

# Nottm Voice

## A contribution to the Great Education Debate

THE TORY MANIFESTO for the May County Council elections (published this month so that everybody will have forgotten it by May and vote for them in spite of it) comes up with the startling proposition that you can save money on education and improve educational standards as well.

This is quite true, of course. The quickest way to do both would be to sack Bill Cairns, woolly chairman of the Education Committee and top claimant for council expenses by several thousand pounds. (True, Coun. Cairns lives at Warsop and has to startrek to County Hall for every meeting - but surely it would be cheaper to build him a palace on the Victoria Embankment.)

In fact, the Tory wheeze is nothing more than the hoary old chestnut of leaving vacancies unfilled, though how this would improve standards is somewhat enigmatic - perhaps teachers are now so bad that schools would actually be better without them.

What is frustrating, however, is that the manifesto comes within a whisker of a brilliant money-saving scheme, and then shies away because of blind political prejudice. For, after arguing that money can be saved by not replacing staff, the manifesto hastily adds that, of course, this will not apply to important, essential people like headmasters.

A perfect example of myopia caused by the automatic Tory genuflection to authority! As any teacher knows, the headmaster is always the least useful person in the school. Much less useful, in fact, than the school caretaker. A headmaster may be away for weeks on

end and barely be missed, but if the caretaker is off for a single morning, the whole school is likely to be plunged into darkness and sub-zero temperatures.

In fact, there is almost nothing to be said for modern headmasters. Few of them teach - becoming a headmaster is a standard get-out for teachers who don't like teaching. Nor do they administrate very much - a competent school secretary can clear the headmaster's in-tray in half the time it takes him; and will happily do so when he is away and not creating unnecessary work to justify his ludicrously inflated salary. And as for disciplinary matters - any senior member of staff can make the necessary policeman noises from time to time.

Headmasters are the biggest confidence-tricksters in education (a profession full of them). If the Tories had the guts to follow their reasoning through, they would sack every headmaster in the county the moment they took power - and immediately knock several hundred thousand completely wasted pounds off the education budget ●

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WE RECENTLY received two identical letters from East Midlands Arts informing us that their circulars were now being sent from Birmingham by computer. "The new system," the letters said, "will give several

benefits to the Artspost public. New addresses and amendments will be dealt with much more quickly and there will be an automatic check on duplication of addresses which will almost totally eliminate this problem." ●

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THE ATTEMPT of the Tory City Council to save £8,000 by no longer supplying dustbins to council tenants has finally come to an end.

Apart from being incredibly petty (the saving is about 0.0410256% of last year's Housing Committee budget), this daring plan to prune back reckless spending on dustbins by the former Labour Council ran into serious difficulties.

It was soon discovered that the Council has for some forty years been insisting that private landlords are responsible for providing dustbins for rented accommodation, and that where they don't the Council provides the bin and charges the landlord.

However, one landlord has recently appealed against a notice requiring him to provide a dustbin, on the grounds that if the Council, as landlords, don't provide dustbins, why should he.

Furthermore, problems soon became apparent in the collection of refuse. The Director of Technical Services reported that refuse was no longer being collected from some forty-three council houses owing to unserv-

iceable bins and that "upwards of 800 such bins are giving cause for concern".

There were only two options open. Either the Council could rule that all tenants should provide their own bins - which would be difficult and expensive to enforce - or they could rule that all landlords should, including themselves. All these arguments were set out in a report from the four council departments concerned.

The Finance Committee finally decided on Tuesday, 11th January that the only sensible thing to do was to go back to the old system of providing bins, and to put back the £8,000 in the Housing Budget.

There is, of course, no truth in rumours that the estimated cost in officers' time of sorting out this mess is about £8,000 ●



## Letters

Dear Nottingham Voice,

Far be it from me to defend bureaucracy, but I must protest at your one-sided presentation of the item on salary increases for Area Education Officers. Over the last two years these officers (eight AEOs and three staff members above the overtime "bar") have worked about 8,000

hours of unpaid overtime, mainly arising from attendance at school managers' and governors' meetings. In 1974/5 there were about 970 of these meetings, of which 800 were held outside office hours, and in 1975/6 there were 1092, of which 882 were held outside office hours.

These officers are not entitled to overtime payments, and they have been unable to have time off "in lieu" because of pressure of work in the Area Offices.

What is really needed (assuming all the work they do is necessary, which is another matter - but it should be pointed out that the new managing/governing bodies were set up in the cause of democracy) is (this sentence seems to have got out of hand) extra staff to cope with a quite unacceptable workload, but presumably that would create even more of an outcry from the public in the present financial climate.

These payments are little more than a gesture of appreciation and do not solve the problem of these overworked officers.

Yours sincerely,

Mairi M. Yuill.

30 Barrack Lane, Nottingham.

Dear Sir,

I am as sane as the next man, but when you're standing next to a politician it makes you wonder.

However, with farmer Jimmy Carter about to become the next President of the USA, I feel in my bones that we could be in for more earthy politics in future. He's obviously got the nuts for such a difficult job.

Seriously though, it's about time we in Britain followed the American example and took it a stage further. I've got it all worked out. We could have a four-year rotation of Prime Ministers, such as a pea or bean farmer one year, a potato farmer the following year, a wheat farmer the next, but leaving the job vacant, or "fallow" as we farmers say, every fourth year. I'm all in favour of open government, although, if the people wanted, they could have a sheep or a cow for that year instead.

I have recently spent some weeks touring East Anglia looking for a suitably old and ignorant swede farmer to install as the next Prime Minister, but with little success so far. Oh well, I expect one will "turnip" soon.

Yours in clover,  
Tom O'Bedlam,  
c/o The Old Sanatorium,  
Pasture Lane, Notts.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Send cheques, POs, etc., payable to Nottingham Voice, to 33 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

### City centre pub guide

#### 53. Yates's Wine Lodge, Long Row

YATES'S WINE LODGE is well worth at least one visit. I have visited several Yates's in different parts of the country and, despite architectural differences, they all have an atmosphere reminiscent of Salvation Army hostels and labour exchanges.

The large downstairs drinking arena is no exception to this - one feels cheated that there are no spittoons and no sawdust on the floor. It is remarkable for its groups of lady customers of uncertain years, who, although they may not actually be retired hookers, will certainly do until the real thing comes along.

The tippie favoured by the patrons is either large glasses of Amontillado at 38p a glass or, for the less affluent, Australian sherry-type drink at 32p a large glass. Spirits are available from 24p to 26p a measure, including Yates's own Irish whiskey at a remarkably low price of 25p.

I have no personal experience of Yates's own Irish whiskey, but I can speak for their Scotch, having bought a bottle once when short of cash. After an initial sampling, it lay around untouched in an avidly Scotch-drinking household for months and finally finished up in the Christmas punch.

The gallery bar, while offering a similar range of refreshments, has a more subdued atmos-

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**RUGBY PLAYERS WELCOME**

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phere. It is open only in the evenings, where a tea-garden trio competes vainly with the upsurge of merriment from below. The clientele here is younger, with many students and sightseers. Both this and the other upstairs bar get very crowded - particularly at weekends.

G. NOME



WE HAVE RECEIVED the following letter from Release. If readers feel they can give any useful information, will they please get in touch with us, or contact Release directly at 1 Elgin Avenue, London W9 3PR (Tel. 01-289 1123).

RELEASE HAS been asked by the Home Office (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs) to give evidence about the current use of police stop and search powers, particularly in relation to drugs.

As it often happens that the police do not tell the person why he or she is being stopped and searched it is not always easy to know if the police are frisking someone under the powers of the Misuse of Drugs Act (which authorise personal searches without the necessity of a formal arrest) or under some other statute. We therefore think it necessary to collect evidence both about harassment which is clearly related to drug offences and harassment for unspecified reasons.

We would be very grateful if you could either write or tele-

phone us with any complaint or case histories which have come to you over the last 18 months or failing that your general impression of the way the police are using these powers and the reaction of the people you are in contact with.

The last time the Home Office reviewed this issue was seven years ago and it is very unlikely that a similar opportunity will occur for a long time. It is therefore very important, since Release and NCCL are the only organisations so far invited to give evidence, for us to draw on the experience of as many agencies and individuals as possible. As we have not been given much time to prepare our report it would help to hear from you by 31st January ●



### The logic of the Welfare State

THERE'S ALWAYS been a market for stories about "battered" babies and "tug-of-love" children - i.e. children who have been living with foster-parents but are suddenly taken away by their natural parents.

Research in this field has shown that the overwhelming majority of those children taken into care by the local authority have natural parents who come from Social Classes 4 or 5 (according to the official census classification). All those people in receipt of state benefits from the Department of Health and Social Security (e.g.

## THE PAGE 13 TIT PICTURE



If these strike you as a right royal pair of orbs, it's not surprising - they're a prominent feature in the regalia of HRH Queen Boobs II (25), who in her spare time is constitutional monarch of a small European country. Bet quite a few of our readers wouldn't mind encroaching on these royal prerogatives, though! After all, everybody knows about Her Majesty's Pleasure!

Unemployment Benefit and Supplementary Benefit) will normally fall into the bottom class (class 5).

The 1975 Children Act, which is now being implemented in gradual stages, makes it harder for natural parents to take their children away from foster-parents.

It will be easier in future for foster-parents to go in for the adoption of children, a practice which has been criticised for a long time as a way for childless middle-class couples to adopt children from poorer parents

who lack the material resources to raise them themselves.

With all this in mind, it is useful to recognise that the state makes two vastly different standards of provision for children.

Foster-parents who are paid by a local authority to look after certain children who are received into care by the Social Services Department are paid according to the age of the child. For example, a child between 0 and 4 years old will be allowed £7.00 per week, plus a quarterly clothing allowance of £14.00.

DHSS claimants receive substantially less for their children. For example, the allowance for a child up to 5 years old is £3.50 per week without any additional clothing allowance. The gap is similar for other age groups, with local authority foster-parents getting about twice as much as DHSS claimants for children of the same age.

Without wishing to denigrate the work done by foster-parents, who are recruited voluntarily, it is hard to escape the conclusion that, from a financial point of view, the children of DHSS claimants would indeed be better off in the care of the local authority.

However, the logic of these two different standards of financial need is not likely to be altered in the present economic and political circumstances, with, for example, Conservative demands to actually reduce Unemployment Benefit. Rather, the logic will be reinforced - with some help from the 1975 Children Act ●

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THE TORY ELECTION manifesto for the May County Council elections has recently been released and - surprise, surprise - calls for a cut in public spending and thereby a cut in the rates.

Among the radical proposals the Tories want to see introduced is an increase in "productivity" among such as social workers and teachers, and they intend, if elected, to do away altogether with community workers and community teachers (after all, it would be difficult to measure their productivity).

Not that the Tories intend to neglect education. Far from it. Special units will be set up in comprehensive schools "to cater for the talents of these the brightest of our children". These units, or Grammar Schools as they used to be known, will have better libraries, better scientific and technical equipment and a greater range of teaching aids (who used to be known as teachers).

Far-reaching plans are proposed for transport. The Tories state that many people have been put off using Nottingham as a shopping centre because of transportation policy and are now shopping in Sheffield, Doncaster, Lincoln and Derby. As everyone knows, many people from around Nottingham always travel to Doncaster for the weekend shopping because parking is so much easier there.

"The aim will be to get traffic

moving again," says the manifesto. One of the key ways of doing this will be to switch pelican crossings from pedestrian controlled lights to part of the ordinary traffic light system. "A pedestrian should not be able to hold up peak hour traffic."

Quite right too. What right have peak hour pedestrians to get across roads at all and hold up traffic, which must be able to move on to the next set of traffic lights without delay.

The Tories also intend to charge 2p on the free city centre shoppers' buses to discourage "joyriders" (who can habitually be seen in a state of total ecstasy as the number 88 turns from Fletcher Gate into Victoria Street).

But never fear. Public transport will be maintained "at a basic level".

And so to the consumer. The Consumer Advice Centres will be closed and the weekly shopping reports will be discontinued. "Above all, we intend to cease insulting the intelligence of the average shopper." Shoppers in future will no doubt be delighted to undertake their own survey of prices in all city centre shops as part of their Saturday shopping. It shouldn't take more than a couple of days to do them all.

But not everything is to be cut back. The Police, of course, will be given all the money they want ●

THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT is in the process of ordering furniture for the new Homeless Families Hostel (or "unit", as they insist on calling it) due to be opened in June. Housing say that "the principle followed has been to provide accommodation which is reasonable, but which does not encourage the residents to think of the unit as a permanent solution to their housing requirements."

The Social Services Department has been asked for advice - on the grounds that it has experience of this kind. The result is that basic six-person units will be provided with six dining chairs and two easy chairs. Presumably residents will occupy the easy chairs on a rota system.

In the same vein, the six-person unit will be provided with only three bunk beds - obviously a ploy to see that husbands and wives don't get together and subsequently qualify for a larger unit ●

several thousands a year - but only because the cost of collection is included. But, as the paper has to be collected whether it is used for salvage or not, this is a completely cock-eyed way of analysing the operation.

Perhaps the real reason is that the paper is needed to make the Eastcroft incinerator burn more brightly ... and so, while the Neros at the City Treasury fiddle, a few more trees will fall in Scandinavia ●



PUBLIC SPENDING cuts continue. Councils have recently received a circular from the Department of the Environment advising them not to proceed with "any new capital projects outside housing and personal social services".

The savings are to be found by suspending all new construction work on roads and public transport projects, all new environmental projects, and projects by water authorities. Reductions will be achieved in housing by cutting grants to housing associations, money available to councils to buy houses, and the buying of housing land.

But probably the most interesting is the Community Land Scheme. This was set up to enable councils to buy land as part of their planning procedures - a sort of "mini-nationalisation" of land. "The basic framework of the scheme



AT ITS CUSTOMARY right-angle to contemporary thought, Nottingham City Council has decided to discontinue "salvage" collection (i.e. collecting paper separately from other rubbish), despite the £45,000 it brings in from waste paper mills every year.

According to council calculations, the operation loses

will remain unaffected, but there will be adjustments in the arrangements for administering it."

These adjustments include cutting the amount of money available, cutting back the type of land being purchased, and reducing expenditure on staff. The circular also encourages councils "to release existing land holdings" - that is, sell land rather than buy it! ●



READERS OF last month's Voice will recall that we reported on the scheme whereby the Housing Department was provid-

ing the addresses of council tenants to all and sundry for a fee of £2.

We are pleased to report that this scheme has been suspended pending enquiries and that the matter will be discussed at a future Housing Committee meeting.

We are informed that the scheme has been going on so long that its origins are lost in the mists of time. But it is likely that the scheme will be resurrected on a more limited basis.

Letters of outrage, etc., to Coun. Charles Borrett, Chairman of the Housing Committee, The Council House, Nottingham ●



### Notices

National Welfare Benefits Handbook. Some copies of the current (November, 1976) edition of the CPAG guide to welfare rights are on sale at the People's Centre, 33 Mansfield Road (price 60p).

A Valentine's Day Dance, organised by the People's Centre and Off the Record, will be held at the International Community Centre, 61b Mansfield Road, on Friday, 11th February, from p.m. to 2 a.m. (late bar). Tickets available from the People's Centre, 33 Mansfield Road for 50p (75p at the door).

for

## **Letterheads & Leaflets**

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# **Nottingham Voice**

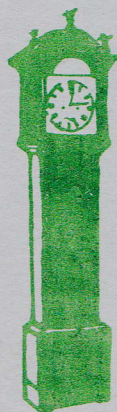
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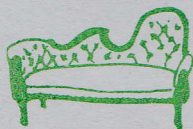
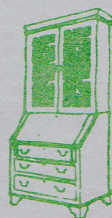
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