

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL may have unwillingly surrendered many of its powers and functions during the Town Hall revolution, but its flair for political controversy remains unimpaired.

The controlling Labour group's efforts to get to effective grips with the disastrous housing shortages - by buying up unsold houses on private developments - has prompted the apathetic middle classes to assume the mantles of militants.

Young snobs lucky or over-paid enough to secure a house on any of the Nottingham area's new private estates are forming their own activist groups or political cells - though they call them, respectfully enough, "residents associations".

They have been holding meeting after meeting, a protest march, demonstrations, and undertaking a wide range of lobbying.

The outcome is evidenced in righteous howls of anguish about plummeting property values, degenerating neighbourhoods and the horror of council house neighbours.

And they add to this their claims that the Council, which after all is pursuing its mandated policy of modern homes for as many as soon as possible, is acting immorally, even illegally.

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And a Labour councillor has fallen the unfortunate, politically naive victim of their ploys.

Councillor Stanley Baker, who represents an area including one of the trouble-spots, Hollydene Park, Bulwell, has put himself in jeopardy of being sacked by the Labour group.

An outburst at a meeting on Heronridge Estate led him to publicly criticise the way the inner caucus of political leaders on the Council comprehensively dictates group policy.

And he has publicly supported residents' and Tories' proposals that the new homes should be offered for sale to families from clearance areas or on the house waiting lists before they are rented out.

But this tack is hardly Cricket when the city's waiting lists are running at over 10,000 and hundreds of new privately-built homes remain unsold to anyone, month after month, and the building industry faces financial chaos.

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The young estate whizz-kids, with their new Vivas, 2.4 children and coffee-party wives, are at last beginning to realise the Council's leader John Carroll sometimes means what he says.

It took them long enough to appreciate the implications of his pledge to buy up houses to boost the city's housing stock and ailing redevelopment programmes.

His "open cheque book" could apparently run to £10m.

The city has already bought 159 homes at Heronridge, Top Valley, and



108 across the Gedling frontier at Hempsill Vale, the latter on land which the old Carlton Council incidentally sold to developers. They are also buying about 134 houses at Hollydene Park, Bulwell.

And others are in the pipeline.

The house-rustling may yet take them outside the city limits again, possibly this time into Rushcliffe or Broxtowe districts.

Could it be a wicked Machiavellian plot to force the city boundaries wider and thus enhance the chances of becoming a top tier authority? After all, only Bristol, of the districts, has a bigger population.

Or could it be an equally sinister form of imperialism - to pack the electoral rolls of Tory areas around the city with new Labour ranks?

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Whatever the eventual answer, the house-owners are taking to the barricades to quell this 1974 version of the "yellow peril".

Many families living in desperate Victorian conditions in clearance areas will have modern homes sooner than they had dared hope. And they may even get a perverse satisfaction from paying £7 or £8 a week rent for a home with extras while the man next door who is buying his home is struggling to pay £15 to £20 a week mortgage on the basic model.

The city's policy is rightly being strongly defended by Housing Director Malcolm Campbell Lee and Housing Chairman Bert Littlewood.

The home-owners face a long uphill struggle for effective public support, which will not be helped by the streams of abusive 'phone calls to which Bert Littlewood is currently being subjected.

Even those bastions of capitalism the building societies have refused to "black" the affected developments.

The humanitarian philosophy of mixed public and private development may be with us at last!

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IT WAS SAD INDEED to see one of Nottingham's most conscientious and efficient councillors up before the

Shire Hall beaks last month to pay penance for a momentary indiscretion.

The unsavoury nature of his crime, indecent exposure, will not be denied, least of all by Eric Pate himself.

True to the man's character he saw fit to resign as a city JP a few days before his appearance in front of a county bench.

It is understood he is still undecided about his political future. It's a truly sad irony that the pressure of his council and other public service work probably contributed greatly to the depressive illness from which the court was told he was suffering.

I hope by the time you read this Eric Pate has decided against resigning from the political arena. And hopefully his colleagues, on both sides of the House, will give him the support he deserves to carry on.

On a council notable for its family circles, its unimaginative part-timers and party hacks who make up the numbers, Councillor Pate's flair makes him one of the leading policy-makers.

His contribution, both to public debate and to organisation within the Labour group, is a valuable one, and should if possible be retained.

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JOIN NOTTINGHAM CORPORATION for the high life. Approved apparently without a murmur from the Labour or Tory members of the city's Leisure Services Committee, a £72.17 bill run up by Entertainment Manager Joe Nuttridge staying at the Albany Hotel during the Festival.

He must have had some late nights during what many people agreed was a highly successful fortnight. Rumour has it he may even have been tired and emotional at times.

But surely a taxi home to Cropwell Bishop each night would have been cheaper. And £50 could have meant all the difference to another Festival event.

Perhaps he has still to learn fully what an explosive combination money and the Festival have proved in the past.

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THE SALE OF three Persian carpets from four bought when the Council House was built raises a mysterious question.

They are being sold for £1400, and average £466 each. Total valuation of all four was £1600.

The fourth and only one being used is in the Lord Mayor's parlour.

So why is the city's civic head fobbed off with a cheap £200 carpet?

And just to pile (sic) on the agony: Why at a time when those who can afford to are rushing to buy inflation-proof assets like Persian carpets has the Policy and Resources Committee, in its Oriental wisdom, decided to dispose of these rapidly-appreciating investments?

Barker

Grass Roots

Number 10

Nottingham, September, 1974

Price 4p

PAGE TEN
NOTTINGHAM
ROCK
COLUMN

Searching for snips at Sneinton

Story on page 2



Stall story

SNEINTON MARKET IS OPEN on Mondays and Saturdays and is, certainly in the eyes of the hundreds of people who flock there every week, the best market in Nottingham. "It's great"; "There's always something happening"; "You never know what you'll find - there's always something new" are some of the reactions.

It's an open market - stalls are hastily erected in the early morning, or barrows pushed onto the market place. Many traders simply lay their wares on the ground. There are no posh name signs or smartly striped canopies - it's a very makeshift affair - and so it's been since 1856 when the market was first established.

Permissible

In 1853 Edwin Patchitt, Secretary to the Enclosures Commissioners, told the City Council that they must not build on the land but that an open market would be permissible - and that still holds good today. In 1873, it was mentioned in the Nottingham Red Book: "Sneinton Market, so called, is held on an open space of ground on the eastern side of the Borough, near to the baths and wash-houses, and more or less of a market is held daily, but the principal one is Saturday." (The baths are still there.)

In the old days it was as much a fair as a market, with conjuring shows, side shows, travelling teeth extractors, a weight lifter called Tommy Strong ("By name and by nature") and well-known characters like Mr Brumma-jum, the toff who sold "priceless" gold and jewels, and Polly Potter, "Watercress Polly", whose ample proportions were well known - "as big as Polly Potter" was an often-used expression.

Nowadays, the sideshows have gone but the characters are there - Pot Emma and Pot Jack with their second-hand

stalls, an old lady of 79 who has been coming with her barrow of second-hand clothes to the market every Monday and Saturday for 54 years - and her mother before her. "I never miss," she says. "It keeps me fit."

You never know exactly what to expect at the market - some stalls are there every week, others come and go. Parts of scrapped cars, piles of furry teddy bears, books, bric-a-brac, heaps of factory-reject knitwear for £1 a piece, formica off-cuts, carpet pieces, cones of fine knitting wool, and barrow loads of fruit and veg., "Home-grown tomatoes - 2lb for 15p - money back if you're not satisfied."

You can pick over junk and second-hand books, prettily painted cups and saucers. Sneinton Market is famous for its bargains - you might find a priceless antique for a couple of bob.

At the lower end is the wholesale fruit and vegetable market which was moved there from Nottingham's Old Market Square at the turn of the century because of the construction of electric tramways around the city centre.

Friendly place

Why not go early (and it's a good idea to do so - the market is packed by 10 a.m.) and have breakfast of bacon, egg and beans for 26p, washed down with a half pint mug of tea, at the busy cafe at the wholesale market end. And if, after your morning's exertions, you feel like something stronger, pop into the Sir Robert Clifton, more often called the Market Side because of its proximity to the Market - it's a friendly place, the beer's good, and you can have your lighter filled for 5p.

You can get to the market by walking down Bath Street or by catching the number 77 free bus to Hockley. It's well worth a visit.



On target



Money to burn

HAPPY CUSTOMERS of Nottingham's very wonderful, refuse-fuelled District Heating Scheme may like to be reminded that the recent troubles were not unpredicted. Way back in March '71, when Derbyshire was still boss in Nottingham, Private Eye did one of its exposure jobs on the scheme, then only at the planning stage. Unfortunately, the warnings were unheeded, but readers may still care to refresh their memories with a few salient points.

(1) The Corporation accepted the second highest of the four tenders for building the grates and boilers. Submitted by Head Wrightson Process Engineering Ltd, at £726,000 this was nearly £1 million more than the lowest tender.

(2) This choice was made on the advice of consulting engineers Pell, Morch and Partners, who then, wearing slightly different hats as consulting engineers to both the Corporation and the National Coal Board, were employed to design and supervise the construction of the whole scheme. For their advice, so expensive in its consequences, Pell, Morch charged the Corporation £155,000.

(3) The reasoning behind Pell, Morch's choice was never adequately explained. The firms making the lowest tenders were not allowed to see, let alone contest, the "evidence" against them, and the Council meeting which made the final decision was held in secret. A press release announced blandly that the Head Wrightson tender was "the best buy for Nottingham". The minority Labour group strongly opposed all this, but was powerless to do anything about it.

(4) As if all this were not disturbing enough, it turns out that it was already known at this early date that the Martin-type grate (a German design) which was part of the Head Wrightson scheme (though not of the others) would cost over six times as much in annual maintenance as British-designed incinerators, and that not only was it likely to be shut down one week in four for boiler repairs, but the whole grate would probably last no more than four years, compared to the 15-year life of a British grate.

It is interesting to read in the Evening Post over three years later that the "teething troubles" of the "£5.2 million incinerator complex" have been caused by "failures in electric motors, grates and fire brick materials ... Some are due to poor workmanship and others needed changes in materials and design"; and that "fitting of modified parts - aimed at beating the deposit which fouls up tubes in the boiler" is being carried out.

Consumers may care to reflect on all this when confronted by the Coal Board's insistence that the inefficiencies of the scheme should be passed on in the form of increased charges (refuse is now burning at £7 per ton instead of £3 per ton if the scheme worked properly).

Harassed tenants

IT IS ENCOURAGING to see that the ostriches of King Street have finally taken their heads out of the sand and admitted that harassment of tenants is a problem that the Council ought to be doing something about. No doubt ostrich-in-chief Malcolm Campbell Lee will have learned during his discussions (reported in the Evening Post, Saturday, August 17th) that many local authorities have been active in the field of tenancy relations for some years, preventing illegal evictions, prosecuting landlords who harass tenants, and referring furnished contracts to rent tribunals. If Mr Lee hadn't needed recent rent legislation to prod him into action, he could have taken a leaf from the book of Leicester, our neighbouring city, where "law and order" merchant, Mr Adlington, has been bringing evil landlords to book for the past 1½ years.

However, workers at Nottingham People's Centre will be pleased if the City's application for an urban aid grant to provide a tenancy relations officer is successful. It appears that under the present regime many of Nottingham's private tenants who are being harassed are referred by City Council staff to the People's Centre for action.

Even in the Post

THIS PASSAGE from the Post puzzled us. Has our daily paper at last detected elevated principles in the Labour group? Or, as seems more likely, is "ideals" merely a misprint for "deals"?

Evening Post, Saturday, August 10, 1974

The Corporation has already been heavily criticised for its ideals in the private housing market.

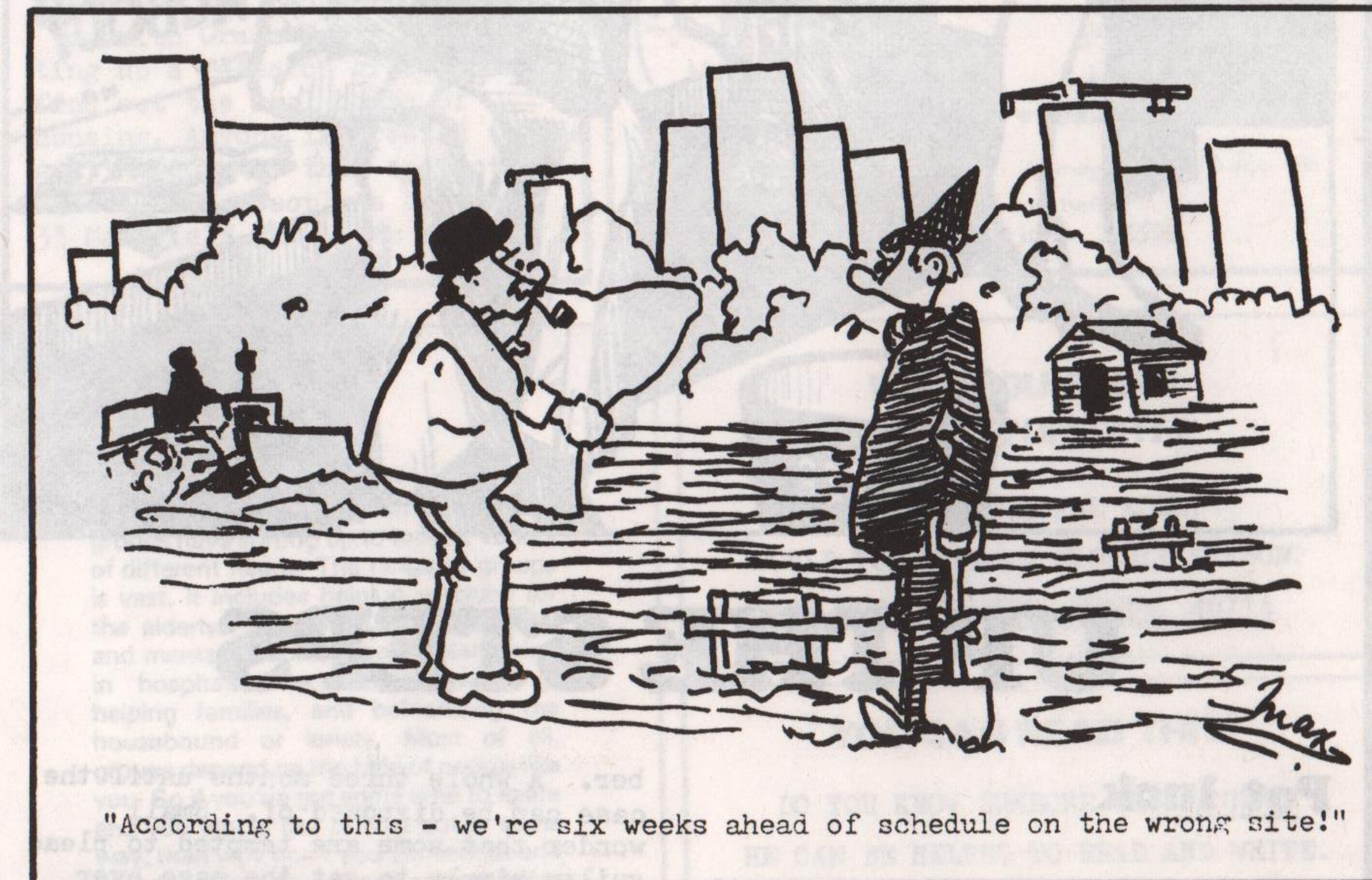
The second extract is from the misprint addicts' old favourite. It seems especially suitable to Nottingham. Is this the answer to Coun. Woodward's prayers?

THE GUARDIAN Tuesday August 13 1974

Almost the whole of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea may be declared a conservative area to give the council much stricter control over the quality of future building.

Catch-22?

AN UNMARRIED MUM placed a baby voluntarily in the care of the local authority because she didn't have suitable accommodation for the baby. The local authority said she must have suitable accommodation before she could take the baby out of care. The Department of Health and Social Security stopped her unemployment benefit because (not having the baby) she was available for work. She therefore had no money to pay for suitable accommodation.



Hostel reception

IT SEEMS AS IF NOTTINGHAM is moving into the homelessness industry in a big way. Word from the King Street corridors of power has it that Peel Street hostel, currently run by the Salvation Army for the Housing Department as "Part III" accommodation, is to be replaced by a much larger purpose-built complex in the Woodborough Road area.

Any move to replace the restrictive and overcrowded Peel Street hostel must be welcomed, but why spend massive sums of money building and staffing a hostel when the cash could be used to rehabilitate some of Nottingham's many empty houses for homeless families to live in? However, Nottingham's hard-line homelessness officer, Mr Chapman, is unlikely to approve of any scheme for giving homes to the homeless which does not include as a preliminary a suitably long period of "punishment" in the morally upright, but stigmatising atmosphere of a hostel.

Pub snub

MANY RESIDENTS of Nottingham will remember a particularly colourful pub next to the Mansfield Road entrance to the Victoria Station footbridge. Logically enough, it was called the Mansfield Arms. Those who plucked up enough courage to go in (sometimes it was an uphill struggle against those being thrown out) will recall that gazing into rock-pools at the seaside was considerably less interesting

than studying the fauna at the Mansfield Arms. Alas, these delights are no more. After a long closure for refitting, the pub has re-opened with (a sure sign of changed times) a solitary sunshade on its terraced roof in the shadow of the old station clock, a posh new bar (lounge only), a posh new name (the Regent) and, it obviously hopes, posh new customers. Unfortunately, it may be that, despite the pub's long neglect of them, the old clientele haven't forgotten the pub. How else explain the notices which have appeared on the door (surely not usually necessary in such an obvious-

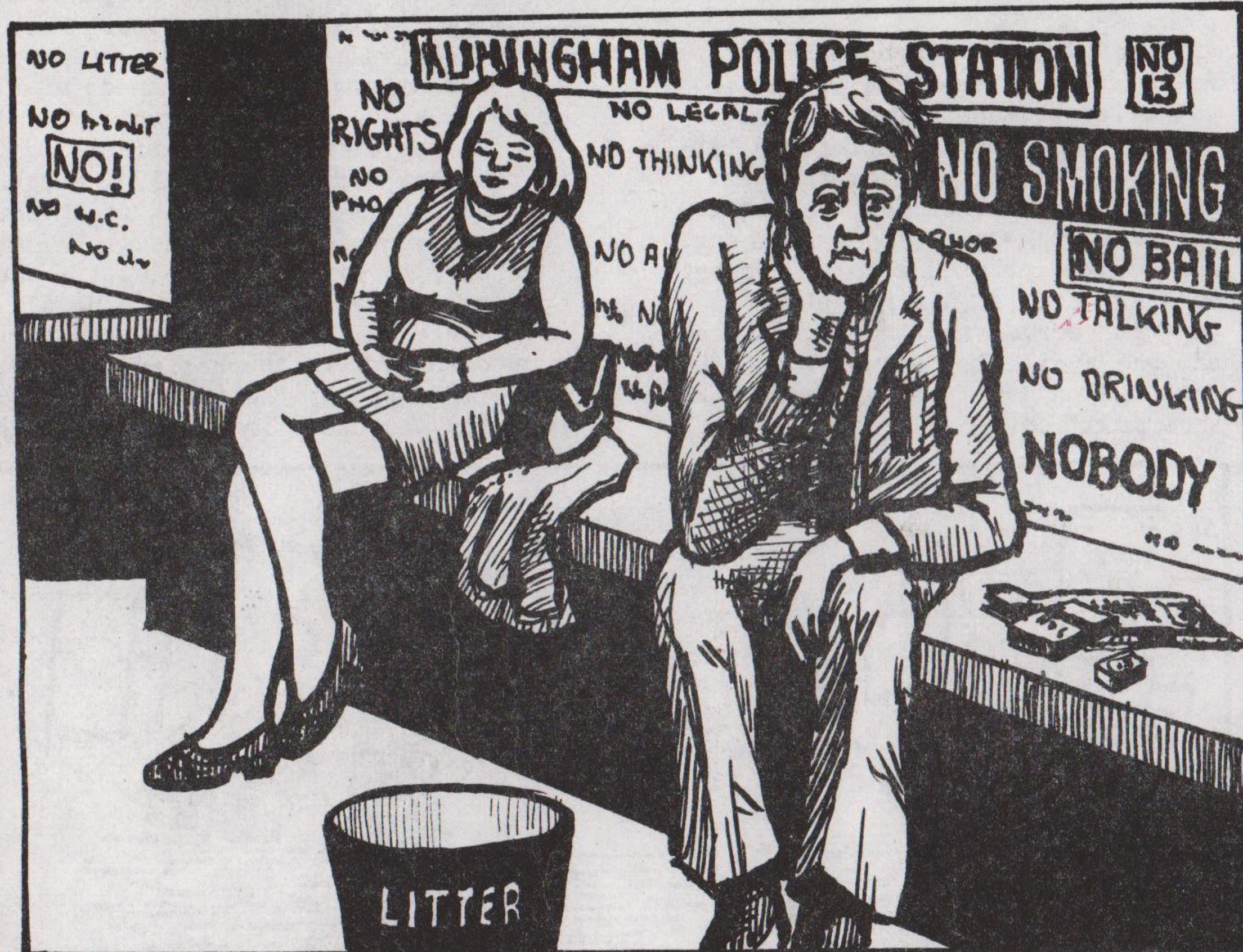
ly tasteful place as this): "The management reserves the right to refuse service to anyone in dirty working clothes or untidy dress"; and (ironic in view of the portraits on the wall of the Mansfield Arms of prize-winning pedigree dogs) "Sorry - no dogs allowed - lounge bar only."

That's Dunnett

IS THERE A NOTE of resignation in the way certain Labour Party members refer to the "Dunnett Machine"? Gloom, perhaps, at the sheer monolithic efficiency of it all? Despair not - things do not always go Uncle Jack's way. One day he may even make the fatal slip for which the vultures are hovering. After all, Chairman Jack didn't emerge too triumphantly from the recent match against Bournemouth.

And, inconsistent perhaps with the image of a conscientious, hard-working constituency MP, he has been (continued overleaf, column 3)

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UP THE STEPS

Pot luck

HAVE YOU EVER thought of growing pot? A young chap did the other day and put one seed in a plant pot and left it on his window sill. It was still there when the police came, only it had made a pathetic attempt to grow and failed. Away they went to the police station, the grower, his half-dead plant and a small amount of cannabis besides. Later, in Court at the Shire Hall, the law descended with awful severity. The would-be horticulturalist was fined a total of £150; £5 prosecution costs and £15 towards his legal aid costs giving a grand total of £170.

Now everyone knows that the law strikes hard at the supplier of cannabis. But there was no suggestion that this young man was a supplier, simply that he had a small amount of cannabis for his own use and had experimented with growing one plant which was an abject failure. What were the Shire Hall Magistrates thinking of! Surely not of the advice reportedly given to Justices to deal leniently with cases of possession where supplying is neither charged nor alleged.

The law's delay (1)

AT LEAST THAT unfortunate young gentleman did not have to wait over three months for his case to come to court. Let us suppose that you were charged with the theft of a bar of soap from a local store and your case is brought before the City Magistrates at the Guildhall. If you plead not guilty, then you will have to wait for your trial in the Magistrates' Court to take place in Decem-

ber. A whole three months until the case can be disposed of. Small wonder that some are tempted to plead guilty simply to get the case over rather than to face a harrowing wait of over three months.

... and (2)

TALKING OF DELAYS in disposing of criminal business, it was gratifying to see that the number of Magistrates on rota to sit at the Guildhall was increased the other day by new admissions to a grand total of 240, which may help, with the extra courts which are to be available at the Guildhall, to reduce the present delays.

Good scheme

THE "DUTY SOLICITOR" SCHEME at the Guildhall appears to be working well. It was introduced in April for an experimental period of six months, and it ensures that, each morning and afternoon session of the courts, one and sometimes two Solicitors will be available to represent anyone who is in custody and wishes to make an application for bail. In the bad old days before April 1st, few Defendants were represented by a Solicitor on their first appearance, many found themselves in police custody for three days or at Lincoln Prison for a week before a Solicitor was able to stand on his feet to make an application for bail. If you want to know what the bad old days were like at the Guildhall, go to the Shire Hall, where day by day you can hear Defendants coming up from custody unrepresented by a Solicitor and unable to make an effective application for bail. The sooner the scheme is extended to the Shire Hall the better.

(continued from page 3)
known to mislay the boundaries of his own constituency. Rumour has it that, during the Drury Hill controversy of not so long ago, Careless Jack suffered an attack of frontier-blindness and declined at first to take any interest in the affair, claiming (inaccurately) that the offending thoroughfare wasn't on his patch.

Let's hope the Machine is better oiled at the forthcoming General Election. The vote-catching juggernaut certainly has a few problems on its hands this time round. Apart from the internecine strife with the dissident left, there are the still-recent boundary changes and the City Council's massive clearance programme in the Meadows. All those lovely Labour votes scattered to the far corners of the City boundary. Quite a headache for super-Agent John Carroll. Rumour even suggests the constituency may now be a marginal.

Apology

In our issue of "Grass Roots" No. 9 we included a paragraph "Dead Shots" in which we alleged that 8,000 copies of the "Nottingham Arrow" had not been distributed by the private firm who had been paid to deliver them. We also stated that we had heard rumours of total chaos and collapse in the previous month's deliveries. We further inferred that in the "Marian Sherwood" Columns her correspondents were fictitious.

We now discover that the above statements were based on wrong information and we are satisfied that they are completely untrue.

We unreservedly apologise to the Nottingham City Council and to the Publishers and Distributors of the "Nottingham Arrow" and completely withdraw the allegations we have made.

The above apology appears following a letter from the City of Nottingham Publicity and Information Officer informing us that unless we printed in the next convenient issues of Grass Roots and the Nottingham Arrow an apology for the statements referred to, the Nottingham City Council would institute proceedings for damages.

We have further received from Messrs Cottrill, Stone, Lawless & Co., solicitors to the publishers of the Nottingham Arrow, Civic Publications Ltd. of Bramhall, Cheshire, a letter stating that their Clients would issue a Writ for libel against the Grass Roots Committee unless we printed an apology expressed in the terms above in Grass Roots and in the Nottingham Arrow, and paid £25 in costs.

Since Grass Roots is a small publication produced on good will and charity, may we issue an appeal to our readers to help us meet this financial obligation. All contributions will be gratefully received at the People's Centre, 33 Mansfield Rd.

Developments

Not green in Lincoln

A RECENT VISIT TO LINCOLN revealed an interesting contradiction in the National Westminster Bank's policy towards buildings of architectural or historic interest in its possession. On Castle Hill in Lincoln, within a stone's throw of the Castle and the Cathedral, stands a fine half-timbered building dated 1543. This, according to a large and showy plaque attached to its front, was restored in 1957 by the National Provincial Bank, and in 1970, following the merger with the Westminster Bank, it became the Lincoln Area Office. Judging from the exhibitionist style of the plaque, this is an object of some pride and self-congratulation to the Nat. West. (though the restoration is of the crude, black and white, liquorice allsort variety). Why, then, their barbaric cost-accountant's approach to our own Watson Fothergill on Thurland Street? Doesn't an exceptionally imposing Victorian bank exude almost as much prestige (value incalculable) as a chocolate-box Tudor town-house?

ANOTHER LEAF FROM LINCOLN'S book: the Lincoln Civic Trust have scored a few sour, but unfortunately all too minor points by persuading developers to let them attach small plaques to a number of new buildings. These record briefly, but with fine asperity, the previous existence on that spot of a particularly interesting building. They are probably most effective as propaganda - a reminder of what's been lost may make people more determined to hang on to what's left. There would be no shortage of sites in Nottingham, of course. The only problem would be dodging the traffic while examining plaques attached to the tarmac on Fletcher Gate and Maid Marian Way.

Bulwell plea

HOW FAR CAN THE NEW, isolated estates of Highbury Vale, Crabtree Farm and Bulwell Hall be brought together to form a whole community? This critical question has been raised by the Bulwell Community Forum in an open letter to councillors and officials of the City and County Councils. The Forum represents a grouping of professional people (e.g. social workers, teachers, probation officers) and representatives of voluntary organisations who work or serve in the Bulwell area. They are concerned at the lack of contact between physical planners and social workers involved with the residents of the new council estates, and criticise the policy of moving slum dwellers into "concrete wastelands without the sense of community that was possessed in the older areas." Social workers are then left to pick up the pieces in terms of family breakdown and delinquency.

The Forum attack the delay in providing social facilities in new estates and recommend the establishment of neighbourhood community centres, youth clubs and corner shops to provide social meeting points for people



WHAT WILL HAPPEN to Bridlesmith Gate? As our photo shows, a substantial part of the south end has been acquired by Cox Industrial Estates Ltd. Since Cox also own property on the other side of the street, it seems that the fate of this ancient highway depends on what they and the City Planning Department can agree between them. A planning application is already in, and redevelopment seems certain, since that's what Cox are in business for, and the Planning

Department's "Advisory Handbook" gives the green light for the removal of most of this group of properties, apart from the former Barker's Coffee House (the building carrying the two boards on the left). We trust that, in accordance with the Handbook's principles, Barker's Coffee House will be preserved, and that if a forthcoming inspection of the interiors reveals anything of value in the others, steps will be taken to preserve them too.

on the new estates. Concern is expressed at the lack of new jobs in the north Nottingham area to cater for the growing number of school leavers over the next five years - an aspect felt to be neglected by the Council in developing new estates.

What effect this one open letter will have remains to be seen - it would be nice to think that it will spur the local authorities to bring into step their physical plans and social provision.

Cut-price homes

AT A TIME OF owner-occupier hysteria over Council plans to buy houses on private estates, it is not surprising that the Council's own experience of building houses for sale should be neglected. Unfortunately, experience in the business of house-selling does not come cheaply, as the saga of Radford Colliery shows.

The story begins in March 1973, when the City Council agreed to purchase 13 acres of the former Radford Colliery site from John Player. Total cost of the land was £180,000, which, at under £14,000 an acre for inner-city housing land, was not exorbitant in these inflationary times.

The Housing Committee decided that what the city needed was cut-price houses for sale. The Council would build them itself and mortgage preference would be given to people on the Council's waiting list, people in present or future clearance areas, and existing Council tenants. Hopes were raised by news that Government policy would enable the houses to be

'sold at up to 20% and in some cases 30% below market value' (Evening Post, May 1973). The Director of Housing considered that 150 houses for sale could be built on the site, together with some accommodation for old people. An attractive scheme with the new District Council elections only a month away.

An outline of the type of housing suitable for the site was approved in July 1973, the Housing Committee opting mainly for terraces of three-bedroomed houses to cater for the needs of people on the waiting list and families from clearance areas. Accordingly, a contractor, Rowlinson Construction Ltd, was engaged to design and build the houses.

However, all did not go according to plan. It appears the contractor felt that terraced houses would not be such a strong seller as detached or semi-detached houses, although more terraced houses could be built on the site. As a result, expected costs began to escalate, so that the Post could announce that the likely cost of these "cut-price homes" would be between £11,161 and £11,964. Unfortunately, only 109 of these low-cost homes are to be built on the Radford Colliery site, not the 150 originally promised.

With an average price of £9,276 for a house in the East Midlands area in June 1974 (Department of the Environment Survey), who can blame the Council for buying private houses and not building and selling them? At least there is one site in Old Radford which will arouse no owner-occupied fears about lowering property values.

Grass Roots

Public rape?

"THEY DO NOT CARE a damn about what they are doing to our housing policy. We are being forced to bid against them and it is putting up prices. It is rape - public rape - nothing less."

So runs the considered opinion of Councillor Leighton, Chairman of Gedling Council, on Nottingham Corporation's plans to buy private houses on the Whimsey Park Estate, Carlton, to help ease the acute housing shortage in the city. Such comments have been typical of the hysterical outbursts greeting the City Council's decision to buy approximately 500 new houses on privately-built estates during the next two years.

At present the Council's waiting list stands at 10,000, with another 8,000 families in clearance areas needing to be rehoused by 1980. Consequently, it is not surprising that the Council responded favourably to approaches from private builders to buy houses currently under construction or standing empty. In the last few months, Building Society mortgages have been scarce, so that few house buyers are available to purchase newly-built private houses. A growing proportion of builders' capital has been tied up in empty houses, and at a time of high interest rates this represents a continual and growing financial liability. Banks have not been willing to advance new loans to builders because of the depressed state of the private house market. The result has been a further cutback on the number of new houses started, leading to a future shortage and another bout of rapid inflation of house prices once the mortgage famine is eased.

But there is nothing inevitable about this depressing stop-go pattern of house building. The plans by the City Council to buy new private houses present builders with an escape. The City Council is, in effect, guaranteeing private house builders a ready market for new houses over the next two years. Current purchases being negotiated will provide builders with much-needed finance for future house building - thus staving off what could well have been a major slump in the local building industry, and maintaining the supply of new housing: public and private.

It should also not be overlooked that at least 500 families from the waiting list or from the Meadows, Radford and Hyson Green will be able to get new houses in the next two years. Homes that would not otherwise be available.

Public rape, Councillor Leighton? It depends which public you mean!

Play House

THE PORTLAND ROAD "Play House" - taken over as a squat to much publicity in July - was opened on Tuesday, 28 August. The idea is to use the building as a supervised play centre for young children in the Raleigh Street and Portland Road area. In the past month a great deal of work has been done cleaning and decorating, and there has been extensive replastering, painting and rewiring. New window panes and plumbing fittings have also been installed.

The decision to take over the derelict shop was taken by residents of Kenilworth Terrace, off Portland Road, in conjunction with the Hampden Street Squatters Group and RARA. For a long time residents have been concerned about the lack of play facilities. In the last copy of Grass Roots, attention was drawn to Nottingham's lack of play provision for its children, and in the Raleigh Street Clearance Area the problem is particularly acute because of the particularly large number of children in the district.

High figures

For Nottingham taken as a whole, the percentage of children aged 14 years or younger was 25.5% at the April 1971 Census - in the Raleigh Street area the corresponding figure was 34.2%. In the immediate area to be served by the Play House - around the Raleigh Street Infants School and on the terraces between Portland Road and Raleigh Street - the figures are even higher: 43.6% and 42.6% respectively.

Yet the only play provision for literally hundreds of children is an inhospitable, cobbled "Play Street" on a steep slope which is continually used for access by the lorries of a coal merchant. No children play on this street. Instead they play on dangerous roads, in derelict houses, or in the local tiny gardens, and the results of this are, in turn, a high accident rate on the roads, a great deal of damage to houses and a lot of worry and irritation to parents.

Heavy toll

Thus there has been a good case for a long time for something to be done - both to provide play facilities, and to regulate the traffic flow through the Raleigh Street area that has taken such a

On the squat report



heavy toll in accidents to young children. In June strong feelings about these problems led to a demonstration and the gathering of a petition which was sent to the Council. At long last the due processes are under way. We have heard that the County Council is considering a scheme to regulate the traffic, and an application for an Urban Aid grant for an adventure playground has also been submitted.

But these processes take time - in fact far too long. While the police were very quick off the mark to say that any obstruction of Portland Road would lead to arrests, the authorities are not so quick

in putting through their own traffic scheme, which will not come into operation till next Spring at the earliest. Moreover, there is no guarantee that the application for a grant for an adventure playground will be approved and, if it is, it will be some while yet before it is constructed.

Meanwhile the need exists - so a more immediate solution to the local problem was needed, and taking over the shop was that solution.

Squatting in the derelict shop was relatively easy - in fact much easier than expected. Entry was secured and the tin

Left: '... the need exists'

over some of the windows and doors was taken down. The police arrived and explained the legal position - but there was no trouble and they went away. Squatting is not a criminal offence but a civil matter between the squatter and the owner.

In this case, since the building was derelict and tinned up in any case, and there was widespread local sympathy, no action has been forthcoming or is likely. Indeed, there is an advantage to neighbours from squats - it is obviously preferable for next door to be kept clean, in a decent state of repair and free from vermin and rubbish. Local sympathy and understanding has been sustained by a liberal flow of explanatory leaflets.

Difficult task

More difficult than expected was the task of getting the place cleaned up. Originally it was thought that this might take a week or so. However, as the wallpaper was stripped off and the floorboards taken up, more and more damp patches, perished plaster and other defects were revealed. This was disheartening at first and it points to the obvious need to be careful in choosing your squat. But friends and neighbours have put in a great deal of work since then. Support has also come from people and friends who have supplied building materials, jumble, cups of tea and sandwiches, and now the place is in fairly smart shape.

The Council's attitude has been interesting. A letter was sent to the Housing Department asking for their co-operation, and a telephone call was made. In particular the Department was asked for building materials for the repairs. They said they were sympathetic but since the shop was not Council-owned they could not help. (Is the implication that if you squat for a good cause in Council-owned property then you will get help?)

Lesson obvious

The experience of the Portland Road Play House Squat has so far been a good one, and the lesson seems to be obvious. If your community lacks play facilities, needs a community centre, or needs premises for some other local need like an advice centre - then, get organized and take yourself one.

BRIAN DAVEY (RARA)

Know your rights

The new Rent Act

AFTER A PERIOD of cliff-hanging worthy of a James Bond novel, the Rent Act 1974 finally received Royal Assent, and became law on the 14th August. But for the tenant who wants to find out whether he receives the Act's increased protection, or the landlord looking for loopholes, the suspense is not yet over.

Because of industrial action by HMSO printers, copies of the Act have not yet been distributed, and the D.O.E.'s only publication so far is inadequate and ambiguous. And it seems as if the Central Office of Information (the Government's own ad agency, who brought us gems like the "Switch Off Something" campaign) are none too keen to switch people on to their new rights, since housing aid services report that they have received surprisingly few enquiries about the new law.

However, here is a "Grass Roots" guide to tenants' rights under the new "fair deal" for furnished tenants.

Court Orders - Any tenant whose landlord has obtained a County Court Possession Order on a furnished letting before 14th August should apply to the Court to have the order rescinded if the tenancy was one which would have become a protected tenancy on August 14th.

Resident or non-resident landlord? The Act gives increased protection to the furnished tenants of non-resident landlords, but allows landlords who let rooms in their own homes to recover possession fairly easily. If a rented dwelling is in a block of purpose-built flats and the landlord occupies one of them, he is not considered to be a resident landlord for the purposes of the Act, but if the dwelling is in a house which has been converted into self-contained flats, and the landlord lives in one of them, then he is considered to be resident.

If the landlord did not qualify as a "resident landlord" on 14th August, he cannot reduce the security of his furnished tenants simply by moving in, but if he sells the property, the new landlord may move in within six months of the sale, and provided he gives the tenants notice of his intention to take up residence within 14 days of the sale, his tenants will have full protection for the first six months, but thereafter will only have the limited protection of tenants of a resident landlord. A new landlord cannot evict a tenant in order to move in himself, and if a resident landlord moves to live elsewhere, the tenancies become fully protected.

Furnished tenants of non-resident landlords are now fully protected. This means that if the landlord wishes to get rid of a tenant he must first serve a valid notice to quit. The tenant cannot, as before, apply to the Rent Tribunal for security of tenure, but, after the notice has



"Is this place purpose-built?"

expired, the landlord must apply to the County Court for possession, and must give one of a specified list of reasons - normally non-payment of rent or damage to the premises or fittings.

Unless the landlord can show an acceptable reason in Court, possession will not be given, and the tenant will remain protected. It is worth noting that this means furnished tenants of non-resident landlords who are paying too much rent can now apply for fair rents to be fixed without fear of their landlord automatically being able to get them to leave. This does not apply where board or attendance is provided - in such cases, protection is the same as for furnished tenants of a resident landlord.

Furnished tenants of a resident landlord retain the same protection that furnished tenants had before the new Act. This means that, if a landlord issues a notice to quit, the tenant can apply to the Rent Tribunal for security of tenure, but when the Tribunal refuses to grant or extend security, the landlord can obtain a possession order from the County Court without giving any reasons. Unfurnished tenants of resident landlords, and furnished tenants whose tenancies began after 14th August, 1974 are advised to seek advice, as their security may be affected by the new Act.

The Act does not apply -

- *to accommodation provided by an employer as a condition of employment,
- *to students occupying accommodation provided by establishments of education,
- *to lettings made for the purpose of holidays or for out-of-season lettings of holiday accommodation,
- *to accommodation wanted by the landlord for retirement, where notice of this has been given at the commencement of the tenancy.

Tenants in these categories should seek advice.

Letters

Balloon bursts

Dear Sir,

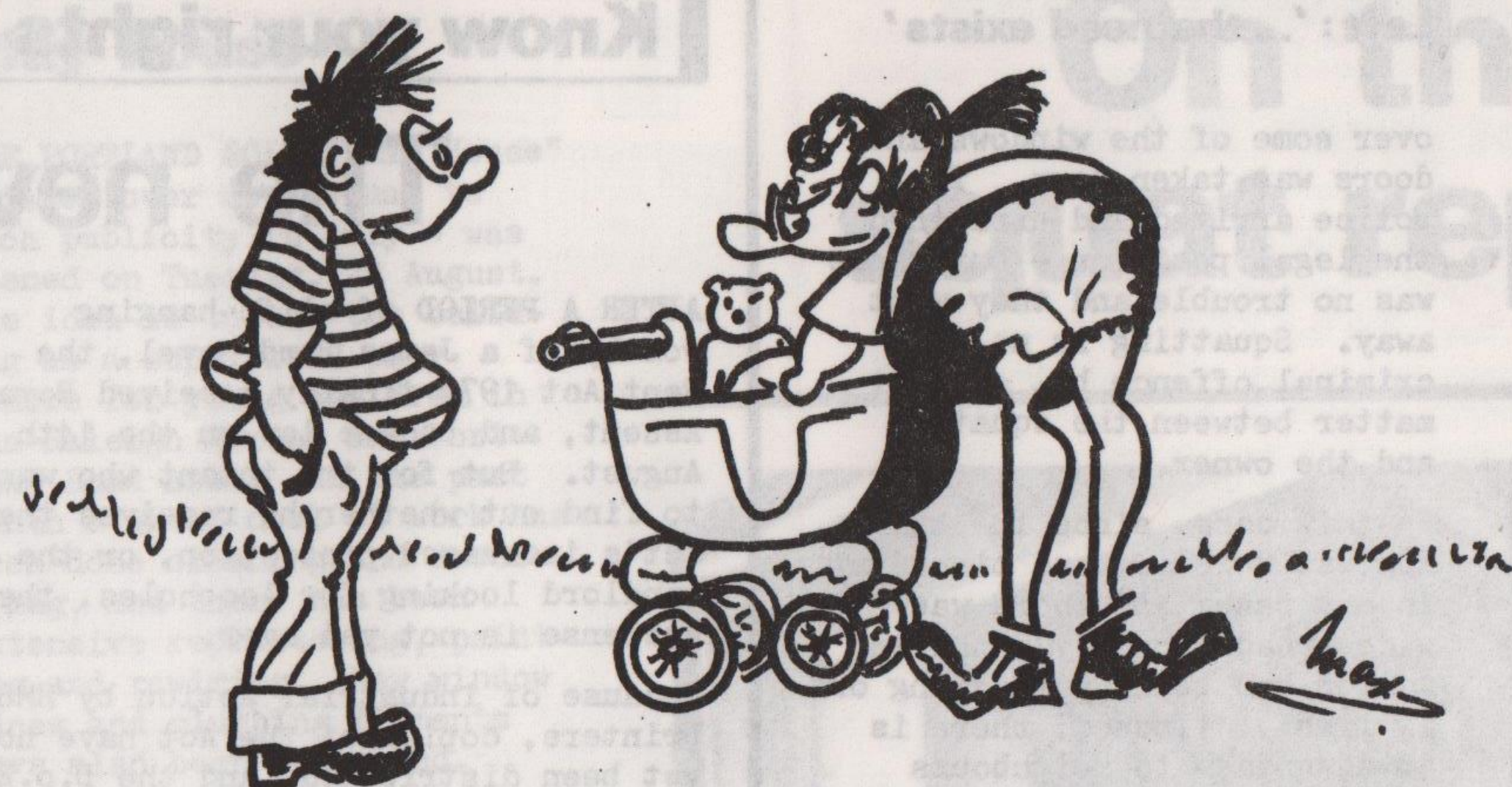
Earlier this year the May issue of the Nottingham Arrow was pushed through my letterbox and I avidly read this publication from cover to cover.

I was delighted to read, on page 9, the article headed "Second Tenants' Meeting Hall is Open-Third Planned". It seemed the Balloon Woods Centre was due to be opened that same month! How lovely!

Reading on, I was quite taken aback - I couldn't believe my eyes. It appeared that this building was near the Balloon Woods shopping centre! How incredible! Had a miracle happened overnight? As far as I knew there was no shopping centre at Balloon Woods, only a temporary caravan shop, yet here, in black and white - in the Municipal newspaper of the City of Nottingham - the shopping centre appeared to be an existing facility! Had I gone mad?

I wondered whether to visit an optician at once, to verify that my eyesight was O.K. - in case I had not seen this shopping centre, as a result of some optical disorder. Then I was in a quandary. Perhaps there was an optician in the shopping centre? Perhaps there was a chemist's too, where I could obtain some tranquillisers to ease me over the shock? Perhaps there was a supermarket, a chip shop, a shoe repairer's, an off-licence and a hairdresser's?

Down to earth. The "Balloon Woods Tenants' Hall" - now named "Balloon Wood Centre" - was officially opened by Bert Littlewood on July 1st and the shopping centre is still in the "proposed" stage, work has not been



"No Alfie! We ain't playin' mums and dads till we're well up the housin' list!"

started. Can you obtain an official explanation?

Yours faithfully,
Fed-up Tenant.

On the fence

Dear Sir,

I was interested to read the August edition of Grass Roots.

The articles on the appalling conditions in clearance areas and the shortcomings in the design of the Victoria Centre flats were a valuable reflection of the reality of the class divisions and anarchy of the society in which we live.

However, I was disappointed with the complacent and frivolous attitude of the political column "Merry Go Round". The rest of the paper analysed the social problems of the city, yet the political column offered no solution.

and recognising the need for more than one refuge, Women's Aid are joining forces with other organisations also concerned with the problems of battered wives in drawing attention to their plight and in urging the Council to provide immediate accommodation for use as temporary refuges.

Anyone interested is welcome to come to Women's Aid meetings. The next one is on Monday, 16 September, at 8 p.m., at 14 Tavistock Avenue, Mapperley Park. Ian Summers, the Chairman, would be pleased to receive any offers of help or interest. His address is 1 Grasmere Gardens, Gotham, Tel. 830472 (evenings).

Forthcoming events for your diary:
12 September: Fashion Show, Woodthorpe Branch Library, Wensley Road, Woodthorpe, Nottm, 8 p.m. Tickets 20p.
29 September: Sherry Morning, 1 Grasmere Gardens, Gotham, Notts., 11.30 - 1.00 p.m. Tickets 20p.

People or pubs

AT A PUBLIC INQUIRY held on the 6th and 7th August a resident said that what Aspley needed was a community centre and a chemist's shop.

The brewery, Hardy & Hanson, were

The struggle going on within the Labour Party against the Dunnett Machine was dismissed as an amusing, insignificant dog-fight.

The column made no attempt to analyse the real political issues, nor had any suggestion of how to organise to strengthen the struggle against capitalist society and the class system by, for example, linking up isolated battles of tenants' associations, trades unions, women's groups, claimants and left-wing groups within the Labour Party and elsewhere.

Perhaps the Editorial Committee should stop sitting on the fence and use Grass Roots in a positive way to help the working class take power.

Yours sincerely,
Councillor Stephen Evans.
7/30 Victoria Centre,
Nottingham.

P.S. If you think that I am baby-faced, you should have a look at that old fox you mentioned, Charlie Butler.

appealing against the Council's refusal to allow redevelopment of the former Co-op building at the junction of Aspley Lane and Robins Wood Rd. A petition of 350 signatures was presented opposing the building of a pub on the site. Already there are several pubs in the vicinity.

Aspley is a pre-war council estate which was built at a time when community facilities were not considered necessary. Perhaps the people and their representatives should start thinking now about the future of the community in Aspley. If the appeal is squashed, the purchase and use of this site for the benefit of the whole neighbourhood should be seriously considered.

Circus action

THE DISTINCTIVE ROAD pattern and islands at Canning Circus have made me realise how important is the impression which such a junction of incoming and outgoing roads makes upon the regular travellers in and out of the City.

Canning Circus, named after the statesman (1770-1827), should convey in its visual aspect something of the

excellence and importance of the City, and in particular the integration of citizens with the buildings and open spaces which make up the creative life on which all depend in various ways.

But Canning Circus is more than a pattern of meeting roads, it is an elliptical open space, a breathing space for all those who pass through, whether walking or in motor vehicles of all kinds.

It is an open space, on one side of which the longest frontage is taken up by fourteen almshouses with a central archway. This archway leads into the General Cemetery, now an almost park-like area of paths and trees with some open areas of grass-land.

The almshouses are partially occupied by aged residents, who may have some affection for their situation, but the houses themselves are worn out in terms of modern convenience, whilst the dwellers therein have no view to the rear.

It is this view of the silvan aspect of trees and some major uprising buildings which is so unique in a City, and so refreshing when one has time to look through the archway.

About half a mile over the valley formed by the lower parts of Waverley Street and the adjacent Arboretum, this tree-girt area is a most valuable lung of the City. Near to the Centre of the City there is a lack of open parkland with verdant views, as opposed to the usually rigid square concrete structures which both block previous pleasant views, and are not in themselves architecturally beautiful. Here is beauty which needs to be retained and enhanced, to which end I wish to make a suggestion for immediate action by the appropriate persons.

The frontage of the almshouses, with its central arch, is important now as a feature of Canning Circus. Its neglected appearance should be taken in hand by repairing the clock and chiming bell, the gilded weather vane which surmounted the cupola should be found and put back, and the stucco-work repaired and re-painted.

If some of the almshouses are now empty, a use should be found for artistic purposes such as craft workshops or studios, since nothing is available with such attractive rear views anywhere else. But in due course, when the almshouses have come to the real end of their residential use, the site should be cleared for the erection of a fine artist-designed stonework archway and supporting smaller arches, so recessed into the Cemetery area that passers-by in the whole of the Circus could be afforded the wide and attractive views which are at present hidden.

This archway structure could be named the Statesman's Arch, so forming for the City some reminder of what a City is for, namely to provide for its people good government, views which are refreshing, and opportunity for something of beauty.

To complement this idea, the high wall on Talbot Street could be lowered in an artistic manner to provide additional views, and some modern toilets as well as a paved viewing area with a Visitor's Information

(continued on page 10)

CLASSIFIED ADS

Rates: 2p per word; Box nos. 10p. Other rates available on request. Tel. 411227.

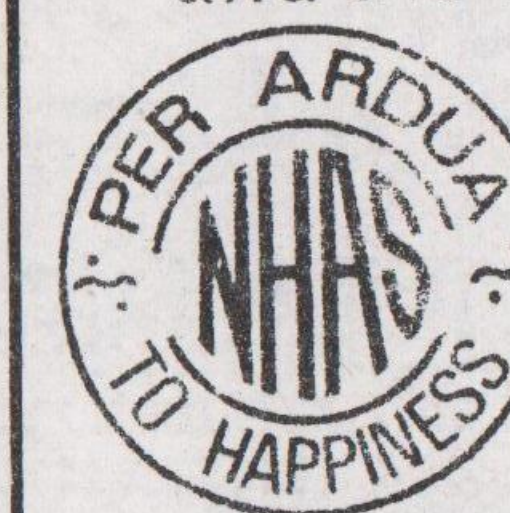
UNIT for one-parent families. Tues. Weds. Sat. Sun. daytime. People's Centre 411227.

GROUP for homosexual men & women. Contact Nottingham & Derby: CHE, P.O. Box 87, Derby DE1 1EN.

BRASS TACKS: People connected with Grass Roots are setting up a research group to find out the real costs of housing. Anyone interested in getting down to them contact BRASS TACKS, People's Centre, 33 Mansfield Rd, Nottm 411227.

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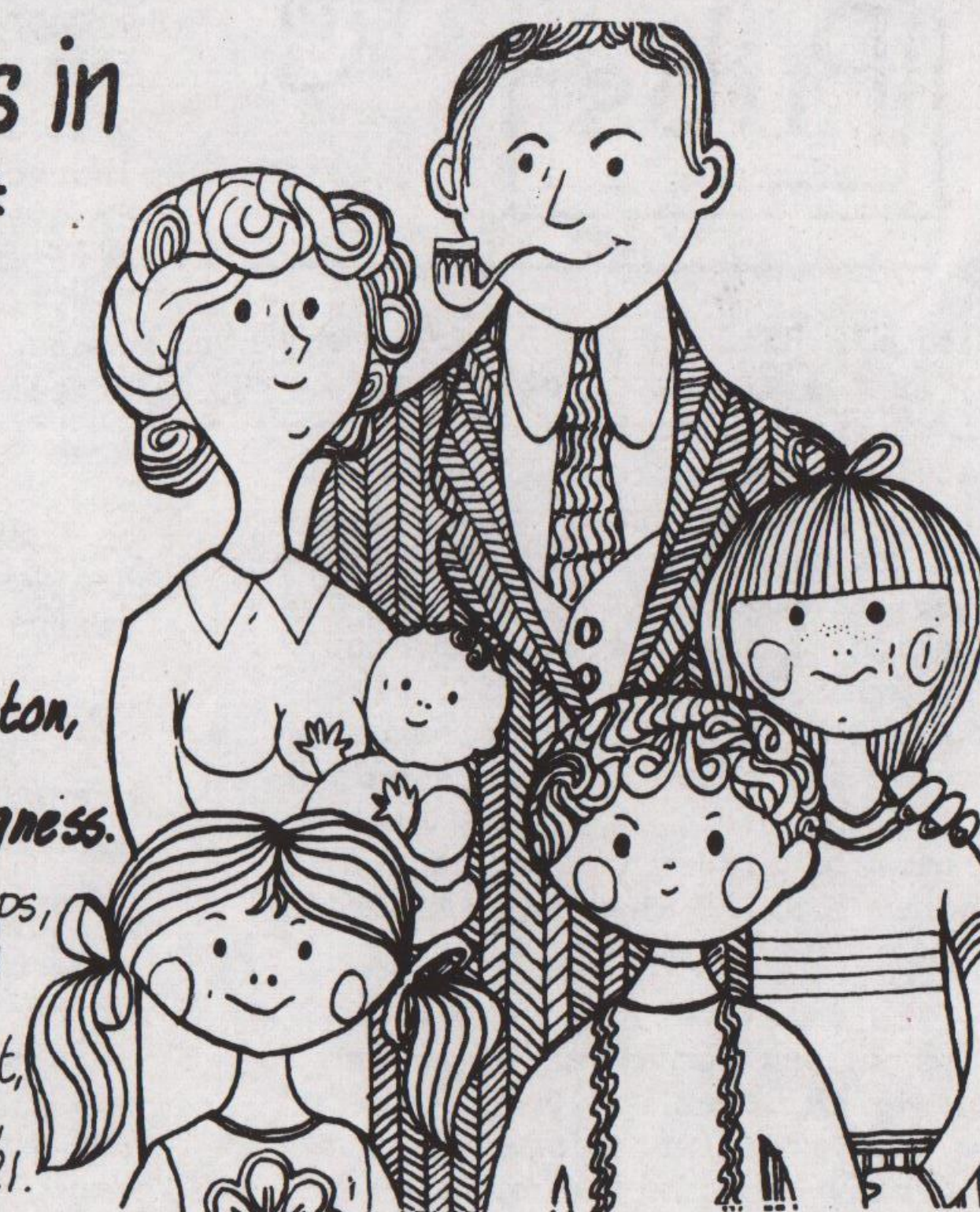


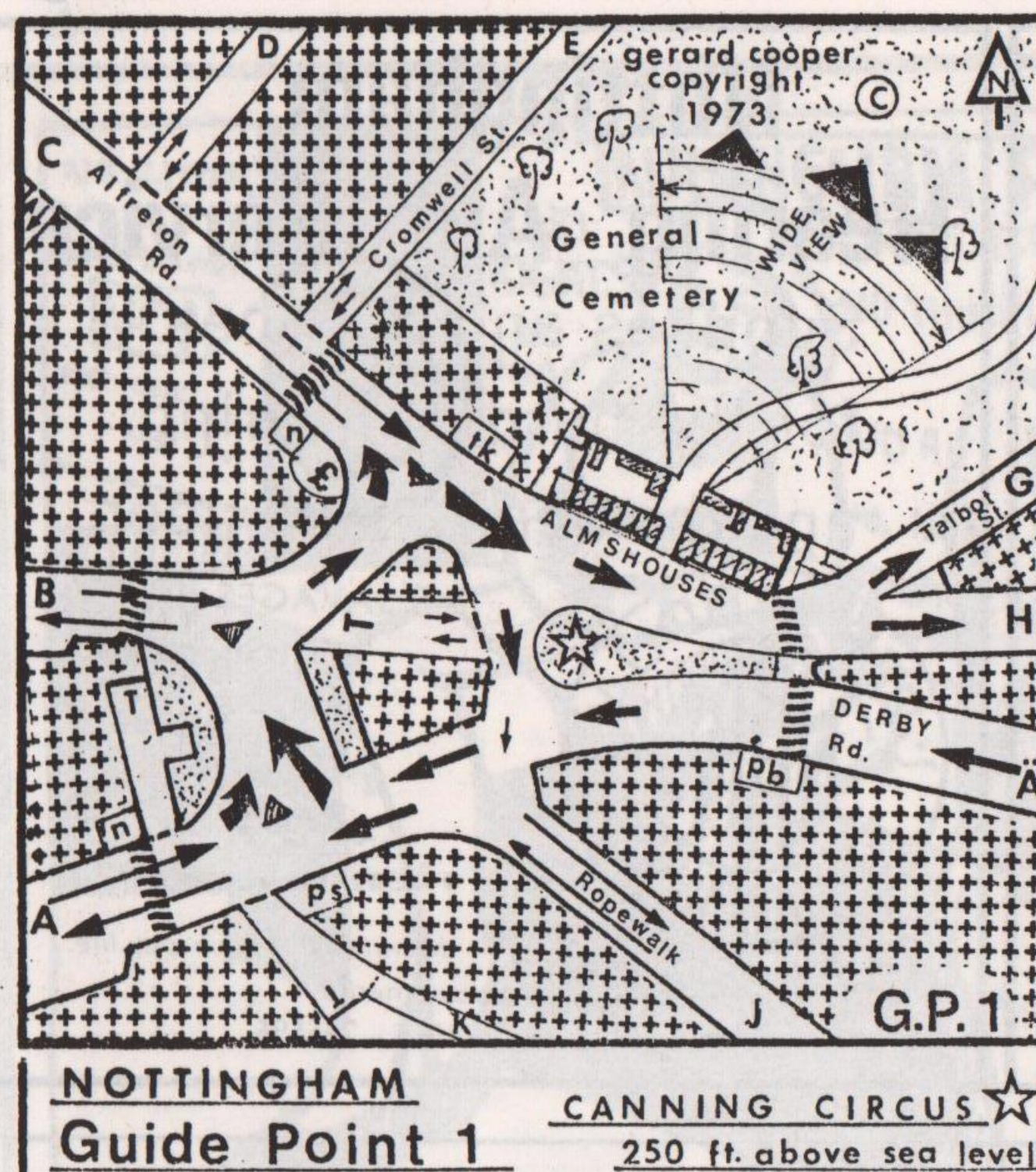
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(continued from page 9)

Kiosk should be provided in the replanning.

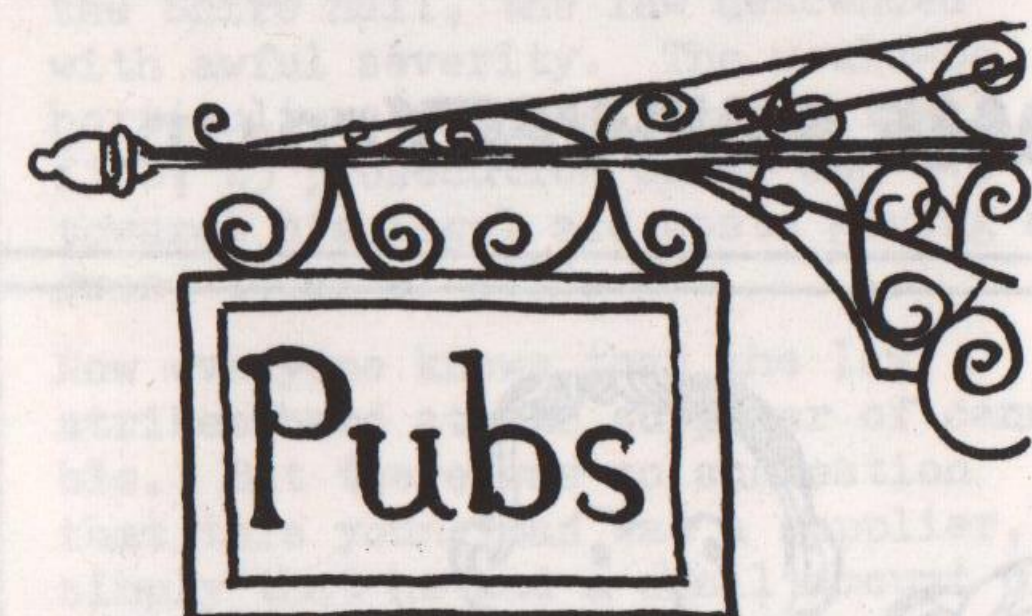
Finally it should be noted that Canning Circus forms a very important focus of both road and pedestrian junctions, serving the professional, medical, legal and educational areas around, but that the road approaches serve only to allow access to such areas and the buildings and open spaces. Roads in themselves are neither beautiful nor peaceful places and need every possible aid which architecture and careful use of contours can provide.

Here is an opportunity for stimulating action by the new machinery of local government and a new vision by Councilors.

Gerard K. Cooper, F.F.S.
13 Newcastle Drive, The Park.

Check-out

THE NOTTM CAMPAIGN against Rising Prices are continuing their monthly survey of the cost of items from the family shopping basket. Their latest check (20th Aug.) on 3 Nottm super-markets (Burton's, Scan, MacFisheries) reveals that only tea, bacon & large tins of soup & baked beans remain unchanged in price from the previous month. A welcome lowering in the cost of eggs was found in all 3 shops, but sugar was only obtainable in Scan. Margarine, mince, and cheese all cost more, with the largest increase noted being on 8oz jars of coffee: these cost 68p in all 3 shops, compared to the previous month's 63p (Burton's), 53p (MacFish) and 62p (Scan).



THE MILTON'S HEAD on Upper Parliament Street is the ultimate Nottingham plasti-pub (and also part of the ultimate plasti-Centre). If you want a really tasteless drink, this is the place. The beer can be pretty tasteless too. If you don't watch her, the lady behind the bar is prone to top up your pint from an overspill glass - not a practice which inspires confidence in any pub. If you're only there for the beer, it's Home Ales, and a pint of bitter costs 15p. It's a reasonable drink when not tampered with.

Ignore the relatively plush bar upstairs unless you're under 18 or callous to children and dogs - these can be seen most lunchtimes waiting despondently outside the entrance on the Parliament Street footbridge. A warning: this bridge and the steps

beyond are sometimes used by the clientele as a bowling alley for pint glasses (full, usually) or as a place of relief. Passers-by should watch their step.

But downstairs is the place. This is the "Milton Room". Its fittings are sheer delight. There are large blown-up engravings - the title page of the "Areopagitica", two scenes from "Paradise Lost" (the War in Heaven and the Temptation of Eve), and a rather bemused-looking Milton wondering what to make of "Remember You're a Womble" on the muzak.

The real spark of genius, however, is the creative use of plastic, from the shelves of plasti-books round the outside of the bar (plasti-Sophocles, plasti-Chaucer and plasti-Shakespeare, all in antique eighteenth century plasti-bindings) to the magnificent three-foot high, half-relief plasti-medallion of Milton, with four lines of verse chiselled in plastic underneath. After this, the head of Milton in the doorway seems a little tame. Painted in black on a glass panel and rear-lit in red, it looks vaguely macabre, like something from a Goose Fair side-show.

What a few of us are wondering, though, is whether somebody couldn't do even better now the trend's been set. What about an Edgar Allan Poe bar, for example? Now there's a chance for some really spectacular effects . . .

GERARD COOPER, author of the article on Canning Circus above, needs helpers to undertake a city survey. He writes as follows: "The life of a city like ours is complex & a help to understanding lies in the completion of accurate maps and indexes of small areas. These could be taken in hand by one or two volunteers prepared to help in this 'Guide Point' survey in conjunction with the compiler. Spare time can be thus be usefully occupied to build up vital information in the spheres of your own curiosity & interests. Blank key maps will be provided for you to fill in the location of basic crafts & buildings & activities in the social sphere." Contact Gerard Cooper at the address above or 45459.



"EVERY CLOUD HAS a silver lining", or so the saying goes. Unfortunately, a particularly black cloud has hung over Nottingham's rock music scene for the past three years - since the expulsion of that particular brand of music from the Albert Hall. Nottingham, as far as I know, is the only city in Britain lacking any kind of facilities for big rock bands.

However, there are a couple of venues in the area worth a visit. A particularly upcoming one is the Golden Diamond at Sutton-in-Ashfield, where rock bands are booked on several days each week, often local in origin, but also national bands of a high calibre - some recent examples being Ange, Seventh Wave and String Driven Thing. Admission prices are also very reasonable, as is the drink.

Virtually the only place in the city where you're likely to find rock music during the summer is the Boat Club. Bands are normally those on the national club circuit and are usually quite entertaining. Prices aren't too high at around 80p.

The end of summer heralds the usual tours by the popular bands, and really we are fortunate in Nottingham that Leicester (De Montfort Hall) and Sheffield (City Hall) have excellent concert halls and are reasonably close. Universities and colleges are back in session shortly, which provides another very good source of rock music. Nottingham, Sheffield, Leicester and Loughborough Universities, Trent Polytechnic, and occasionally the People's, Clarendon and Clifton Colleges feature good concerts with popular bands.

Probably the best venue is Loughborough University, with Sheffield University a close second. Loughborough's prices tend to be rather high at 90p to £1 a ticket, but that includes admission to a disco as well as the group. Sheffield prices are in total contrast. I've been to several concerts there where tickets have been only 35p-40p (P.F.M., Cockney Rebel, Greenslade), the reason for this being "Students can't afford much more than 40p. We don't usually make much profit at concerts, but a well-patronised disco mid-week helps keep us in the black".

Since this column will be appearing monthly, it would be a great help if I knew exactly which aspects of rock music readers would like to hear about: local bands, record reviews, interviews, concert reviews, venues. Please send any comments to 33 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

Major upcoming gigs

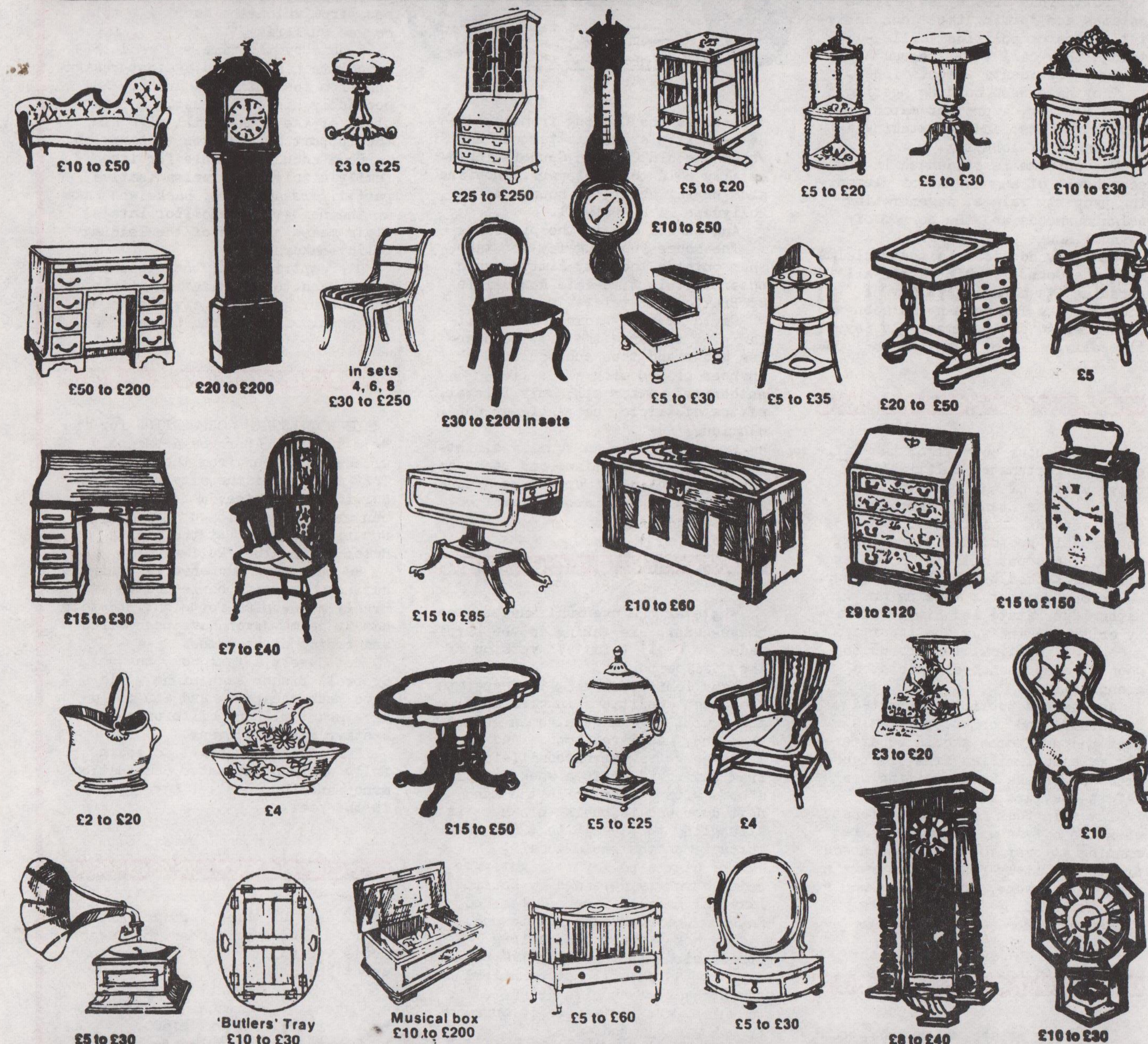
17 Sept: Leo Sayer (De Montfort Hall)
24 Sept: Glitterband (Tiffany's)
25 Sept: Greenslade (De Mont. Hall)
26 Sept: Procul Harum (Sheff. C. Hall)
1-2 Oct: Roxy Music (De Mont. Hall)

DAVE BRETT

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