eruv could be accommodated by being allowed to connect the existing boundaries with wires stretched across eighty-five posts in an area that already had forty or fifty thousand posts of one sort or another. "In our tradition, there is the principle that when one party benefits and the other party loses little or nothing, the first party shall be permitted to proceed," the emeritus Chief Rabbi, Lord Jakobovits, has said. The secular version of that, stated by a rather nonobservant Jewish publisher, is "Sure it's absurd and irrational to believe that your life is going to be changed by the presence of a wire, but it's even more absurd and irrational to oppose it."

A lot of people did oppose it. As soon as the proposal became public, anti-eruv groups were formed. Lawyers were hired. Petitions were gathered. Dozens of letters were written to the *Ham & High* and other local newspapers. For a time, the eruv proposed for N.W. 11 and N.W. 4 was an issue of passionate contention at dinner parties in North London, whether the dinner was within the proposed area or not. The planning committee of the Barnet council—reversing the recommendation of its staff planning office—denied permission for the eruv. When an inspector from the Department of the Environment was assigned to hold a public inquiry into the appeal of that ruling, it took two weeks for him to hear from all those who wanted to testify. At around that time—in December of 1993, two years after the planning application—the *Guardian* began a story on the eruv by saying, "A bizarre madness seems to have taken hold of a north London suburb, with predictions of pitched battles on Hampstead Heath and warnings of Bosnian-style ethnic disintegration."

There are some who say that the eruv



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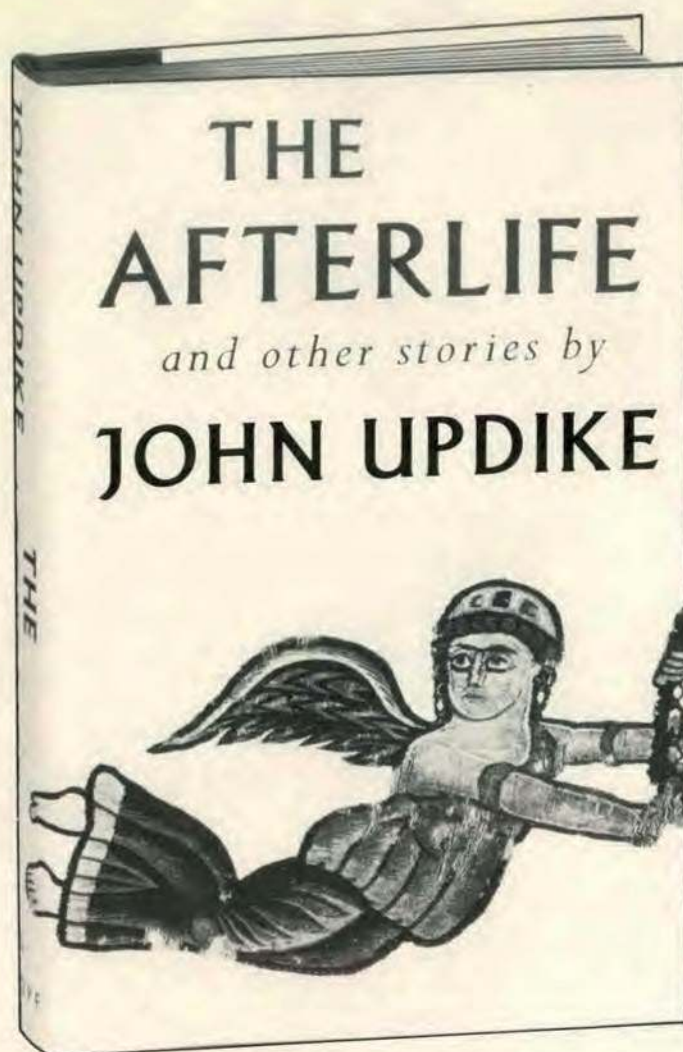


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proponents mishandled their campaign—that they were too aggressive and too quick to accuse anyone who disagreed with them of anti-Semitism. ("The English are, in the end, pretty fair-minded, but they don't like to be hounded or lobbied," someone sympathetic to the idea of an eruv has said.) There are people among the advocates of the eruv who believe that there was a conspiracy to do the project in. They point to a banner headline ("JEWISH ZEALOTS: WE'LL PATROL ERUV") that appeared in the *Ham & High* over a story revealing the purported minutes of a Jewish vigilante cell—a document that the police dismissed as a crude forgery but that many people apparently used as the source for their vision of pitched battles on the Heath. Upon reflection, Matthew Lewin thinks that neither flawed strategy nor a conspiracy was required to make the project controversial. "It took off on its own," he has said. "The feedback flooding in here was amazing. This goes to people's identity. They see it as somehow changing their identity."

THOSE who believe that the campaign for the eruv was bungled point to the annual general meeting of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust in September of 1992—the meeting that first brought the proposal to the attention of the North London public. The Hampstead Garden Suburb, which is just north of Hampstead itself, was established around the turn of the century as a place where people of every class and age could live together harmoniously in verdant surroundings. Its spectrum of housing ranged from near-mansions to rows of artisans' cottages done in English-vernacular architecture. The assortment of classes did not materialize; the artisans' cottages turned out to be too expensive for artisans. But before the real-estate boom of the seventies—a period when the Hampstead Garden Suburb was, in the words of a longtime resident, "afflicted with the affluent"—it had attracted more than its share of nonbelievers and Quakers and the sort of residents who are sometimes described broadly as "people in sandals."

Some sections of the Suburb, as it is known locally, now have a high proportion of Jews. There are also a good number of Japanese and Arabs. There are

even Americans. But the impression an outsider gets from driving through its quiet streets, passing some houses that look as if they might have been snatched from a National Trust village in Kent and replanted intact, is an impression of enduring Englishness. If the Suburb failed to become a model of class mixing, it did become a model of town planning, and it has been declared by the Department of the Environment a "Conservation Area of Outstanding Architectural or Historical Interest." Its residents seem to pour the energy once generated for a variety of causes into seeing that it remains just the way it is. Listening to stories of the frustrations faced by homeowners who wanted to alter their houses in relatively minor ways, a visitor can come to feel that it might be easier to get a slow child into Cambridge than to change your porch railing in the Hampstead Garden Suburb.

The annual general meeting of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust is normally the sort of affair at which the loudest disturbance might be the tinkle of a pair of eyeglasses falling to the floor as the person holding them nods off. The 1992 meeting was not like that at all. The chairman of the Trust Council, Lord McGregor of Durris, had written to the Barnet planning officer strongly objecting to the proposal for an eruv, and eruv proponents, enraged at learning of the letter, had asked their supporters to attend the meeting in order to "demonstrate the commitment of our community to the freedom of religious practice and against anti-Semitism wherever it arises and in whatever guise." Lord McGregor, who has lived in a wooded cul-de-sac of the Suburb since shortly after the Second World War, is what in England is sometimes called one of the great and the good—the sort of people who, being great, are invited to serve on royal commissions and, being good, see it as their duty to do so. A former sociology professor with credentials in the liberal community, he is now the chairman of the Press Complaints Commission. When he tried to explain his views at the annual general meeting, he was shouted down with cries of "Resign!" and "Shame!" Because part of his letter to the planning officer had been devoted to deploring any de-

viation from the strictly regulated appearance of the Suburb, eruv advocates produced photographs demonstrating that the windows of Lord McGregor's own house were not leaded in the manner clearly called for in Suburb regulations. The photographs were not even of the front windows: somebody had presumably poked a camera through the hedges surrounding the English garden of Lord and Lady McGregor. Lord McGregor did resign, on the spot. The chairwoman of the Suburb's residents' association summed up the evening as "the most dreadful, awful meeting I've ever been involved with." The main headline on the Hendon & Finchley Times coverage said "ZOOM LENS SPIED ON MCGREGOR'S HOME."

Perhaps because of that first raucous meeting, perhaps because of the sort of place it is, the Hampstead Garden Suburb became the center of resistance to the eruv. Nobody found it odd that so much of the opposition was coming from an area that was to have only eight posts—all of them in a wooded area that wasn't within sight of any houses. Although some residents of Northwest London were genuinely concerned about the eruv on the conventional planning grounds of aesthetic impact and maintenance and safety, the argument went way beyond the homeowner who didn't want a post in front of his parlor window or the English bird-lover concerned that the wires could be a hazard to his feathered friends ("Our first priority must be toward the birds").

Most of the anti-eruv letters received by the inspector did begin with a sentence or two about street clutter, but most of them went on from there, often to some of the same issues that Lord McGregor had mentioned in his original letter. They said that in an area where people of diverse backgrounds had always lived peacefully together by treating religion as a private matter it was divisive for a minority to foist its religious symbols on everyone else ("One of the bases of toleration is that no sect should behave in such a manner as to affront others," Lord McGregor had said), and as proof of that they pointed to the divisiveness that had already become evident. They said that the use of public land for religious symbols would



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be a precedent that could end up with, as Lord McGregor wrote, totem poles on the Heath. They said that the eruv poles would be a magnet for anti-Semitic hoodlums. They said that the wires would remind refugees from Nazi Germany, many of whom had settled in the area just before and just after the war, of ghettos and concentration camps. They said that the addition to existing street clutter was being proposed not so that all residents could receive some necessary service but simply so "a small group of people could undertake to break their own rules."

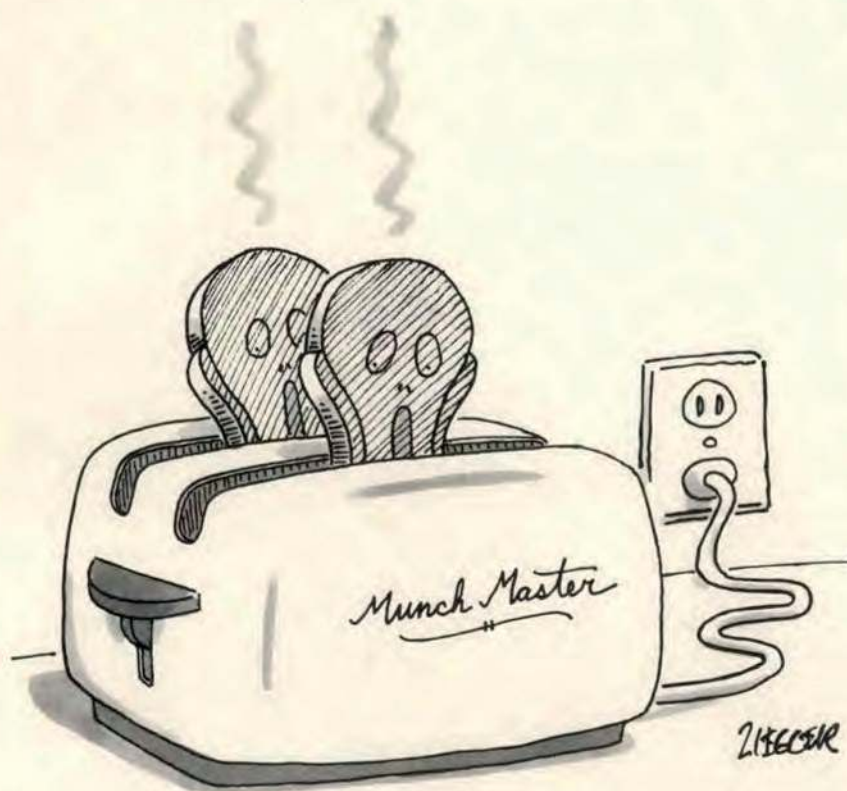
The contention that seemed to be made most often and most vehemently by eruv opponents was one that Lord McGregor hadn't mentioned—that the eruv would create another kind of ghetto. As opponents saw it, the eruv boundaries would signify an area where Jews live, and more Jews would come to live there in order to avail themselves of the eruv. The newcomers envisioned were what Londoners sometimes call Stamford Hill Jews—after a Northeast London neighborhood that has also been referred to as Volvo City, because some of its residents, Hasidim and ultra-Orthodox Jews, tend to drive large families around in Volvo station wagons. (During Hanukkah, the Lubavitchers

among them attach menorahs to the Volvos' roof racks.) There are already a number of ultra-Orthodox Jews in Golders Green; in the evening, men in black suits and beards can be seen hurrying off to worship at tiny synagogues. Particularly in the Hampstead Garden Suburb, a lot of people seemed to see the eruv posts and wires as the equivalent of neon signs that would blink alternately "Jewish Neighborhood" and "Strange Orthodox Jews in Funny Clothes Please Come to Live Here." The president of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Conservative organization, making a point that was repeated by people across the political spectrum, said that the eruv, by attracting more Jews to the area, would "upset the balance of the social mix. When you take a disproportionate number of any minority group into an area it changes the character." The name of the president of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Conservative organization is Norma Blausten. What some advocates of the eruv found most galling was that many—perhaps most—of the most vehement opponents of the project were themselves Jews.

ENGLISH Jews, most of whom descend from the same wave of immigration that brought so many Eastern

European Jews to the United States, have traditionally had to grapple with a problem that can be difficult for an American Jew to grasp: they are not English. Unlike the Jews who came to America in the decades around the turn of the century, Jews who landed in England were not just one of any number of immigrant groups arriving in a country that announced right at the entrance (using the words of a Jewish poet) that it welcomed every country's "masses yearning to breathe free." The Jews who got off the boat in England were the bulk of the immigrants arriving in a country historically wary of foreigners. (When Parliament passed a law restricting immigration in 1905, there was no doubt which immigrants it had in mind.) England made no claim to being a pluralistic society. It was inhabited not by a collection of immigrants who were bound by a set of beliefs but by people who had become The English—a nationality whose monarch presided over an established Christian church and whose Parliament until the middle of the nineteenth century refused to seat any members who had not been baptized. In the phrase of Dan Jacobson, the South African Jewish novelist, who has lived in London for many years, English Jews felt that they had been given a room in the house but were not part of the family. They felt more like boarders. Those who were born before the Second World War still tend to identify themselves as British rather than English—lumping themselves, somewhat uncomfortably, with the Welsh and the Scots.

Although anti-Semitism is hardly unknown in the mainstream of English society, it is often associated with the edges—with people who are sometimes spoken of as yobs and nobs. The yobs, once heavily represented by black-shirted thugs in East End street battles, are still present, in reduced numbers, as the skinheads, who are seen by some as a threat to eruv posts. Among the nobs, the English upper class, a sort of parlor anti-Semitism remains ingrained. After the *Spectator* published musings recently on the possibility that the American entertainment industry may be controlled by a cabal of Jews who don't dress terribly well, one Jewish editor in London called the article a prime example of "genteel English anti-Semitism," and



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the *Spectator's* editor, who is also Jewish, defended it as reflecting, at worst, "British snobbery." Those two phenomena have always been difficult to separate. At a time when Margaret Thatcher, who preferred self-made people to Tory old boys, was seen as having an unusually high number of Jews among her advisers, one of them resigned, and Harold Macmillan was widely reported to have said (at his club, appropriately), "I see there are now more Etonians than Etonians in the Cabinet."

On the whole, though, Jews in England have faced less overt hostility in modern times than the Jews of most other countries, and they have achieved success and prominence in a variety of fields way out of proportion to their numbers in the population. Still, English Jews often feel what has been described as a sort of otherness, a feeling common to longtime boarders. Traditionally, the way they dealt with that otherness was to keep their heads down. Jews tended to abide by the principle that was expressed rather starkly in a letter about the eruv printed in the *Hendon & Finchley Times*: "England is basically a Christian country and if other faiths choose to live here they should not disrupt local populations." (Lord Soper, the former president of the Methodist Conference, seemed to be reflecting that view when he called the eruv "a piece of impertinence.") Living in a country that does not prize ethnic differences or foreign ways, Jews have concentrated on being followers of a religion rather than members of an ethnic group—loyal subjects who happen to worship at a different building on a different day. Jews in public life have tended to have decent English accents and quiet English names. There are only three hundred thousand or so Jews in England, but it is axiomatic among people who discuss such matters that a difference in numbers alone is not what accounts for the absence of an English equivalent of, say, Borscht Belt comedy or the Jewish-American novel.

Of course, some longtime boarders found it stifling to tiptoe up the stairs when family discussions were going on in the parlor, or to come up with an obligation elsewhere around Christmas. A Jewish lawyer who is prominent in public life has often told the story of returning with a Jewish friend to England in

the late fifties after they had put in a year or two of graduate study in the United States—a period during which both of them had felt liberated by being open participants in the noisy give-and-take among American ethnic groups. "We pulled into Southampton and we looked down at the dock," he says. "There was a sea of chalky-white English faces, and our hearts fell."

BEFORE the great influx of immigrants, English Jews had organized themselves into religious institutions that reflected an English way of doing things. There was a Chief Rabbi, the sort of position historically less established among Jews than among the co-religionists of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The union of congregations that the Chief Rabbi presided over—the United Synagogue—was actually established by an act of Parliament in 1870. Until twenty-five or thirty years ago, its council included members of the great Anglo-Jewish families known as the Cousinhood—people like the Rothschilds and the Montagus, who had been in England for generations when the Eastern Europeans arrived. The United Synagogue carried on Jewish worship with English formality; until not long ago, the officers of its congregations appeared in services wearing top hats. The services were Orthodox. For a variety of reasons, the United Synagogue remained Orthodox, although its interpretation of Orthodoxy was rather expansive until the Cousinhood was supplanted in the leadership by Jews of more recent origin. Compared with the United States, a relatively large percentage of English Jews—even English Jews with decent English accents and quiet English names—are at least nominally Orthodox. They may even observe the Sabbath, although probably not strictly enough to abstain from carrying their house keys. Jewish young people from around North London congregate on the streets of Hampstead once a week—the young women among them are sometimes called beccs, from the name Rebecca—and their night for such socializing is Thursday. On Friday night, many of them are expected to be home with their families.

Although the United Synagogue's percentage of synagogue membership is shrinking, it remains by far the largest

Jewish religious institution in England. To the irritation of people who belong to what Americans would call Conservative or Reform congregations, or to no congregation at all, the Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue is still seen as the spokesman of the Jews. In recent decades, the United Synagogue has grown more Orthodox—a number of its younger rabbis got their rabbinical training from the Lubavitchers; the Chief Rabbi will not appear on a public platform with rabbis of more liberal versions of Judaism—but many people who might go to services only on the High Holy Days, if then, continue their membership in it. The United Synagogue is, after all, the Jewish equivalent of the Established Church. In the words of Sidney Brichto, an American rabbi and author who has spent many years in England, "What's the difference which shul you don't go to?"

In the past few years, of course, England has become much more of a collection of immigrants than it used to be—Commonwealth immigrants from the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent, Europeans moving in and out freely through the open borders of the European Union. The faces on the dock at Southampton are no longer uniformly chalky. England is no longer the sort of place in which the only religious building that truly fits into a quiet suburb is an Anglican church—a building that always seems architecturally appropriate and, given Anglican attendance figures, has the added advantage of causing very little traffic.

There is a mosque in Regent's Park. State schools that are predominantly, say, Sikh or Muslim can opt out of the requirement to have school prayers of a "mainly Christian character." In the words of Vanessa Feltz in the London *Jewish Chronicle*, "There is no longer a homogeneous 'norm' from which we are excluded." English Jews in their twenties and thirties are more likely than their parents to describe themselves as English, but they are also more likely to identify themselves as Jews. "There's a strong generational split," Matthew Kalman, who edits *New Moon*, a magazine aimed at younger Jews, has said, pointing out that Jews actively opposed to the eruv are from the older generation. "Young people believe that Jews in

a multicultural society—like gay people, like black people—have to demand their rights. Our parents' generation are used to Jews' being invisible. They like being together but they don't like to admit it. They think the Gentiles don't see a lot of Jews in N.W. 11. The eruv threatens their invisibility."

New Moon is committed to encouraging Jewish "cultural ethnicity" among its readers—it explores Jewish literature and films and food and comedy and dating rituals—but at this point the most striking aspect of increased Jewish awareness among the young is religious. In this era of group identification, some Jewish teen-agers who feel the need to identify with their group tend to do so by wearing yarmulkes in public. Some young business and professional people who were brought up in the relatively flexible version of Orthodoxy that was customary in the United Synagogue have joined congregations more strictly observant than the ones they went to as children. In the context of the way English Jews have been Jews, some think that the only way to be more Jewish is to be more observant.

One of the most vibrant of the new congregations is Ner Yisrael. It coalesced in the mid-eighties around Alan Kimche, an English rabbi who, after some years in Israel, returned to London in 1984 to run lunchtime Torah-study groups at firms in the City. In the left-right shorthand sometimes used to gauge degrees of strictness in observance, Ner Yisrael stands to the right of the United Synagogue and to the left of ultra-Orthodoxy, which is most prominently represented in

London by a Stamford Hill union of congregations known as Adath. The members of Ner Yisrael, attracted from both United Synagogue and Adath backgrounds, tend to be people in their thirties who are university educated—the women as well as the men—and are working in, say, law firms or architectural firms or businesses in the general community. They don't wear black coats or side curls, but they are in fact strictly Orthodox Jews. On the Sabbath, they observe the prohibition against carrying anything outside their homes. The women among them, many of whom have full-time jobs, are less passive about being housebound on the Sabbath than



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"To this day, I can hear my mother's voice—harsh, accusing. 'Lost your mittens? You naughty kittens! Then you shall have no pie!'"

ultra-Orthodox women might be. Both the men and the women tend to be more assertive about Jewish matters than their parents are. It was Alan Kimche and his followers who decided to push for an eruv in Northwest London and got an expert over from the United States to consult about the boundaries. On the theory that a congregation of only a hundred or so families could be easily swept aside by the powers that be, Ner Yisrael took its plan to the United Synagogue, which, after some hesitation, decided to embrace the eruv proposal. The band of people working for an eruv officially became the United Synagogue Eruv Committee. The project was now under the authority of the Chief Rabbi, who remains, whether his congregants require an eruv or not, the spokesman of the Jews.

JEWISH opponents of the eruv—accused regularly in the Jewish press of suffering from "inhibitions about their own Jewishness"—made no apologies for not wanting to live in a "Jewish neighborhood" or for not accepting the

definition of Jewishness offered by what they considered a small group of fundamentalist zealots. Some of them were indeed people with memories of ghettos or concentration camps. Some of them found it embarrassing not simply that Jews were, as they saw it, trying to force something on their neighbors but that the something in question struck many people as an insanely legalistic bit of medieval hairsplitting—what one letter-writer called a "magic schlepping circle." The eruv, according to another letter-writer, made Jews appear to be "a totem- and taboo-ridden tribe."

In a bit of Jewish irony that people caught up in the controversy were probably unable to appreciate, the true fundamentalists—the Adath rabbis, who represent the sort of heavily bearded and strangely costumed Jews that a Hampstead Garden Suburb householder, Jewish or Gentile, would have been most worried about having as neighbors—were opposed to the project from the start. Some of them apparently had doubts about whether something that worked in a walled village in ancient

times could be applied to a modern urban setting. Some were worried that removing any reminder of the distinction between the Sabbath and other days would serve eventually to undermine strict observance, or that an enclosure might be breached without anyone's knowledge. Cynics said that the Adath rabbis were against the eruv because it wasn't their eruv or, more specifically, because it was Alan Kimche's eruv. ("They hate him. He's stealing their children.") It was even suggested that ultra-Orthodox men who now see their wives hardly at all on the Sabbath, given Friday-evening services and Friday-night celebrations for the births of sons and long services on Saturday, opposed the eruv because they like things the way they

are. Chaim Bermant, who does a lively column for the *Jewish Chronicle*, wrote that the Adath rabbis, whom he sometimes refers to as the Men in Black, have "an instinctive aversion to anything which might make religious observance less burdensome and the holy Sabbath an actual source of joy for the observant."

TOWARD the beginning of the eruv controversy, Rabbi Kimche said that Gentile residents would not be affected by the eruv any more than they were affected by their area's postal code. In fact, there are many people, in London and elsewhere, who would fiercely resist any attempt to tamper with their postal code. Area codes are also closely held. When London changed to a system of two area codes a few years ago, there was grumbling in North London itself over which neighborhoods had been assigned to the new 081 code and which to the tonier 071 of Central London. People do define themselves partly by such ostensibly trivial tags, and the eruv committee seemed unprepared for

how resistant some residents of Northwest London were to the prospect of someone's tampering with the definition. Rabbi Kimche and his followers may also have underestimated how difficult it would be to explain that an eruv is not, in fact, a fiddle. At one point, he said not long ago, he told some officials, "You don't understand it, you won't understand it, and, quite honestly, you don't need to understand it. The point is that we want it, we consider it important, and we ask you to respect that."

Gentile residents who couldn't imagine accepting an eruv for the reasons expressed by Rabbi Kimche were, in the words of one person who favors the eruv, "less anti-Semitic than just not multicultural." Although eruv proposals have occasionally caused controversy in the United States, the way the argument played out in Northwest London was seen by a lot of people as peculiarly English—a reflection of how slowly England is changing toward pluralism. In the view of Ned Temko, an American, who edits the *Jewish Chronicle*, "England is becoming a multi-ethnic society, but it's deeply, fundamentally, uni-ethnic." Many residents of places like the Hampstead Garden Suburb would argue that they already have a multicultural neighborhood—one that would be threatened and divided by the sectarianism of the eruv—but the notion of multiculturalism traditionally associated with the Suburb amounts to people from a variety of backgrounds all acting more or less English. That has for years included a synagogue, as well as an Anglican church, but for a lot of people it still does not include a magic schlepping circle. According to one resident of the Hampstead Garden Suburb, the eruv committee "transcended the unwritten rules of the game. They were breaking the rule about being different."

A COUPLE of months after the inquiry into the eruv appeal, the inspector in charge forwarded his report to the Secretary of State for the Environment, who would make the final decision. The betting was that the report would recommend that planning permission for the eruv be granted. The inspector, after all, would presumably make his decision on the ground of planning policy rather than group rela-

tions. What the Secretary of State for the Environment would do was more difficult to divine. That decision, which had been expected to take several weeks, was not handed down for months—a delay that led to ornate speculation in N.W. 11. Politically, some evidence developed that the Conservatives had something to gain, at least in North London itself, by reversing the Barnet council's planning committee—in a council election last spring, a campaign by eruv advocates against their opponents on the committee was thought to have been one element in greatly reducing the normal margin of a couple of Conservative councilmen—but it was difficult to know whether a significant number of voters elsewhere might see a pro-eruv decision as a surrender to Jewish pressure. The person who happens to be the Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer, is a man who left the Anglican Communion for Rome after the Anglicans voted to permit the ordination of women, and those who speculated on his personal predilections were split as to whether a man so conservative religiously would be appalled by Orthodox Jewish paraphernalia in the streets of Northwest London or understanding of it.

Finally, this fall, more than six years after Ner Yisrael members went around with their American consultant mapping out boundaries, the Department of the Environment announced that the inspector had indeed recommended approval of the project and John Gummer had upheld that recommendation. One homeowner has appealed Gummer's decision to the courts, and there remain some bureaucratic hoops to go through. Eruv proponents, though, are optimistic that the eruv will be operational in a matter of months. In the meantime, Rabbi Kimche and his supporters hope to build some bridges to those who opposed the project, particularly the rabbis of Adath. For a while, the letters column of the *Ham & High* was reheated by Gummer's announcement, and the leader of an opposition group still says that the eruv may never go up. Rabbi Kimche believes that resistance in places like the Hampstead Garden Suburb will melt away only after the eruv is established and people realize that physically it hardly exists. "It's the concept that's disturbing," he says. ♦

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