

fleabite

an occasional broadsheet of the brighton and hove anarchist group

NUMBER ONE

AT LEAST THREEPENCE



FLEABITE is published by Brighton Anarchists and can be contacted through Nick Heath, Flat 3, 26, Clifton Road, Brighton.

Fleabite will be brought out as often as possible. We'll turn up when you least expect us. We'll tell you about Politicians, Bosses and Teachers - the People Who Know What's Best For Us. It's funny how what's best for us always turns out to be better for them. How they're always right, yet they need all kinds of policemen to keep us in line. We can show you just how great their power has become.

They need us - we don't need them. We are quite able to run things ourselves. Everyone should play an equal part, wherever they work or study. We have had enough of people who only want to push us about. When you stop accepting their lies, you will find it is easy to work without them.

Putting out a broadsheet is a two-way thing. If we're not writing about things that matter to you, tell us. If they're trying a new way to keep us down, tell us. If you've refused to be a part of their pantomime, tell us.

In return, we'll supply you with information and ideas. The rest is up to you.

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

If you're unlucky enough to find yourself out of work and you cannot survive on Unemployment benefit, you can ask at the Labour Exchange for a form B.1. which is their application form for "Supplementary Benefit". This is the modern name for National Assistance. "If you are in immediate need," the form reads, "you may take this form to the Ministry of Social Security."

You therefore make your way to that architectural monstrosity known as Circus House (or to St. James's Street, if you live east of the Steine). There's usually a queue, and it takes about ten minutes before you reach the little window. The glass in this window, like all the glass that separates you from the staff, is Triplex Armour Plate.

If you've been out of work for less than two weeks, you're told to go away, because you've called too early. However, if you left your last job more than a fortnight previously, then they want to know why you didn't call before.

Passed the interrogation successfully? Right, now you can have a seat until they call you. The seats are bolted together, of course. After a wait of up to an hour, your name will be called on the speaker in the waiting room. Too bad if your hearing isn't that good, or they don't pronounce your name clearly.

Now you can go to the interview cubicle, where this time the chair is screwed to the floor. You should have brought your rent book and last two pay slips, and if you haven't got any of these, then don't expect any money. The interviewer will listen to your tale of hardship with as much compassion as if you'd rolled up in a Rolls-Royce. He will attempt to catch you out in everything you say, and woe betide you if you can't give immediate replies to all his questions. Eventually he'll take a statement from you, and get you to sign it. You're then dismissed to the waiting room, if he thinks you could be eligible for some money.

After a slightly shorter wait this time, the loudspeaker calls you to queue at the pay desk where you finally get paid. The whole operation never takes less than an hour, and has been known to last for the best part of a day.

The St. James's Street office has a character all its own. Instead of padded seats there are hard wooden benches, and not enough of these. There is no enquiry window. The loudspeaker occasionally bursts into life to summon the "next enquiry", and this means you have to find out where you're placed in the queue. As there are people standing about everywhere, the timid may wait for hours wondering whether they're jumping the queue, or whether other people are getting in before them.

Both offices display "No Smoking" signs, which of course nobody bothers about. In fact, ashtrays are provided at Circus House. The other endearing thing about the offices is the horde of toddlers, screaming and running everywhere, bored stiff. And neither office has a toilet for claimants.

If you go to the office or not, you'll eventually get a visitor. If they're already paying you, this interview isn't too bad. The poor bloke just wants to get back into the warmth of the office, so he won't stay long. But if you live in a flat, it's quite likely he's asked everyone in the building if they've heard of you. What he's hoping to hear is someone complaining about all the people who live in the flat, or any similar bit of gossip that might help him. The office send you a note to say he's coming, but this always arrives in the same morning's mail.

At no time during this inquiry are you ever allowed to know more than the bare minimum about how you are assessed - the "Guide to assessing claimants", known as the A code, is on the Official Secrets List. To reveal any of the contents of this guide would therefore be against the law. The only general rule that anyone can gather is that you are paid your rent plus about £4 10s a week.

If you're at all charitable, you may wonder what effect all this has on the staff. From what you see, they range from coldly businesslike to the nearest thing to Gestapo. On the other side of the counter it becomes clearer how these attitudes are formed. The staff see themselves as Members of the Civil Service, and the job

is something that must be carried out in the correct Civil Service manner. The people who come to the office are eventually regarded as things, items to be processed. All claimants are regarded as "trying it on", and while some obviously do, this does not seem a reason to treat every applicant as a potential fiddler. Indeed, when you are treated as a criminal, it is the easiest thing in the world to become one. You have nothing to lose. And how does Authority react? By taking a still more repressive line.

The liberal in the service - and there are some - feel kept in line by the more authoritarian members. In the office in which I worked there were several of the staff who acted as unofficial cops when not on duty. They would note if they happened to see a claimant while off duty. One in particular had a fixation about young women. He believed that every one was living with a man who secretly supported them. If he interviewed them at the office, he would rush to the top floor to see if they went off with a man. If he visited, he would call on them as early as he could, in the hope of catching them in bed.

Perhaps the only good thing that happened while I was there was due to the Manager. He used to go to the local old folk's clubs and give talks to the members about getting a supplement to their pensions. It is common amongst pensioners to regard "The Assistance" as charity of a degrading nature, and it was mainly for this reason that the name was changed.

I recently met a friend who still works for the Ministry, and he claims that the police circulate Social Security offices and Labour Exchanges with lists of names in the hope of getting addresses, if the people are registered there.

If you have to claim it's best to get to the office at about 3.45 as they shut at four. You won't be kept waiting for more than two hours - even the M.O.S.S. like to go home. Incidentally, if you start a new job which pays a week in arrear, you can get a payment by taking a letter from your firm down to the office on the day that you normally get paid.

Bearing in mind three more things - single people are only paid for four weeks, that you are given no help toward getting a flat (where does rent in advance come from), and that you pay for all these things through your insurance stamp - the campaigns by newspapers against "layabouts living off the state" look pretty sick.

CALLAGHAN - SAVIOUR OF THE PEOPLE

As the time for the next General Election approaches, and, we hope, the people who supported Labour tell the pollsters that they're not going to vote at all, the Home Secretary may be forced into supporting the bigots by announcing new repression to deal with the Squatter/Student/Drug addict "Menace".

Which squatter refused you that pay rise? Which student stopped and searched you at two in the morning? Which drug addict won't repair the leaky roof to your pad?

DEFINITIONS

Sorry to bore you with a bit of political infighting, but it appears that only Anarchists don't know what Anarchism is all about. That's if you listen to those people who've got everything sussed out. So, in our own small way, here's what it looks like to us:-

ANARCHISM; Political belief. Against government, on the grounds that people can run their own lives at a local level, with general participation replacing a small number of leaders.

ANARCHY ; Situation of chaos where leadership is non-existent. Only possible where population is dependent on leadership, and has not been allowed to think for itself. Anarchy can also be partial in an otherwise organized state, where the state uses its organization to crush resistance to anarchy. For example, chaos in housing. (Families homeless as state keeps houses empty). Squatters offer resistance, but state uses force (police) to crush them.

ANARCHIST; Person who believes in Anarchism and opposes Anarchy. Forms Anarchist Group to publicize Anarchism, oppose the state, and practise participation.

Incidentally, Anarchists did throw bombs to kill leaders in the 1890's. So did a lot of people in other political groups. The others wanted power for themselves. They still haven't learnt that Power Corrupts. But the Anarchists have learnt that you can't stop the state by killing its leaders. When you start to do things for yourself, then you've killed them off anyway.

TAKING THE POW OUT OF POWELL

We know everybody's having a go at poor old Enoch, but here are a few things you may have overlooked.....Why do businessmen support Powell? If he clears out immigrants, London Transport and the Hospital service will lose all their cheap labour. Discrimination forces immigrants into accepting low wages, in spite of any qualifications they may have. Perhaps there's more in it for businessmen than meets our eyes.....Powell took no interest in studies of immigrants carried out in his own constituency until his Race speeches started.....What about the white immigrants

from South Africa and Australia? Clear out the Earl's Court ghettos! Close down the Overseas Visitors Club! "One of them was heard to mention something about 'pointing Percy at the porcelain' in a public convenience! How long can we take this affront to our British way of life?".....Swift action is undoubtedly needed over Immigrants. Otherwise the next generation will be 100% British, and Enoch will have to say he dislikes them 'cos they're Black.

SPRINGPOX

Our dear Home Secretary has got this demonstration thing sussed out. By bringing in large numbers of fuzz he makes it look as though protesters just want to get a policeman. Fuzz, understandably pissed off with being Callaghan's pawns, need little prompting to get a kick in here and there. Demonstrators shout "Police Brutality". Joe Public sees it as "Hooligans Attack Police" and forgets all about Apartheid.....Don't expect tour promoters to have any change of heart. Most of them have money invested in S.A. (High rate of return due to cheap labour costs). They also deal with any embarrassing truths by ignoring them.....In S.A. most support for apartheid comes from the older Afrikaans, descendents of the Dutch settlers. There are a lot of whites opposed to separation, particularly around Cape Town.....In S.A. schools children are taught that "God created two races, and the black one was inferior". Religious Instruction or Indoctrination?

THE ART AND CRAFT OF RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH

This time last year, Richard Get-up-and-Attenborough came down to Brighton to show his first film "Oh What a lovely War" to a private audience of Sussex students, as a sign of his gratitude "for their help in the production".

As most students were away on holiday during the summer months of shooting, this was a surprising gesture to make. A free "sneak preview" would have been more appreciated by the people whose town was taken over by Mr. Attenborough and his American backers. As it was, the residents had to pay.

The "treat" was arranged by the director with the aid of the managers of the then "centreless" Arts Centre. This relationship was to be fruitful for all concerned, namely: "During our conversations with Mr. Attenborough, he gave us a very clear idea of the sort of Chairman we were looking for". Result: Dicky-boy gets the job.

Landing this catch will undoubtedly gain the Arts Centre a certain amount of much needed kudos. This depends, of course, on how Mr. Attenborough gets along with the various manipulators of "Art" in his future career. Art directors, in any medium, are always prey to that art-indicator: **Success Ratings**.

Mr. Attenborough stands to gain something for himself if the Centre is taken up by the Mass Media and brought to the notice of the cultural elites. He has not overlooked the various Festivals (also Nottingham, Bristol, and Manchester theatres) all of which have brought widespread recognition and associated good fortune to their directors. No better short-cut to the big money than this for someone who has just got onto the "actor-turned-director" bandwagon. Needless to say the "Film-maker in residence" will be our old friend Mr. Attenborough. After all, with one whole film behind him, he is bound to be an experienced authority.

If all goes well for Mr. A. doubtless he will help out with the Centre's massive future debt. Does he realise that the managers probably had that in mind last year? If they did, they will be disappointed. Mr. Attenborough's feelings about giving to worthy causes became apparent at the preview. He was more than somewhat embarrassed by a suggestion from one of the audience that he should donate one third of the estimated nine million pounds profit to the victims of the war he felt so horrified by. So horrified, in fact, that he won't even buy up all the left-over paper poppies with his Rolls Silver Shadow (RA 111), that's supposing the film makes a loss.

With such a sincere chairman one starts to discount most of the elaborate publicity cover-ups that are pushed around to justify the costly Arts Centre, which cost us only a quarter of a million pounds. A lot of this propaganda is aimed at the people of Brighton, trying to persuade them that this silk-suited stagemen's tea-party is something to do with them. Sussex's very own Fred "Goebbels" Newman, assisted by Elizabeth Daiches, deserves a quick burst of gunfire at this point.

"People" participation in terms of artistic audience involvement of the crowd that packed the Theatre Royal to see Rex Harrison is an obvious non-starter. No theatre with only 500 seats can recoup the running costs the Centre will incur.

Such migrating pseuds that do reach Falmer will only be acting out a token role (sic). What will eventually be realised is that the Arts Centre needs the people of Brighton like a corpse needs blood - they're only in it for our money. Where else will it come from if a lot of little people's fantasies don't work out. Although the Centre has been blessed with generous benefactors, the funds don't look so good against current and future expenditure.

No doubt some will be attracted to the ever-encircling walls of the Arts Centre and bled dry in the process. The latest arrival and bit-part player in "Comrade Jacob" is, surprise surprise, Mr. Attenborough's son David. Far be it from us to cast any shadow or smear on this young man in his first year at the University.

We can all do ourselves some good by going into the Centre and writing the proverbial all over someone's proscenium arch, mobile or otherwise. By breaking down the ivory doors that art hides behind we will create something as exiting as a Stones Concert; as cathartic as the first performance of "Rite of Spring" or "Ubu Roi"; and certainly of more use to us than the tragedy-comedy that the Arts Centre is bound to become.

SO GET IN QUICK FOR THE FIRST TRULY PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE THAT PLACE WILL BE WITNESS TO.

DEAD CENTRE

Witness to the first official performance that the Arts Centre put on i.e. the first night of 'Comrade Jacob' were the critics. Strange that both the critics of the heavy Sundays - Harold Hobson in the Times and Ronald Bryden of the Observer - saw fit to criticize the theatre as well. Bryden dismissed it as "an audience corral", and said of the designer "Sean Kenny should think again". Harold Hobson was even more explicit.

"Alone amongst contemporary theatres," he wrote, "it is extremely draughty, bitterly cold, furnished with shoddy and prehistorically uncomfortable seats without arm-rests, lacking on its numerous stairs the handrails that might assist the infirm, totally without food of even the simplest kind and about as cheerful as the inside of a coffin". He also expresses the opinion that the centre has little to offer the students or towns-people.

With such rave notices as these the question everyone should be asking is; Will this £250,000 "production" cut its losses and close up now? The building could be put to more profitable uses - the trendy thing is to lease the land to National Car Parks. Or it could be sold to Joe Hyams - the owner of Centre Point knows all about making money from empty properties.

Funnily enough, the play is about the earliest Anarchists, the "Diggers" of Oliver Cromwell's time. Harold Hobson calls them "communists", but it will be a long time before communists dare speak of their leaders in the way these men spoke. As one of the diggers wrote: "Every one that gets an authority into his hands tyrannizes over others". That was written over 300 years ago. Still valid today?

HOME IS THE HUNTER

After being exposed by the Mole and the Argus, you'd think the last thing that Brighton Council would do is repeat their mistakes. But this authority bows to no man, least of all Ian Hunter. And who is he? The Artistic Director of the 1970 Brighton Festival. He has been the Artistic Director of every Festival the town has held. Mr. Hunter does not appear to be blessed with broad taste; unfortunate, perhaps, for the ratepayers who provide his fee. For every year Mr. Hunter seems to think that the people of Brighton will prefer to hear the same group of artists. His interest in these musicians is perhaps understandable when one realizes that they all share the same booking agent - Ian Hunter. While not denying the stature of these artists (e.g. Daniel Barenboim), how long will we have to subsidize this old pall's act? Looking into our crystal ball, we would say for at least another twelve months, for latest news is that Mr. Hunter has booked his artists yet again for the 1970 Festival.

L.S.D. OF ACID-ROCK

The news that the Council is to promote a Pop Festival on the racecourse sometime next summer cannot be greeted with unqualified approval. The motive can only be profit, for the city fathers have never shown a benevolent interest in youth before. Councillor Catherine Vale's crusade against young people has resulted in a crackdown on coffee bars, on the grounds that drugs were being sold in them. "We only wish to extend the same control over these places as we have over public houses", it was said at the time. Since that time the drug trade has moved to two public houses, and the police are well aware of this, judging by the number of plain-clothes fuzz downing their halves and trying to look inconspicuous. It was also said at the time that any haunt of pushers would lose its licence to trade; but obviously Tamplins and Edlins are a more difficult proposition than some poor coffee-bar owner. A note of hilarity was introduced by the admission of Cr. Vale that she had never actually entered a coffee-bar. However, she successfully rallied the council behind her, and the "menace" was repelled.

A number of people who were repelled by the fair Mrs. Vale rather than her bill and who - dare we slander such a gracious councillor - felt that she was more of a menace to Brighton's youth than any coffee-bar were relieved when the good lady announced her retirement. However, this was just what the forces of evil and anarchy were waiting for. Innocent students were being led astray by men in the pay of Moscow, and the disciples of chaos were abroad. But brave St. Catherine was equal to these nihilists who seek to poison the flower of our youth.

She selflessly stood again for the arduous post of councillor, and on her re-election introduced a bill to give the council the power to take away a student's grant, should he be so foolish as to carry out the wishes of the enemies of our

green and pleasant land. This bill was rushed out, using evidence thought doubtful at the time, and events have shown that this was another mythical "threat" that Cr. Vale protected us from. At the time it was boasted that every education authority would follow suit; to date not one has copied Brighton. There is a strong chance that the courts would uphold the right of the Universities to be the sole judge of a student's ability.

So obviously Cr. Vale will have to be shut up by the money-makers of the Council if the Racecourse Festival is to go on. It will be interesting to see how the arranging will be done. There is more to a festival than a fenced-off site with plenty of groups. There must be catering facilities and toilets sufficient to deal with a crowd of at least 100,000. Can Sheepcote Valley accomodate the campers who come from all over Europe? We expect the council will engage the service of Securicor for perimeter patrols following their use of guard dogs at Wykeham Terrace.

The greatest problem facing the council will be that of Undesirables. This strange band of misfits caused terror at the Sheepcote Valley camping site until a brave council, back in the days of mod and rocker battles, banned any would-be campers who did not arrive by car. For several years the Undesirable hordes hovered just outside the gates but a vigilant council held firm. Then, in the course of one of its regular reviews of the situation, the council discovered that the horde had vanished. They therefore lifted the ban. This was in no way connected with the two cyclists who were turned away and pitched their tent on the Aquarium roundabout in protest, a few days before the ban was removed.

The Undesirable horde has made one appearance since those days. When Leslie Kramer wished to open an amusement centre in competition to Forte's (opposite Top Rank) it was stated at the planning inquiry that "Undesirables might be attracted to the place". Like an ancient Riddle-me-ree, they are always in Kings Road but never in West Street.

What can we do about the Council's plans? The best way would be to write to the Argus and say how groovy it is of the council to put on a show for teenagers. You have been to similar concerts in Hyde Park and isn't it great how all the groups play for nothing, stressing (without actually mentioning) that the concerts will be free. The council will then have to reply, saying that it will cost at least 10/- for just one ticket. "Outraged" fans can then write back, asking what is so special about Brighton Racecourse that the council needs to charge, pointing out the free concerts which took place all over Britain last summer, and generally exposing the council for the skinflints that they are.

And if we were the National Jazz Federation, and we still hoped to have our 1970 Festival at Plumpton, we would seek assurances from the police and local authorities that they would not "overlook" anything which might result in the Festival being cancelled at the last minute.

RETRIBUTION, REPRESSION, AND REVOLUTION - THE NEW THREE Rs

In our editorial we mentioned Teachers as some of The People Who Know What's Best For Us. This isn't to say that all teachers are bad - far from it, I say, as one of the teacher members of the group twists my arm. So why are there only ordinary teachers and bad teachers? Let him tell his own story.

"I came out of Teacher raining with a firm desire to avoid excessive punishment and to ignore stupid rules - I had had enough of that in my own schooldays. As a student I read about Summerhill and Dartington schools, though Michael Duane's book about Risinghill warned me of the dangers from zealous governors when trying to be progressive in a state school.

In teaching practise I was lucky enough to teach in a new school with no "great tradition to live up to". Also the Head was a young man, and he gained the support of most of his pupils. This was reflected in the large numbers of pupils who took part in after-school activities.

When I first started teaching fulltime I was completely unprepared for the reception I received. The teacher whose place I took had been very keen on discipline. The slightest mistake, the least misbehaviour, were punished by a hundred lines. Yet it was impossible to get the support of the class. They had formed themselves into two groups. There were the trouble-makers on one hand, and those who wanted to work on the other.

The trouble-makers had lost any desire to take an interest - they had not bothered to listen to the previous master, and were hopelessly behind in their work. Because they had felt that he was only trying to push them about they were not concerned about anything he wished to teach them. All his lessons became one long bore.

The workers saw the trouble-makers as a threat. They had been used to a master keeping his class cowed by handing out lines wherever he saw fit. "Give them some lines, Sir, that'll shut them up!" they pleaded, and it was difficult not to do so.

I tried to carry on lessons without giving any punishment out but the class was unmanageable. After a fortnight word must have reached the Headmaster, for he took to "dropping in", in one instance standing at the back of the classroom for the most uncomfortable quarter-hour that I, and I suspect, the class, have ever spent.

With such a broad hint as this I had to swallow my principles, and so, the next

day, I changed my tactics entirely. I handed out 100 lines to the first boy who spoke out of turn. The class fell into a sort of stunned silence, amazed at my new stern attitude. Within a few days (for I took this class every day) the entire room was quiet.

Yet all the time I was conscious of the pupils who had made all the trouble. They were unco-operative, and they paid no attention to anything I tried to teach them. To them I was now no different to the teacher I had replaced."

If you think your school is fine, read the books on Neill and Risinghill school, both of which are available in Pelican paperbacks. Do the pupils where you study have any say in how the school is run? Is your school council just a showcase? How many of the things that really bother you are discussed there? How often does it meet - once a week or once a term?

Every school should have a school Council where everything could be brought up that concerns the pupils and staff. The pupils should be free to criticize all the school rules and should expect the staff to give good reasons why they are in force. All right, you say, but it would never work. It would work, but there are two major drawbacks.

Both of the obstacles to the success of a school council are common to life in general. The people in power think that there is nothing they can be taught about running their organization, and the people who take orders have never thought seriously about what to get rid of and what to retain. It is easy to throw off a repressive power; it is not so easy to work out how to organize without it.

A school cannot be run without teachers, though a factory can be run without a boss; the difference is that teachers have knowledge, which is as essential to a school as raw material is to a factory. Teachers at present have two roles; to pass on knowledge, and to maintain discipline. Unless the teacher is a sadist, he will want to spend all his time giving information.

Yet like the teacher above the misbehaviour teachers encounter is a protest against repressive rules. If the students can come out with constructive ideas about these rules then the staff should listen. The class the teacher mentioned had no idea that their teacher was against repression. What about your school? Is there a teacher who wants to be less of a disciplinarian than the rest? Faced with a disorderly class no teacher wants to talk about relaxing rules. The initiative must come from you.

Find out about the schools where the pupils maintain discipline themselves. We're not talking about prefects. Where students can bring up anything that's on their minds, where the reason behind every rule is explained, and those that are useless are dropped, then there are the schools where the discipline problems have vanished. Select the teacher who you think is most likely to agree with student participation and ask him about the possibility of establishing a school council. Tell him it's in his interest too. He doesn't want to have to keep telling his classes to shut up.

Schools in London and the South East have started their own school councils; State schools, not private, like all the schools where they say "Yes, it's a good idea, but it wouldn't work here." The Free Schools campaign has a group in this area; the address is printed on the back cover. They can show you examples, give you advice - but the action must come from you.

HAIR TODAY - GONE TOMORROW

At the De La Salle school the head appears to think that long hair somehow stops his pupils from learning. After continually warning them about the length of their hair he has now resorted to expulsion in one case - to encourage the others? In reply to this act of repression the sixth form are going on strike next Wednesday.

All rules that look stupid to you usually look stupid to the local paper. If this happens at your school phone up the Argus - naturally they will want a photo guy with long hair, so make sure he is wearing straight clothes for the picture. Agree beforehand what you are going to say explaining your action, but don't go mad and issue a "statement" or try and look really organized. In return you will see your Head squirm as he suddenly realises how stupid his action is.

NO PLACE LIKE NO PLACE AT ALL

Anyone who lives away from their parents knows how difficult it is to get a place in Brighton. What passes for a flat is usually a divided-up room, draughty, and generally worth the £5 plus asked for it only if the other places are worse, or, what is more likely, there are no other places. A friend who advertised a flat in the Argus stopped answering the phone on the first day after the 60th call. The rent was not particularly low, yet people who called after the flat was let offered to pay half as much again. This shortage of accommodation is no accident, although landlords and estate agents like to make you think there's nothing to be done about it. It needs a careful look at housing in general to see what's wrong.

Up to now, houses have been built either as another way of making money out of people, or as some kind of favour reluctantly given to the homeless by local councils. Homes are thus built for profit or charity, and not in response to the right people have to a decent dwelling, which we feel should be the basis of any

housing policy. The needs of families should come first.

Where council houses are concerned, people's wishes, especially in times of severe housing shortage, are rarely considered, and families are often compulsorily moved several miles from their former neighbourhood, in order to get the only house that is available to them.

We would like to see a major change in the control of housing. People in one area, instead of having to rely on local authorities and private speculators for as important a matter as the place they live in, would decide themselves how many homes to build, of what kind, and would have the means to make sure they got built. To bring about this change to a housing scheme that suits the needs of the tenants, we support the growing movement towards Tenant's Associations, which unfortunately has left Brighton virtually untouched. These could gradually take over the policy-making and administrative functions of the local council. Tenant's control would be further helped by a building industry controlled by its workers. This would mean the end of the "spec. builder" who prefers to build office blocks which are kept empty till a suitable occupant can be found. Rates are not levied on empty properties in Brighton.

Under the present system, whenever a council's waiting list drops to somewhere in the region of a thousand (as in the case of Brighton), the local authority stops or rapidly reduces building - hard luck on the unlucky ones who didn't get a house. But surely, when the local council have the resources and the job is still not finished, it is absurd to stop. Why do they do it?

In the same way as the government and big business conspire to create unemployment and thus keep wages down, so they create a "housing shortage" to keep rents up. If everyone were decently housed, and there was a small surplus of houses, then rents would no longer be as high as they are now, for landlords would be forced to cut prices to attract new tenants. Eliminating the housing shortage would also create problems for local council bureaucrats. People would no longer be prepared to accept any old bit of bricks and mortar they are offered. They would no longer be prepared to move miles to a new neighbourhood or to cram a large family into a two-bedroomed house.

It is clear that under the present system the country's housing problems have not been solved, as the millions who live in squalid conditions show. In your paper you can read adverts placed by the Ministry of Defence, telling you how they protect your right to "free" speech. How many houses could have been built with the money used to mount this propaganda campaign?

The first priority must be to create a housing surplus to give people the widest possible choice of housing. In a particular district the houses would be controlled by the resident's association who would decide on any new development in the area. Together with interested groups, especially building workers (including architects and civil engineers as well as manual workers) they'd run the administration of the houses, plan the building programme, see to repairs, and organize maintenance.

Recently, building workers on a site of Turf at Isleworth in Middlesex showed their concern about housing in London by offering to work free to get the flats they were building finished as soon as possible. The management had locked the men out over a bonus dispute, consequently making the new occupants wait months for the nearly finished flats. The bosses were furious at the men's plan to move in homeless families and finish their flats off free.

We therefore think that building workers, if they had control over their sites, would be far more interested in working for the good of the community of which they are a part, than the present employers who are not. They would not be interested in building luxury flats and office blocks (and Marinas) that are constructed for the benefit of the well-off, but would first concentrate on making sure that nobody was without a home.

CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY VERSUS THE LEFT TENANTS

Tenants' Associations have grown up in the last few years in many towns in Britain, mainly in response to rent rises, which in many cases they are refusing to pay. However, there is a long way to go from a defensive organization to a free body that can take over the control and administration of its own area.

Housing management, as practiced by local councils, includes all the work done in advice on estates design and layout from the management point of view, the study of housing needs in the borough or district, the selection of tenants, the allocation of housing, the calculation of rents, and the collecting of these. Other duties include the collecting of rates, the upkeep and repair of estates, the adaptation, improvement and conversion of properties, enforcement of tenancy conditions, maintenance of good order, and dealing with unsatisfactory tenants. A council must also provide operation of special estates services (Community centres etc.), and care of the elderly and infirm.

If a tenants' co-operative took over, they would have to deal with these administrative functions. They would of course be fittest to decide on the planning of the estate as this would be done with respect to their own needs, with advice from architects and town planning experts. Tenant selection would obviously be fairer than a local council. The allocation of housing only concerns those residents who wish to swap houses, and this could easily be arranged by having a small surplus

of houses. Rent would be lower as a result of cutting out the local council administration. It would be fairer to subsidise particular families, rather than to support whole areas, without regard to the income of the tenants. The upkeep and maintenance of the houses can be carried out by the tenants themselves, because they now have security from unfair eviction, and get a say in running the estate, and services such as lighting, rubbish removal, and garden maintenance can be arranged with representatives of the workers who carry these services out.

Good order on the estate, something that housing managers are always striving for, can only come from areas that have a strong sense of community. In areas with no community sense, vandalism is always a major problem. Community sense is also important when it comes to dealing with the old. In a tenants' co-op they are an integral part of the community and are not left to the council or voluntary services to look after.

Tenants will only take over control if they organize themselves into tenants' associations, from which tenants' co-ops will be formed to take over the administration of their estates. They will then assert control over their environment, that is, Anarchism.

HOW TERRIBLY STRANGE TO BE SEVENTY

It is difficult to imagine what being old is really like. It's all too easy to forget how youth-orientated our culture has become. The old are too often tucked away, out of sight, out of mind.

Consider what it is to feel you are a drag to those who look after you, that you do not speak the same language any more. Many of the things that you believed in are laughed at now; "remnants of a bygone age" they are called. There is none of the stability you once knew; things changing all the time, people behaving in ways you can't understand. You dread the coming of winter; at best it means bad health, bad enough to make you feel terrible for weeks on end. The newspapers, the television - they're all aimed at younger people than you. It makes you feel irrelevant just to read or watch. Prices are rising all the time, and your pension never goes as far as it used to.

But what is worst is the loss of contact with your friends. Some are no longer living, but even to go across the town is so expensive, you can't afford to see people more than a few times a year. You are isolated from the only people you can talk to.

Does it sound like a good way to be? It would be nice, you might think, if pensioners could get cheap bus fares, to get to see each other more. The government introduced a scheme by which they pay back local councils who subsidized a cheap fares plan. Brighton council have refused to bring such a scheme into operation. They claim they can't cope with the bookwork. They seem quite able to put on Marina campaigns etc. - why can't they manage this?

EVER BEEN AD.

We don't really fancy asking people to advertise in "Fleabite". The advertisers in the other papers are just trying to reach a larger public - we reckon you know which are O.K. and which aren't. But if you want to send us a small ad. we'll print it free. Here are a few phony ones full of in (& bad) jokes.

***REVOLUTIONARY Vanguard for sale, reg. no. IS 1917. Much modified version, though modifications tend to alter performance badly, in fact can often bring it to a halt. Special interior gives impression of travel while vehicle is stationary. Extra large steering wheel (for many hands to grip) though visibility is poor. Steering also badly needs attention, for as well as wandering to the left (typical of this model), it is very wobbly. Excellent handbook, workshop manual & other literature supplied, as well as photographs of famous drivers. This fine vehicle, of which much was once expected, now offered as scrap.

***TROUBLE with the law? Short of cash? Ravachol Associates can help you, no fee!

***THANKS to Saint Kropotkin for prayers answered.

ADDRESSES

FREE SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN - Dave Pugh,
FREE ANARCHIST LIBRARY
ADDRESS OF "FLEABITE" - Nick Heath,

This issue of "Fleabite" was brought to you at great expense and no small loss of loss of life by the combined talents of the Brighton Anarchist Group who wrote the articles, typed the typing, and did the printing to produce this libertarian laff-in from the heart of revolutionary Brighton. Thanks to the Incredible Hulk who posed for our cover while visiting the town recently.

The next issue will be around some time in January & depending on printing (which we are now investigating) may contain Anarchist Comix! Whatever happens, plenty more ideas for the do-it-yourself revolution! So let's hear from you before then. In the meantime: Don't follow leaders, Watch the Parkin' Meters!