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Nottingham Voice

RALEIGH IS FACING the consequences of bad management and lack of foresight according to Jack Hallam, District Secretary of the National Union of Metal Mechanics, the largest union at Raleigh.

He was commenting on reports that the company is short of 200 workers and has a large backlog of orders. Most vacancies are for semi-skilled production workers but there is also a shortage of skilled workers.

Mr Hallam accused Raleigh of "penny-pinching" during the last few years of pay restraint. He said that whereas other companies interpreted pay legislation liberally Raleigh followed it strictly to keep pay rises to the minimum and now their wage rates are lower than in many other Nottingham firms.

Works convenor Les Chapman added that Raleigh was slipping behind even before pay legislation started. He said that for some shift workers basic pay is only £49.70 including average bonus. "You only have to look at the rates of pay", he said to explain the difficulty in filling vacancies.

And both agreed that the tempo of production in Raleigh is higher than in other firms. Mr Chapman said this had been confirmed by trades unionists who had visited from all over Britain and the continent.

But even though the pay is low and factory work is not popular especially where the pace is as high as at Raleigh we thought that there should be at least 200 people out of Nottingham's 14,500 unemployed who would be willing to work there.

So we contacted the Job Centre and asked why they weren't sending more people along. A spokesman told us that Raleigh insists on workers with a record of stable employment. This means that

most of the people who have been out of work for some time cannot meet the requirement for references. He said that two or three hundred extra people sign on every week. But many of these are tradesmen who want to return to their trade and get fixed up within a few weeks. He said there are not many who can be sent along to Raleigh. This includes unemployed building trade workers - there are 850 signing on just at the Castle Boulevard exchange - because unless they intend to change permanently to factory work Raleigh will not consider them.

And many people have told the Voice that Raleigh refused to employ them in factory work because they had academic qualifications and Raleigh said this meant they wouldn't stick the job for more than a few weeks even though they expressed their willingness to do the work.

In another case a qualified joiner who had been in continuous employment applied to Raleigh for a cleaning job. He was turned down on the grounds that his sight was defective in one eye. He is now working for an industrial cleaning agency.

So the reason that Raleigh cannot fill its vacancies is obvious. It is not paying enough to attract the best workers. And it is refusing to take the unemployed workers who are left.

Raleigh does have one thing on its side - it is getting substantial free advertising in the Evening Post. There have been three reports in the last three weeks. One gave front page headlines to

the 200 vacancies. This brought many more applicants in though most were turned away.

And local MP Jack Dunnett is taking up the matter with an Employment Minister - he thinks the problem is the fault of the Job Centres because they are not matching the unemployed with Raleigh's vacancies.

The Voice made strenuous efforts to get some comments from Raleigh management but we were told "Mr Courtenay Taylor (Personnel Director) has nothing to add to what was said in the Evening Post". We can only suggest that readers who wish to know what the management has to say should read the Evening Post.

Readers of the Evening Post will remember that in March the Post announced a "massive £4.75m increase in pre-tax profit of Raleigh Industries for their year to December 31, 1976" but pointed out that this had to be "put into perspective" because the previous year's profits would have been higher if losses hadn't been made in the American market.

The Post quoted Mr A.M.A. McLarty, deputy managing director, as saying "This is no bonanza. It is recovery. ...all at the local Raleigh factory have pulled their weight to help restore the company's profit...without their efforts the recovery would have been all that much more difficult".

Raleigh's profit last year was nearly £8 million. There are about 10,000 workers employed by Raleigh in total so that means the company made a profit of about £800 out of each worker last year. That means that each worker is

earning £15 a week more than he/she is paid.

After tax this profit goes to Tube Investments, the company which owns Raleigh.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

AFTER SIX MONTHS steady demand Jack Dunnett, wealthy businessman and Labour MP, eventually met East Nottingham Labour Party recently to explain the Government's economic policy.

Sweating profusely and nervously scattering ash-trays in all directions, the East Nottingham boss-man gave a sixth-form exposition of the state of British capitalism explaining that the Labour socialist manifesto was inoperative and we had to wait until North Sea oil allowed us to stagger on to another and possibly greater crisis many years hence.

This did not please the party stalwarts who had dragged themselves out of bed to get to this Sunday morning meeting. Furious comparisons were made between the party manifesto and the Government's performance. Unkind comparisons were also made between our own noble entrepreneur and Tribune stalwarts Audrey Wise and Jeff Rooker who had just voted against the Government to reduce taxes for the lower paid. Dunnett was even accused of being ignorant of basic arguments being conducted in the Labour Party.

Our gallant MP's agitation increased to the point where he nearly embraced the next speaker who claimed that the only solution

to Britain's problems was to nationalise everything. How he agreed with such a programme - what a pity it couldn't be done - Oh yes, those wicked multinational companies - they must be dealt with - not possible of course.

Dunnett hack Frank Higgins was so shocked at his patron's new found radicalism that he placed himself firmly to the right of Dunnett and declared that Labour's falling national vote (achieved after years of right-wing Labour Governments) was proof that no socialist policies were wanted in Britain. Dunnett then agreed with Higgins!

Peter Burgess, another Dunnett hack, true to form exploded with rage and not knowing very much about economics accused the great man's critics of never having done a day's work.

Financial whizz-kid Michael Cowan MP (failed) was also there. His well prepared brief was heard in rapt silence and demonstrated once again what an enormous contribution he could make to Labour by joining the Tories.

Did the Labour Party really lose in Ashfield? one asks.

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EVENING POST HACKS descended once again to the depths of gutter journalism only they know how to reach with a front-page headline story on June 27th, "Homes racket in city - claim" "People by-pass waiting list for £100".

The report said the City Council was set to launch a probe into an "alleged council house key racket that preys on the homeless".

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The allegation was that some council tenants leaving are selling their keys for upto £100 to "desperate families".

But what was the Post's evidence for this? They quoted Housing Committee chairman Charles Borrett as saying "I have not heard of this before".

They quoted a Mrs Dorothy Alcock, a homeless person they said, with two children. She said she had tried to buy a key but the deal fell through. She said she knew two other cases but the Post said that a council housing assistant had been unable to substantiate one of these claims. And they quoted two other anonymous homeless people who said they knew of four cases where their friends had obtained council houses. But there was no evidence given by the Post to substantiate any of the claims.

What this story did, much to the delight of the Tories no doubt, was deflect criticism from the Tory policy of selling council houses which means that anyone from any part of the country can completely by-pass the waiting list by paying £150 to cover legal fees and taking on a 100% mortgage on a council house.

Almost all the relets are being sold in this way at the moment. It is these people who are by-passing the waiting list by buying a house who are creating a situation where people could become desperate enough to pay to take on someone else's tenancy. And in fact this is now virtually the only way that council houses can be kept available for rent. As soon as tenants hand in their keys

their houses are immediately offered for sale.

So the selling of keys, though it would be objectionable if the council was housing the people in need instead of the people rich enough to buy, would at least mean that there is more chance of people in need getting a place to live.

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A Peom

(for this then, a Jubilee Situation (Vacant)).

All hail to thee, O Queen
Fair monarch of the Glen,
Who's oft appeared, Nationwide,
and even on News at Ten.

All reigns cannot compare
O, beauteous Brenda Regina,
With thy fair rule o'er Englishmen
Including Sir John Hunt.

All the snows of Killimanjaro
O, radiant Elizabeth Rex (?)
Could not outshine thy Glorious
mind

And nor could a dozen John Pecks.

All hail, all reign, all snow....
O'er the last Jubilee you've been
In the words of Sir Lawrence

Grayson,
"A most serene old queen".

P J Grobworth, KBE (and Bar -
cheers)

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PETER SHORE, the Environment Secretary, visited Nottingham this week. He is the Minister responsible for allowing the city Tories to sell off all the council houses. So it was nice to see a militant reception laid on at the last minute for him in Shipstone Street. This is one of the clearance areas where people are being left to rot because the houses normally available for rehousing are all being offered for sale instead.

The angry residents demanded to know why Shore was allowing the Tories to sell council houses, but of course they got no answer. Tory leader Jack Green, the man responsible for the sales policy, didn't dare get out of the minibus they were travelling in. Residents crowded around the bus and shouted to him to get out and tell them why he was selling off all the council houses.

Shore had to admit the houses were in a deplorable condition and said the sooner people were got out the better. But, as pointed out in the last Voice, this will not be possible unless the Tories stop selling all the available houses.

We asked Shore why he wasn't preventing the sale of council houses since they had been partly financed by the government specifically for people who couldn't afford to buy. But he refused to put a stop to it claiming that the number of sales has been very small (the City Council has sold over 1,000 since last summer and many more are in the pipeline).

As if to rub this in his depart-

ment has just issued a discussion paper saying that home-buyers will get more help while council tenants will have their rent increased every time they get a pay rise.

CITY COUNCIL officers have presented a report to Peter Shore on "Nottingham's inner city" to try and persuade him to cough up some of the amazingly small amount of money he has to divide amongst the bigger cities.

The report shows that the proportion of unskilled workers is increasing as the more affluent people have moved out. It quotes the Basford, Forest Fields and Radford Survey which showed that 44% of heads of households had no employment. And the report shows that 18,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in Nottingham between 1964 and 1975, 5,000 jobs being lost in 74/75 alone - mostly in textiles and clothing. It says most of the loss has been in the inner city area. Reasons given are:

- 1) Between 1967-70 a quarter of the firms lost were moved because of development programmes, and a "substantial number" of jobs could be at risk in future programmes.
- 2) Although service sector jobs have increased these have not tended to match the skills of inner city residents. The result has been a mismatch of skills, increased competition from workers commuting into the city, and increased unemployment particularly for the unskilled.
- 3) The industrial base is declining due to "structural changes in

the economy". A large part of the city's economy relies on small firms which are particularly vulnerable in times of economic recession.

4) In particular the textile industry has been affected by low cost imports, rationalisation, and "labour shedding".

5) Shortage of private investment has made it difficult for existing firms to expand.

6) The city faces difficulty in attracting new industry as a result of incentives available in nearby areas.

Anyone reading through this list would surely conclude that the only answer is drastic measures to take over control of investment in local industries to ensure that development takes place where it will be of most benefit.

However we have a more "realistic" council dedicated to following the rules. And the consequent list of "priority schemes for inner city renewal" shows exactly why following the rules is a complete waste of time.

The suggestions include providing a few small industrial units, giving aid to small shopkeepers, providing more car parking, and "alternate uses for empty offices".

There are also proposals to provide housing in the Lace Market, do more house improvements, do something with derelict land like the Great Central Railway line, do some "environmental works", and tagged on right at the end provide "overdue play facilities" at Colville Street, Kirkstead Street, Basford, Tennyson Street, the Meadows

and elsewhere (Voice readers will remember that the Tories earlier this year refused to back urban aid applications for most of these play schemes).

One thing that is certain is that the problems of inner city and other areas - especially the problems of unemployment and lack of investment - will not be solved by small handouts for piecemeal projects of this nature.



RADIO TRENT wins this week's award for shoddy journalism. This is for a story which they broadcast saying that a film processing company near Mansfield was a subsidiary of the infamous Grunwick's processing lab in London. They also announced that the local Trades Council was to picket the company.

In fact the Trades Council had mistaken the name of the company for a similar name which the Grunwick strike committee had asked to be blacked. After further investigations they found no evidence of any connection with Grunwick's.

Trent obviously made no attempt to verify the story before making the announcement which could have sent hundreds of Nottinghamshire miners amongst others along to picket an innocent company. With this standard of journalism Trent could one day find itself faced with large claims for damages from angry companies suffering from false stories churned out by the lazy Trent hacks.

By contrast Radio Notting-

ham checked on the Mansfield lab, found no evidence to link it with Grunwick's, and dropped the story.

It is interesting that only a few weeks ago the local Chamber of Commerce was criticising Radio Nottingham's coverage of industrial matters claiming that Trent's coverage of these matters was much better.

What they probably meant was that the hacks at Trent will broadcast any rubbish put out by people like the Chamber of Commerce whether it is newsworthy or not.

The Trades Council is now concentrating on getting as many people as possible down to the Grunwick picket lines in London especially on July 11th. And we hear that the Gedling miners may be sending a contingent down on that day to back the Grunwick strikers trying to get union recognition.

*The Grunwick strike committee is calling for people to black the following subsidiaries of Grunwick's: Cooper and Pearson, Bonuspool, Trucolour, Monk-colour.



NEW CLAIMANTS of supplementary benefit at the Castle Gate Social Security office will have been surprised to hear the following announcement shortly before 3.30 on 24th June:

"People who are waiting for giros might as well go home as we're not going to pay any more giros to you cadging buggers".

More seasoned claimants are probably used to this language by

now but the announcement still came as a shock. The office closes at 3.30 but should deal with everyone who arrives before that time.

Shortly after this announcement the police had to be called to an incident at the door. A claimant arrived just before 3.30 but the doorman would not allow him to get in. So three claimants who were leaving held the doorman to allow him to get in. No-one was hurt in the incident though the doorman wasn't very happy about it.

This claimant had an urgent need for a payment that evening. But of course, like many other claimants there, he was refused payment. Because it was a Friday he had to get the police to call out an emergency Social Security visitor in order to get payment.

The People's Centre, Nottingham's independent advice centre, has heard many stories like this. So recently they organised a number of students to conduct a survey at another Social Security office, Shakespeare Street. The students asked questions designed to see what sort of service claimants are getting and what they thought about it.

Half way through the survey the staff on the counter threatened to stop interviewing claimants if the students remained in the building and they were forced to continue outside even though the survey had been cleared through the regional DHSS office. But they were able to interview 100 claimants with a

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very low refusal rate.

Perhaps the most surprising finding was that 46% of respondents felt they had been treated very well and 43% satisfactorily. But 11% felt they had been treated badly and this would be considered a very high figure for anywhere but a Social Security office. And it was the first claimants who thought they were treated very well while those making return visits were more likely to say they had been treated satisfactorily or badly.

Only 44% had got information on entitlement to benefit from a government agency and only 51% got information where to apply from a government agency. This means that about half of all claimants were relying on friends and other sources to tell them where to apply and what they were entitled to.

53% of respondents didn't have an appointment and of these 89% had to wait over an hour. 33% of those with an appointment had to wait over an hour. 45% had to have more than one interview.

49% said their benefit took over three days to arrive after interview and 56% said they suffered hardship while waiting for their benefit to arrive.

The students concluded: "The overall impression was of an inefficient and seemingly uncaring system which ultimately may lead to hardship and that many people are unaware of their rights as regards welfare payments. The first point relates to the stigma of the means test and the second to the lack of information from

government agencies concerning supplementary benefits. These foregoing facts can be seen as directly influencing the take-up of benefits".

According to government figures in 1975 nearly a million people entitled to supplementary benefit failed to claim it. The Child Poverty Action Group estimates that this represented over £400 million in unclaimed benefit.



READERS WILL REMEMBER that in Voice 65 we had a report of the underhand way the East Nottingham Labour Party was trying to prevent a potential recruit, Roger Critchley, from joining. We can now announce that after all the trouble this caused the machine has backed down and allowed him to become a member.

Meanwhile, city Labour leader John Carroll suggested at the last General Management Committee of the East Nottingham party that they should allow the press in because he felt that the Voice had an unfair advantage - though he wasn't complaining about the reports we have printed. This suggestion is now to be considered by the Executive Committee.



RADIO NOTTINGHAM is continuing its policy of impartially ignoring major attacks by the city Labour group on Tory policies.

Its report on the Transport Committee this week completely ignored a concerted attack by Labour men Len Squires and John

Pennington on the way the Tory group is handling the proposed cuts in bus services. This was in spite of the fact that it found time for three other items from the committee including two interviews.

This follows a decision by Radio Nottingham to ignore one of the most powerful attacks by Labour leader John Carroll on the Tory housing policy at the last Housing Committee. Even the Evening Post printed this in heavy type under the heading "Labour slams housing policy".

At the Transport Committee Squires pointed out that the proposal to cut 55 peak period buses and close the Bilborough garage which had been released to the press the previous week was the most important policy document to come before the

committee since the Tories took control.

He complained that many of the unions involved had not been consulted. And Pennington complained that the members of the committee didn't know about the document until they read about it in the Evening Post!

Tory chairman Jim Broughton explained that the Transport and General Workers Union had objected to secrecy in the discussions but he admitted that it wasn't right that the press should be given information before committee members. He said Tory leader Jack Green had authorised the document to be made public.

Then the Labour councillors turned to the transport policy agreement between the County Council and the City Council. This is the document which says

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that the County is to withdraw their £1.2 million subsidy for peak-hour buses and says that the city-centre free buses should cost 2p from August.

Pennington said that phasing out peak-hour buses would mean long queues. He also said that Broughton's statement that there would have to be an "element of viability" sounded like increasing bus fares.

Squires said the Tories were going back to the old strategy of raising fares and slashing services. He admitted that in the past Labour had been guilty of this as well as the Tories but claimed that Nottingham now has probably the "best municipal undertaking in the country".

Broughton blamed the government and accused them of making massive cuts in subsidies to bus undertakings.

A REPORT before the Transport Committee comparing May this year to May last year showed that although there was a 3% reduction in the number of passengers there was a 14% increase in receipts from fares. That shows the effect of inflation over the year on people who travel on buses.

Apart from the increase in bus fares, the main cuts over the past year (apart from Park and Ride buses) have been in the 36/37/41 service to Basford and Cinderhill and in the service 40 from the Meadows to St Ann's.

But over the next year upto 80 buses will be cut from peak-hour services as a result of the cuts made by the County Council.

The Tories claim that not all

of these extra buses are needed. It may be true that some are not needed because of slum clearance in some areas. But most are needed and any reductions will cause long queues for people going to work or school in the morning and coming home in the evening.

It will also mean that upto 100 drivers less will be needed though the Tories have repeatedly said there will be no redundancies.

The Tories have already proposed to cut twelve buses from August by linking the Bulwell and Cinderhill routes with West Bridgford routes.

This will mean cutting the peak frequencies to Cinderhill yet again. And the peak frequencies to West Bridgford will not only be cut but will also run irregularly at 12 or 18 minute intervals.

The service to Edwalton will be reduced at all times to provide a service to the new Abbey Park Estate but at off peak times the service on the common route will be increased.

The main cuts will be between the city and Trent Bridge where it is claimed the present level of service is not needed because of the Meadows redevelopment.

The County Council says there might be "inadequate capacity in winter" for West Bridgford and this is a "potentially more serious matter" than the irregular peak frequencies to West Bridgford.

In other words West Bridgford people will have to wait in the cold in long queues watching full buses go past them.

It serves them right for voting Conservative!