

# The New Criterion

## Letters

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### Backbenchers & youthquakers

by [Mordecai Richler](#)

On the London scene

*Flicker ... whirr ... Move it along, Granddad, you're getting in the way of The Scene! The London Scene, that is! From Soho to Notting Hill, from Camberwell to Camden Town, the capital city of Dear Old Blighty pulses anew with the good vibrations of an epic-scale youthquake!*

—*Vanity Fair*, March 1997

I first settled in London in 1950 at a time when the rubble left over from the Blitz was still in evidence here and there. Food and clothing rationing were still intact. Dowdiness was the rule. But the admirable new National Health Service was working to just about everybody's satisfaction, and I never once encountered a beggar on the streets. In 1957, along came the Suez crisis. I attended a protest rally in Trafalgar Square and joined the march on Downing Street. A French Communist had instructed us in how to cope with the police on horseback, the so-cal ...

Mordecai Richler

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