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Nottingham Voice



ACCORDING TO JACK GREEN, beloved leader of the City Tories, the Nottingham Housing Action Group is composed of "professional agitators" seeking to stir up "political unrest".

Naturally Jack is not keen on the HAG publication "This is the housing policy that Jack built" since it is highly critical of Tory housing policy.

But this kind of reaction does nothing to help build confidence in democratic local government. It is only the latest sign that the Tories are only interested in pushing through policies that protect their vested interests - not in any kind of political dialogue.

A similar attitude was apparent when the Tory majority on the Housing Committee refused to allow Cllr Allsop to even speak on an item he had requested.

And the Tories are likely to become even more intransigent as the effects of their housing policy become apparent. And when the people affected complain? Why, they're only professional slum dwellers looking for any excuse to stir up political unrest.

It's a neat enough tactic.

Smear your opponents and you then don't have to justify your policies. Pressure groups that agree with the Tories are not, of course, professional agitators. When the Chamber of Commerce mounted a campaign against restrictions on motorists they were just exercising a democratic right.

The Tories are the professionals. They are professional political anaesthetists trying to create political apathy. It's to their advantage. While the poor and disorganised suffer, the real professionals will carry on carving up the cake their way. And if you don't think it's true, just go and look at the houses of the rich around Newstead Abbey.

PEOPLE in clearance areas around the city are suffering because of the council's new policy of selling as many houses as they can.

Nearly twenty families in the Meadow Lane area say they have been abandoned. Everyone else from that area has been rehoused where they wanted. But now the council is offering all their houses for sale they cannot make offers to clearance families where they want.

Several of the families have been waiting to move to new houses on the Greenwood Road estate. These have just started to be handed over.

But no-one from Meadow Lane has had an offer there. They are all still offered for sale. And the council cannot give any idea of when they will be moved.

Meanwhile the people say they are plagued by rats, vandalism, and people dumping rubbish. It has meant that some people have had to cancel holidays.

The Health Department is refusing to do anything about the rubbish or the rats. This means they are breaking the law - the 1936 Public Health Act says that the Health Department has got to get rid of anything which is a public nuisance or a health hazard.

People in the Shipstone Street area in Basford have similar problems. Uptil the beginning of the year they were being told they would be out in two to six months. Then, with the change of policy to sell off all the new council houses and relets, they were told it could be two

years before they moved.

After an angry meeting of sixty residents complained about this, Tory leader Jack Green gave an assurance that they would be out by March next year. But they are still complaining about conditions - they want essential repairs doing to their houses.

Now people in the Radford East clearance area are demanding to know what is going to happen to them. The tenants association, REATAR, has been very active circulating information to residents in the area.

They say that the new policy of not building council houses means that Housing Chairman Charles Borrett has broken his promise that they would be able to move to homes near to Radford. And they are concerned that if anyone is moved before clearance is confirmed because of the policy of bringing forward clearance they should get full compensation.

In spite of the difficulties the Council is having in rehousing people from clearance areas now, council officials still believe it is possible that they can rehouse over a thousand extra clearance families than were originally planned this year as has been demanded by Jack Green.

The Voice predicts that they will not be able to rehouse as many clearance families as Green demands unless they either cut down on the number of houses offered for sale or stop the policy of giving everyone three reasonable offers in areas that they want.

The decision to rehouse twice as many clearance families this year could mean that families will be taken from clearance areas all over the city to fit into the houses available.

If this happens it means that towards the end of the clearance programme many families will face the same problem as the people left to rot in the Meadow Lane area - they will be left isolated amongst tinned up houses which attract vandals, rats and rubbish waiting perhaps several months for suitable houses to become available.



A NEW WHOLEFOOD shop has opened at 37 Mansfield Road. It is called "Ouroboros" - an ancient word for a serpent signifying constant renewal of life.

Unlike Nottingham's other wholefood shop, Down to Earth in Hockley, this is a co-operative - owned and run by the people who work there (Down to Earth is owned by one person who takes all the profits).

After paying for overheads and wages any surplus will be used to further the aims of the collective.

Ouroboros involves seven people who found the money to set up the shop. Three of them work there full time.

The policy of the collective is to sell good plain food as cheaply as possible by minimising profit and avoiding packaging and processing. They try to supply food which is not refined and is free of added chemicals but this

cannot be guaranteed because sources of organic produce are limited. They stock a wide variety of foods including grains, beans, nuts and fruit, herbs and spices which they will increase in due course.

One interesting feature is a range of books from Mushroom which are available to look up recipes. Eventually they will be producing their own leaflets about the food they sell.

A fine venture - well worth supporting.



RADIO NOTTINGHAM has been making the mistake recently of believing everything that city Tory leader Jack Green has been telling them.

On May 27th they reported a meeting between two local MPs, Michael English and Jack Dunnett, with Local Government Minister Ernest Armstrong. The MPs were complaining that the council wasn't allowing any transfers in spite of all the empty council houses - over 1,000 they said - and they got the minister to promise an investigation.

But as soon as the report went out on Radio Nottingham Green phoned them and later reports quoted him as saying that the MPs had got the number of empty houses wrong because their figure included garages, business premises and houses in clearance areas, and the number of empty houses available was only 56.

Interesting then that the council is on record as saying that on 15th December last year there

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were 880 empty council dwellings, 810 of them outside clearance areas. By now, with all the extra relets empty awaiting sale, the number must be over 1,000.

So English and Dunnnett were right. Green was guilty of gross distortion. And Radio Nottingham was guilty of lazy journalism. Michael English has asked for a transcript of what was said.

And only a couple of weeks previously Radio Nottingham quoted Green as saying that the Tories had had no problems with squatters since they came into office last May, apart from the squat opened for battered women near the Arboretum.

Both Green and Radio Nottingham obviously have short memories. Last summer there was an active Squatters Association in the city. Radio Trent even broadcast a recording of them entering an empty house to set up a squat. And the council issued several notices to quit to squatters in empty council houses in the Forest Fields area alone.

But of course this impartial BBC station does not accord the same right of immediate comment to Green's opponents. On the morning of May 31st the Nottingham Housing Action Group distributed to the press copies of their latest attack on council policy, "This is the housing policy that Jack built" (see page 6).

It was not mentioned on the Radio Nottingham morning report on June 1st. So the Voice phoned them, twenty four hours after they had received the report, and asked why this was. We were told that the report was still on

the editor's desk waiting for some action to be taken on it.

The Evening Post had a report on the front page of their mid-day edition before Radio Nottingham had mentioned it!



THE QUEEN will be dining with councillors at the Council House on July 28th.

And rumour has it that so weak-kneed will these councillors be at the thought of dining with one of them that special coaches are to be laid on to transport them from the Guildhall where they have to park their cars to the Council House.

Rumours that the Queen will be arriving in a free bus have not been confirmed. She will probably have to pay 2p like the rest of us by then.

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A NEW PAMPHLET on Tory Housing policy has just been produced by the local Housing Action Group. The title "This is the housing policy which Jack built" appears over a picture of a derelict site. It refers to the butchering of the City Council housing programme under Tory leader Jack Green. The main points are:

☆ Over £1 million will be lost by the City Council in the sale of land in the Radford East redevelopment area - nearly £8000 for each new house to be built. And with debt charges over fifteen years this comes to nearly £3 million (the report claims a total of £4 million - this is a slight error). This is only one area of many to be sold. It means that all of the expense of knocking down the houses, paying compensation and levelling the land is paid by the city (and the Government). But private developers will make a profit from land supplied to them at knock-down prices. The land in Radford East will cost the council £1,685,000 to clear but they expect to sell it to a Housing Association for only £329,000.

☆ Tory plans mean 22,000 less council houses by 1982 than were planned by the last Labour council. The main cuts are 9,000 houses which were to be built outside the city, nearly 4,000 houses cut from the building programme recently, and 6,000 council houses which the Group estimates will be sold - 3,500 to sitting tenants and 2,500 relets.

☆ As reported in Voice 64 there could be over 20,000 people on

the waiting list by 1982. That could mean waits of over twenty years for a council house.

The pamphlet prints in full the statement made by Jack Green on 19th April which put a stop to council house building. It is ironic that it is left to Green's opponents to publish his statement. The Tory chairman of Leisure Services, Cyril Swift, wanted the Tories to publish "the facts" of their policies. But this they haven't done. And the Action Group's analysis makes it obvious why. They say:

★ Green is trying to blame the Labour Government for the building cuts - and this is not true though they point out that the Government is not opposing the policies.

★ Green's objectives are contradictory - they can't provide adequate housing for ALL while encouraging home ownership and balancing the Housing Revenue Account.

★ the statement that there will "soon" be 60,000 council houses is not correct.

★ local government is being used to further private enterprise.

★ it seems that clearance is the only priority (apart from owner-occupiers). This leaves out many other people who need housing.

★ the council is giving the false impression that clearance areas are mainly privately owned property - which they will replace by owner-occupied houses. In fact these areas are mainly rented property and most people will need a house at economical rent, not to buy.

★ it is ironic that the council will give full mortgages for council house sales whereas because of Government policy there will be no cash for renovating the thousands of terraced houses which need it.

★ Green's comments about the loss of city population should qualify him for a second attempt at primary school education. He blamed the reduction on would-be owner-occupiers having to move out to buy a house. The Action Group acknowledges this is one reason but give several more - clearance has caused better living conditions by reducing population densities, the decline of the hosiery industry and other work opportunities, and the tendency to form smaller households.

★ Green complains of the debt burden - but this has to be compared to the value of the houses which is more than double what is owed. The Group points out that housing is financed in the most expensive way possible - 60 year loans - which means that a £15,000 house costs £150,000 in the end. This is unlike nuclear submarines and jet bombers which are financed by the Government out of "petty cash".

★ it has been recognised since 1917 when "housing for working classes" was first proposed on a large scale that private enterprise can't provide adequate housing at the right price.

★ does Green want new select areas of middle class families in the inner city? Has he considered that they will not want to send their children to the same

comprehensives as children from the poorer housing in the inner city?

★ Housing Associations - which are to provide all new rented accommodation in the future - are limited in the numbers of houses they can build. And their rents are higher than the council - about £2.50 a week higher in the case of a 3 bedroomed example chosen.

★ the lowest tenderer for private development on North Sherwood Street felt they could not sell the houses they were being asked to build. The previous Labour administration had to buy properties from builders who went to the wall.

★ the council lost over £5,000 a house on last year's sales at Clifton and Grotto Farm.

The Action Group concludes: "The City Council seem able to write off millions of pounds of public money by selling redevelopment land to private builders and housing associations. Even when they sell houses large amounts of money are lost - it is clear that the interests of the City Council lie with private builders and house buyers rather than with the interest of the general public. The City Council have abandoned people in clearance areas as there seems no planned future redevelopment programme when it is left to private builders and housing associations who cannot even plan twelve months in advance. This is a programme of longer waiting lists, overcrowding and empty derelict sites."

THE GOVERNMENT has issued a leaflet saying that one million people have failed to claim a 25% discount on their electricity bill for the first quarter of the year. This discount applies to all people on Supplementary Benefit or Family Income Supplement unless they pay the landlord for electricity.

This news comes from the People's Centre, Nottingham's independent advice centre. They say "It comes as no surprise that the take-up of this benefit has been so poor. No serious attempt has been made to publicise the scheme - for instance neither the electricity board nor the DHSS sent any information to claimants with their electricity bill or their benefit payments.

"This is just another example of a token effort to alleviate the effect of rocketing fuel prices on poor people, like the toothless 'Code of Practice' on disconnections.

"We have found that people are regularly disconnected in breach of the Code of Practice, and unaware of their right to the discount."



ONLY RICH PEOPLE are invited to this year's conference of Shelter, the national campaign for the homeless.

The conference is at Nottingham University at the end of July and the conference fee including accommodation is only £22.50 + VAT. For those who wish to

remain homeless during the conference they can get in at a bargain non-residential price of only £16 + VAT for two days.

The conference is concerned with discussing the forthcoming Housing Policy Review and speakers include Labour MP Frank Allaun and Conservative MP Peter Walker.

But at these prices it is very unlikely that any homeless people will be there discussing the issues that affect them.



POSTERS are appearing on empty council houses on estates around the city. These are houses which the Tory council is leaving empty so they can offer them for sale.

The posters say "This house is EMPTY because the city council wants to SELL council houses because they want to GET RID OF COUNCIL TENANTS. Only rich people apply. This means much longer waiting lists. What will happen to your sons, daughters and friends? If you are disgusted by this policy ... write to Jack Green c/o Council House Nottm.

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Dear Sirs, - Your Nottingham Voice No. 63 has come into my hands and I wish to refer to the article on Page 8/10.

The subject is Radford Ward by-election, and I quote from your article "They were carefully instructed in how to put a cross against Allsop's name".

It occurs to me that this is intimidation and would take this a stage further but cannot do so without evidence. Perhaps you would inform me of the relevant details?

Yours sincerely,
J Chadbourne,
pp E. Warner,
Chief Agent,
City of Nottingham Federation of
Conservative Associations,
The Dorchester,
19a Hamilton Road, Sherwood.

(Eds. Strange though it may seem to Mr Warner these people actually wanted to vote for Allsop.)

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

IS EAST NOTTINGHAM Labour Party slipping out of the grip of the Dunnett/Higgins machine?

The Dunnett hacks are certainly using every trick they can to try and retain control. The latest underhand move was a decision by the Executive Committee to refuse to allow Roger Critchley to join the party.

But why is this? Is Critchley a nasty Trotskyist?

No - his crime was committed four years ago when he was employed by the Meadows Association of Tenants and Residents. Part of his duties as a MATAR employee involved helping in the organ-

isation of a by-election campaign.

MATAR was having an uphill battle with the Labour City Council over redevelopment plans for the Meadows so they decided to put up a candidate for a City Council by-election. As it happened MATAR gave Labour a hard fight and finished well in front of the Conservative and the Liberal.

The Labour candidate who won, John Carroll's son, Dennis, moved to Wales shortly afterwards to grow mushrooms and did almost nothing to represent the Meadows people.

The Liberal candidate, Ted Rowan, has since joined East Nottingham Labour Party and is on their General Management Committee!

When Roger Critchley applied to join he had to appear in person before the Executive who turned him down - on the casting vote of the chairman Bill Dinwoodie.

The main issues seemed to be the MATAR by-election, Nottingham Voice, and the fact that Critchley didn't do any work for the party in the County elections - like most party members in fact.

But at the General Management Committee (GMC) there was a lot of opposition to this decision and a debate which lasted over an hour. One of the main red herrings was Nottingham Voice - proving that it is not just the Tories who are paranoid about the Voice. (Roger Critchley did some articles for the Voice last year on the public spending cuts in conjunction with various Trades Unions but he hasn't been involved since. And one of the workers on the Voice

who is in the Labour Party (Eds. we wish to apologise for this aberration; it is not the sort of thing that we encourage) circulated a statement backing Critchley.)

In fact they spent more time attacking the Voice than they did discussing Critchley's case. Frank Higgins referred to "nasty underhanded slurs" against people's reputations. And Michael Cowan MP (failed) complained of "ignorant schoolboy insults" (The Editors would like to make it quite clear that this criticism is completely without foundation. Silly old Cowan is a puffed up twit with a schoolboy mentality who is a disgrace to the human race).

The reaction of Len Maynard and John Carroll was interesting. Both are ex-Dunnett agents who

have been sacked by the ruthless MP. But they still normally side with the machine against the lefties. Maynard said that Critchley should be allowed in. But Carroll was playing a different game. He obviously wanted the vote to go against Critchley so that the matter would be referred to the National Executive of the Labour Party.

That would mean that Higgins & Co would have to explain their ludicrous decision at a national level. But chairman Dinwoodie saved the day for them - there was a tied vote and he reversed his original casting vote to refer the matter back to the Executive.

So what will the Executive do now? And which way will Dinwoodie use his casting vote next time? Tune in to these pages next month.

FACT

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NEARLY 1,000 Nottingham school leavers went straight from school onto the dole last week. And the number of unemployed school leavers is expected to reach 2,000 by the summer.

About 800 out of the 4,000 school leavers in the city looking for a job will still not have a job by September. This is an estimate from Mr Rigley, Deputy District Careers Officer for the city. And unemployment is twice as bad for boys as it is for girls. That means that even by September there will be 30% unemployment for boys and 15% for girls. This compares to $6\frac{1}{2}\%$ unemployment for men and $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ unemployment for women in the city.

5,170 young people are entitled to leave school. Mr Rigley expects 1,200 to carry on in full time education. That means 4,000 looking for work. The first left in April. And some will not leave until July after exams. Some who have jobs to go to will not be starting until after firms' summer holidays. Some who sign on now will return to schools or colleges in September. And some will not be able to sign on until they reach the age of sixteen.

This means that a true picture of youth unemployment will not emerge until October. But the Careers Office expects 2,000 out of the potential 5,000 school leavers to sign unemployed this summer - that is nearly a half of all Nottingham's sixteen year olds including more than half of the boys. This is in addition to about 200 of previous years' leavers who are unemployed

(though most of these have had a job for some of the time).

Youth unemployment has more than doubled in the last five years compared to a rise of 45% for the whole population. Mr Rigley gives three reasons:

☆ Wages have gone up disproportionately for young people. One reason is that many used to leave at 15 and not reach full pay until 21 whereas now they leave at 16 and reach full pay at 18. This means that many firms prefer to employ people in their early twenties.

☆ The state of the economy means that many firms can increase production by 20% without any extra staff.

☆ Labour turnover has virtually stopped so there are fewer vacancies which school leavers can apply for.

Mr Rigley says that the reason more boys are unemployed than girls is not due to discrimination on the part of employers but is because boys are refusing to do traditionally female jobs - like sewing machine operators. He says there is a lot of light industrial work, much of it in the textile industry. And a lot more girls than boys are going into this area.

He refused to give figures for unemployment amongst young coloured people saying that these are confidential. He claimed there was no significant difference between white and coloured young people. But he said it was thought that many coloured young people who were unemployed were not registering for various reasons.