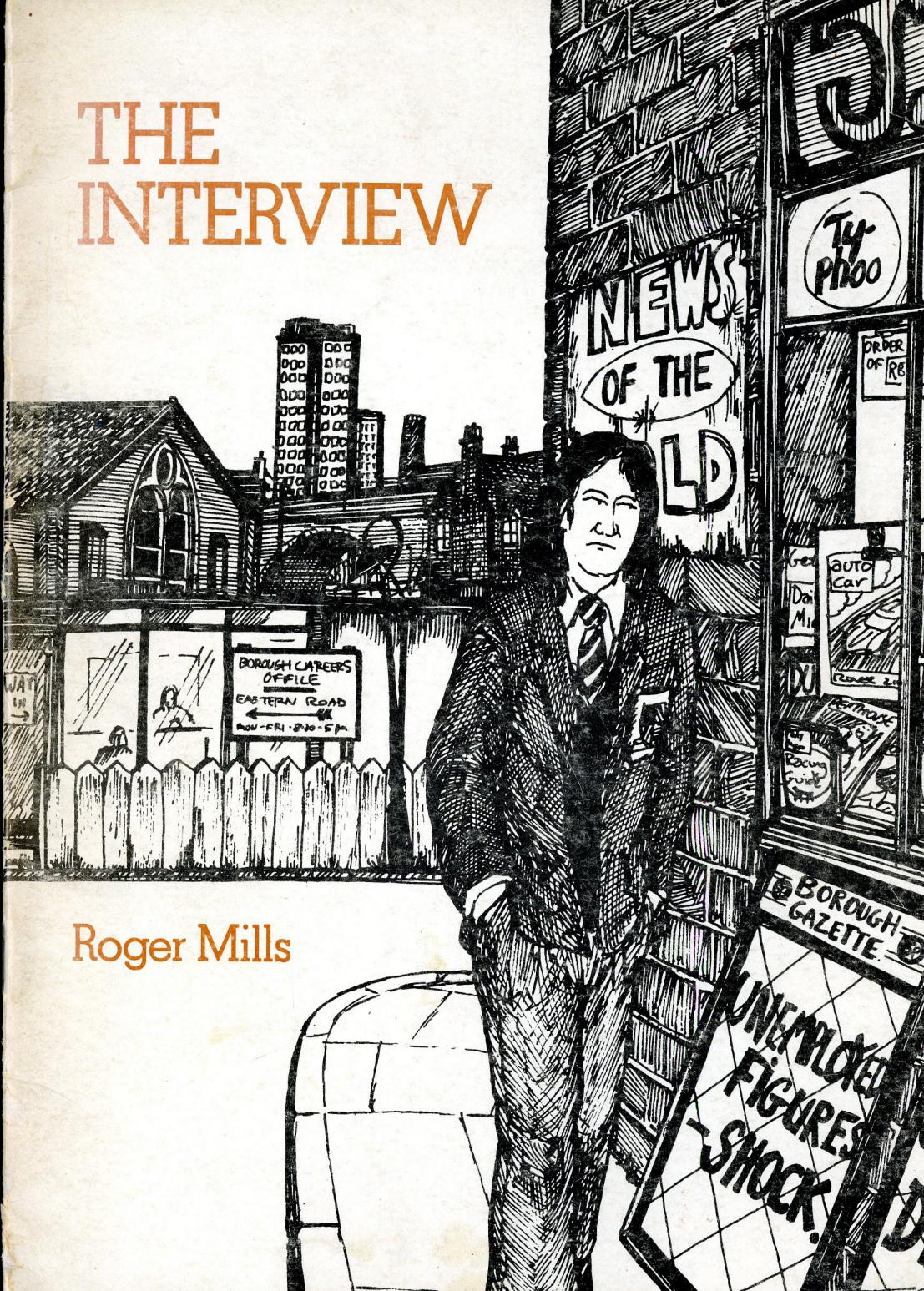


# THE INTERVIEW



Roger Mills

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for the author  
S. Jackson  
Careers Officer

No, it wasn't inconvenient.

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Easton Walk  
London NE8

Dear Roger,

17 June

Mr. Davies tells me that you are leaving school this summer and may need help in finding employment. I shall be pleased to see you here on Tuesday 22nd June. If this is inconvenient or if you do not need any further help, perhaps you could let me know in advance.

Yours sincerely,

P.P. G. Jackson

G. Jackson  
Careers Officer.

No, it wasn't inconvenient.

The Borough careers office was in Easton Walk, a short, shabby road off the High Street, hidden behind the Salvation Army and a Bingo house.

It is a one storey pre-fab that must look like a house of cards to a strong wind.

"PULL," the door said.

I did.

Once I was inside,  
the door slammed shut,  
and cut off the sound of the traffic.

A thin young man with a beard  
was on the telephone.

He pointed to a chair by his desk  
and I sat in it.

He went on talking  
and took no notice of me.

It was a fine day,  
and very hot.

The air was thick and tacky  
and girls picked lazily at typewriters.

A door opened behind me.

Someone said goodbye,  
the doors flapped  
and let in the racket from the street  
for a moment.

A bald man in a grey suit  
came to the young man's desk  
and went through the bottom drawer.

The young man hung up the phone  
and asked me who I had come to see.

"Mr G. Jackson," I told him.

"Oh, that's him down there," he said.

The bald head came up  
and the red chubby face  
smiled over the 'IN' tray.

"Hang on a bit, old son," he said.  
"I've got a customer in there already."

He tilted his head  
towards an open door behind me.  
It had his name on it.

"Won't be long," he promised.  
He hadn't found what he was looking for,  
but he bounded back to his room.

The young man with the beard  
waved his hand at the waiting room.  
I went in.

There were two people there,  
a black boy and his girl,  
both with Afro hair styles.

The room was mostly glass  
and the sun was frying us.

I didn't say anything.  
Now and again  
the black youth mumbled to his girl-friend.  
I bet he didn't get the job he wanted.

Posters on the wall  
steered you towards the army and navy.  
It was one way out.

I picked up a book:  
“SCHOOL LEAVER’S HANDBOOK”.  
I opened it at page one.

“THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OFFICER.  
You met the Youth Employment Officer  
in school.  
They like you to think of them as friends,  
and are always ready  
to help you find the right job.”  
It didn’t say  
they would find you the job  
you really wanted.



I saw a heading,  
"INTERVIEWS AND LETTERS  
OF APPLICATION".  
This is what it said.

"When to an interview you go,  
Dress carefully, but without show.  
Arrive in time, don't chew or smoke.  
Or else they'll choose the other bloke."

Suddenly G. Jackson appeared at the door  
and whispered my name.  
I threw the booklet to the table,  
but missed.

I heard it slap to the floor  
as I followed him to his office.

The carpet was thick and the walls clean.  
G. Jackson opened a file with my name on  
and began to talk.

Outside the window  
two girls in hot pants  
were hipping down the road.

I heard him say  
" . . . and you are still not sure  
about a job."  
He looked up with a smile.

As if it was a big effort,  
G. Jackson lit up a cigarette.

No. 6. tipped. wall  
I wondered if he was going to offer me one.  
He didn't.

"I saw you last year, didn't I, Roger?"

He had.

That time, I had told him

I wanted to be a journalist,

and he laughed in my face.

He waved a bit of paper at me.

"On this form,

you gave me your C.S.E. subjects."

I nodded.



"Now, you've had the results."  
I nodded again.  
"Could I have them, please?"

Oh. That was a hard one.  
I had hardly looked at my grades.  
In fact, I could hardly remember  
what I had passed  
and what I had failed.

I told him as much as I could.  
There were some 3's and 4's,  
and I got a 2 in English  
and a 6 in Chemistry.

"That's a fail," he said.  
"Yeah, and what else —  
Oh yeah, Art was Grade 2."

"I haven't got that on my list,"  
he said, looking put out.  
He looked at me.  
"Sorry," I said.

He looked down at the file again,  
and then his head came up.  
He put his hands flat on the desk  
with the fingers linked together.  
"What did you have in mind?" he asked.  
"W-well," I stuttered.  
"I don't know exactly what job,



Outside, the traffic jam  
were playing tunes on t

1ST MARY  
MISSION

FLUNGE'S  
REMOVALS  
27 CANAL STREET.



s  
heir horns.

but I thought something artistic  
would suit me best.”

He stared at me blankly and sniffed.  
He leaned back in his chair.  
Battle was about to commence.  
“Like what?” he asked,  
peering crossly over his glasses.  
I took a chance.  
“Photography?”  
“Photography?” he repeated.  
“Taking photos,” I said.  
“Yes, quite.”  
He brushed his forehead.

Outside, the traffic jams  
were playing tunes on their horns.  
“Have you a camera?” he asked.  
“Yes.”  
“What sort of photos do you take? Snapshots?”  
“Yes.”  
There was silence.

“I had the idea that I could start  
by working in a camera shop.  
You know, selling cameras to start with.”

“But you said  
you wanted an artistic job.  
What would be the difference  
between selling cameras

and selling — say, tins of food?"

He grinned. So did I.

This was a trap.

"Well, a grocer would be selling tins of food for ever, wouldn't he?" I said.

"In a camera shop you could get higher."

G. Jackson stared at me like a television interviewer who wants his guest to say more. I couldn't.

"I'm afraid," he stated, "that from the sales side you could only get on in the technical field. You would have to know a lot as well as having a great deal of talent. For example, you would need to know about physics —"

"And chemistry."

I finished it off for him.

"Exactly.

It's a cut-throat business.

If you had the technical know-how, you might get on.

But with just an artistic bent, well . . ."

He laughed.

G. Jackson closed my file  
with the flat of his hand,  
as if to say, "tough".

"Well, it was just a thought," I said.

"The whole art field, you see . . ."

He stopped, and began again  
on a new tack.

"It's supply and demand, old son.

Too many people demanding jobs  
and not enough jobs to go round.

Hundreds and thousands leave art school each year  
and even they can't find jobs."

He paused again.

"Your teachers," he said.

"Your art teachers at school,  
are they good?"

"They vary a lot,  
but on the whole they are."

There was silence.

"There you are —

they may have wanted jobs in Commercial Art.

It isn't like the railways, you know.

Even they may not have been good enough."

He pointed to a painting on the wall.

"A friend of mine painted that,

but even he couldn't get a job  
in the art world.



I mean, even I have 'O' level art,  
but I wouldn't base a career on that."

The telephones rang.  
He had won the round.  
He was glad the bell had rung  
while he was ahead.

When the call ended,  
I got the first word in  
before he could begin.

"What you were saying, in fact,  
is that my choice is limited."

"Quite."

"Well, I don't think it's too much to ask,  
to want an interesting job."

"Well," he replied,  
"I don't think that any job  
is interesting all the time, do you?  
My god, this one gets boring at times,  
believe me."

From where I was sitting,  
it was easy to believe.

He pushed back his chair  
and went to the door.

"I'll tell you what," he said,  
"I'll take a look  
and see what's on the books this week.  
We don't get many jobs in art.  
I may have to send you to our city branch.  
They get more of that sort of thing."

He opened the door,  
and stepped out.

"There you are —  
I heard him say  
to the young man with the beard,  
"He wants an artistic job."

There was a noise  
that might have been a laugh.

Above me, two flies were flitting

around the lampshade.  
I could hear them buzz  
in the lull of the traffic.

“I’ve looked around  
and there’s not a thing,”  
said G. Jackson suddenly.

He took an expensive pen  
from his top jacket pocket  
and wrote out an address.

“If you go along there tomorrow,  
I’m sure they will try to help you  
as much as I have.  
Advertising jobs —  
it’s not my department, old son.  
I’m sure they will be more use to you.”

He was beginning to bluster.  
He hadn’t been able to make me take  
a job in a metal box factory,  
and I had held my ground.

And that was it.  
I thanked him and shook his hand  
and was out in the street again.

Not a hostile or unhelpful place really.  
But at sixteen  
they wash their hands of you.



You are in the grown-up world then.

It was hot outside,  
but not so stuffy.  
Maybe there were others,  
friends or relations,  
who might know of a job.  
I did not have to rely  
on the Careers Office.  
I was not helpless.

Other than about leaders

The Good Old Bay Old Days: An article written by  
Sally, describes a typical Sunday at the cabin  
in working class East London. Her work is long with  
washing and ironing, 30p breakfast.  
Carole says the time: "The work of most people are  
easy work. George decides not to go to the station and  
stays on the pier. He describes the countryside and  
countries to my children, and uses pictures a lot of  
descriptions. Interested with fine drawings. 35p breakfast  
lunch note. An oil paint poster may be painted in  
sets of 10 for £5 a set including postage.  
We always measure leases, documents on these people  
and photographs for new jobs. These should be  
submitted to Ken Mobbs, Contractor, 136 Kidsgrove  
High Street, London E8.

## Other new adult readers

**The Good Old Bad Old Days:** An elderly woman, Lil Smith, remembers a typical Saturday of her childhood in working class East London. Her story is told with warmth and humour. 30p paperback.

**George and the Bus:** The story of what happens one day when George decides not to go to the factory and stays on the bus. He rediscovers the countryside and memories of his childhood, and asks himself a lot of questions. Illustrated with line drawings. 35p paperback.

**Please note:** Any of these books may be obtained in sets of 10 for £2 a set including postage.

We always welcome readers' comments on these books and suggestions for new topics. These should be addressed to Ken Worpole, Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.

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"The Interview" is the third in a series of large print reading books for new adult readers. The books are written by working people from their own experiences.

In this short story, Roger Mills describes some of the problems involved in leaving school and finding a job — or choosing a career. Roger Mills is now 22 years old and works in an office which designs leaflets and posters. He is a very active member of the Basement Writers, a group of working class writers who meet every week in Stepney. He is also involved in the work of Centerprise in his free time.

Alan Gilbey, who did the drawings for this book, also lives in East London, and is a member of the Basement Writers. Alan, who is 18, also writes and is just about to have a book of poems published.

30p

