

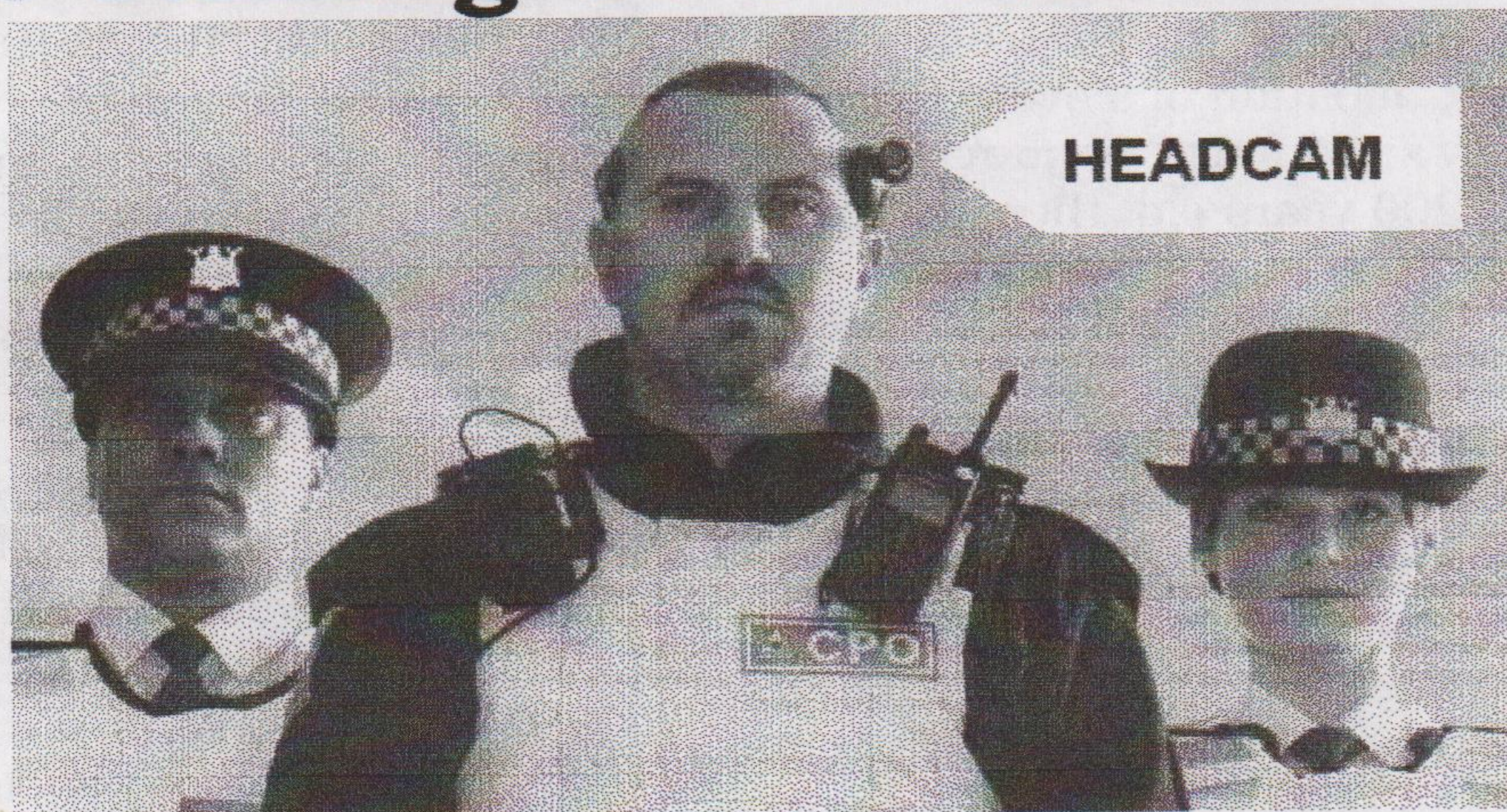
THE NOTTINGHAM SPARROW



Rebel Nottingham ~ Our Nottingham

May 2007 N°2

City invasion by Robocops & Talking CCTV cameras



Most people know of C3PO, the *Star Wars* walking-talking robot with human qualities. Now meet 3 CPOs, some of the actors posing as Nottingham City Council's new army of Community Persecution Officers. CPOs can best be described as 'humans with robot qualities' because in June they will all be given head-mounted spy cameras to record their daily interactions with citizens. Some already have them. And that's not all! The BBC now tells us that Nottingham has been chosen as the one of 20 new areas for "talking CCTV" cameras. Apparently they will shout at passers by with child-like voices to increase the guilt of 'wrong-doing'. Judging from what we already know about so-called community protection, these tickings off from the sky could include anyone handing out anti-war leaflets or sitting on the council steps. Wouldn't it be far cheaper to combine the two schemes and employ Daleks?

HARDsquawk – The Sparrows' regular rant

Take over the Market Square!

After the grand opening of the Square in April, what better way to take it back for the people than hold demonstrations against the despicable way the Home Office is treating refugees from war-torn countries in Africa. The Congolese community and their supporters have twice used the centre of the Market Square to shout and sing against deportations. Survivors from the Darfur region also protested sendings back to Khartoum in Sudan, with welcome support from other asylum seekers, No Borders & the voluntary Refugee Forum.

LETTERS TO THE SPARROWS' NEST

Councillor's trickery exposed

Dear Sparrow, during the Market Square reopening celebration on March 30th, it was amusing to watch council leader Jon Collins giving out leaflets from his back pocket wearing a baseball cap - the sort that get you banned from shopping centres if you are a teenager.

The front of the leaflet reproduced the "Party on the Square" publicity so I thought this was an official Council leaflet. But on the other side was party political propaganda of the Labour party. Collins is standing in the May elections and obviously couldn't resist a bit of easy self-promotion. I have now read on Indymedia that the Electoral Commission are far from happy and also that a belated memo has now gone out to council staff warning against mixing City Council and Party business. Naughty, naughty!

Best wishes – Laura, NG7

**PEOPLE POWER
ON THE WEB**

Notts Indymedia
notts.indymedia.org.uk

The Sumac Centre
www.sumac.org.uk

HISTORY

Abolition of Slavery?

Judging by the local 'Abolition 200' commemoration of the Slave Trade Act of 1807, Nottingham seems to be in complete denial of any East Midlands part in the British Empire's use of slaves and slave trading. Never mind that slavery still exists in many countries including some ex-British colonies, the myth that slavery ended in the early 1800s needs to be exposed.

In the British West Indies slavery was still legal until 1838, and the 1807 Act did not prohibit trade within the Caribbean colonies, only from Africa. Legal slavery in Africa continued into the 20th century under Empire rule in Nigeria and Gambia and until the late 1920s in Sierra Leone, for example. In 1921, in reply to the governor of Sierra Leone, Winston Churchill argued that abolition of slavery there would not be beneficial to the country's economy! So much for the proud idea of British abolition being 200 years old, then. As for local connections, in Notts the wealthy Mellish family whose name is associated with Henry Mellish school in Bulwell and were owners of Hodssock Priory (where the public pay each year to see its snowdrop garden) is an easy example of a local connection with plantation slavery that could be talked about publicly, but isn't.

Plus, in the 1830s, British slave owners (who even included some abolitionists!) many who never even lived in the Caribbean, were compensated for each slave they freed to the total tune of 20 million pounds. This money they then used to build the cotton mills, plus gasworks for night working, canals and railways to move the cotton away from the ports, and banks they ran to invest in these ventures. Nottingham's cotton spinning mills on the River Leen are an example of these. They made life a misery for thousands of British working class women, children and men after the official end of the Trade, still using slave-grown cotton from America! Back-breaking and fatal indentured labour continued in the British Caribbean plantations.

We should know by now that a government Act does not a reality make. Plus, a year of Make Poverty History did little to dent the continuing will of business owners and investors to fleece and exploit the poor of the 'Third World' for profit, whilst people work and live in terrible conditions, children go without shoes and clothes, and many people starve or are malnourished, and die of curable diseases.

ENVIRONMENT

Squat the lot

Last month, a group of Notts activists held 'Spring Into Action', a week of activities to highlight the damage capitalism is doing to the environment. Spring Into Action supporters occupied an empty factory building in Radford to use as Headquarters for the week. Volunteers made the place safe and habitable for visitors without mains electricity and running water using environmentally-friendly compost toilets and batteries charged using bicycles!

Squatting unused buildings is often given a bad name in the press but it's perfectly legal and should be encouraged. While many people are homeless, in the East Midlands alone there are nearly 60,000 empty homes, 16,500 of which are in Nottinghamshire and a third of those are in the City of Nottingham. These figures do not even include all the other empty commercial buildings that could be taken over for community use. Many are listed buildings being left to rot by their owners. More info: www.eastsideclimateaction.org.uk

Librarians & public library access under fire

WORK

At Nottingham University, library staff have recently had to reapply for their employment contracts, which will go hand-in-hand with job losses for some. Part of the reason is the introduction of self check-in and check-out scanners for books that work with the university ID card, issued to students and academics with a barcode for library use. Library staff are not the only ones to suffer from this. You now need to have a card to enter the library itself. Previously anyone, public or non-academic staff could walk in and use the facilities. Not any more - another example of ID cards being used to deny people access to things that used to be free.

THE NOTTINGHAM SPARROW IS PRODUCED BY MEMBERS OF A LOCAL GROUP OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION. WE ARE INVOLVED IN A VARIETY OF POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. Do write to us, including letters for the Sparrows' Nest, at **BOX AF c/o The Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham, NG7 6HX**

Find us on the web: www.afed.org.uk/nottingham Please recycle & copy on recycled paper, if you can!