

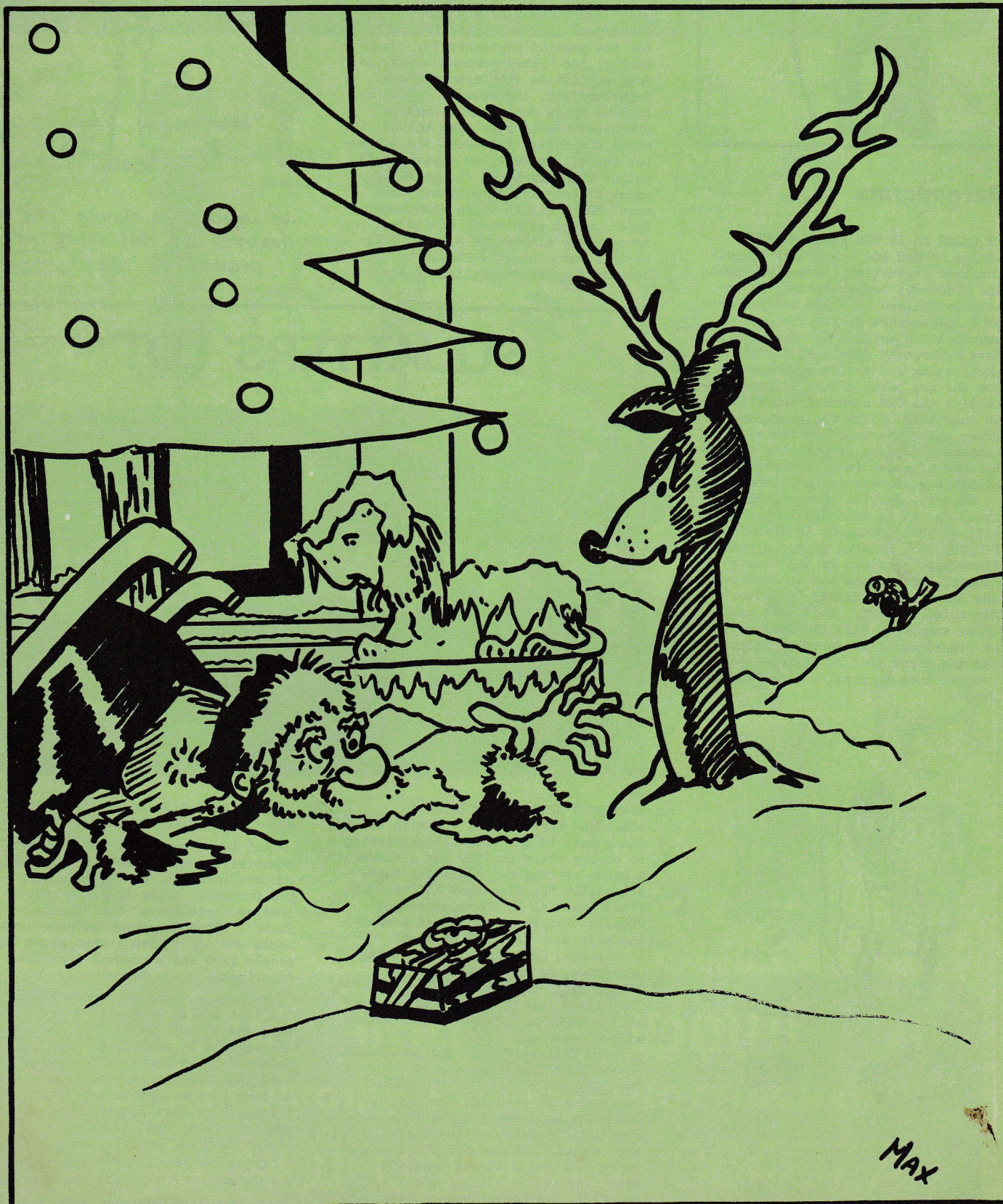
Grass Roots &

NOTTINGHAM VOICE

Number 13

Nottingham, December, 1974

Price 6p



On target



Bureaucrats

IT SEEMS AS IF THE NEW CITIZENS' Advice Bureau and the County Council Consumer Protection (formerly Weights and Measures) Department may be uneasy bedfellows in their new premises at 7 Beastmarket Hill. The over-enthusiastic Weights and Measures men have apparently finalised all the shopfitting and design arrangements for the new joint office without consulting the CAB steering committee. Is this case of "he who pays the Piper calls the tune" an isolated incident, or does it indicate how the balance of power in this grotesque alliance will operate in future?

However, despite these teething troubles, it is unlikely that the CAB will go short of cash. In addition to £10,000 p.a. running expenses for the first year promised by the County Council, the Bureau has applied to the University Carnival Committee for financial support. Will this application succeed? Will Carnival support an organisation whose total budget for the first year is believed to be greater than Carnival's total appeal fund?



Royal flush?

OVERHEARD AT THE RECENT CIVIC RECEPTION for Princess Anne, during the presentation of the traditional cut glass goblet:

Anne: Is it one of a set, then?

Lord Mayor: Um, no, it's just the one.

Anne: Oh.

Home sweet ales

GRASS ROOTS WAS VERY PLEASED TO READ about Home Ales' nice little profit for the year to September 30. Chris Holmes, our "Pubs" correspondent, is very partial to the Daybrook brew. Unfortunately, the brewery is not so fond of Grass Roots since Chris's predecessor said some rude things about the Milton's Head in the September issue. In fact, we suspect this rather rash frankness (no sensible paper offends its advertisers) had more than a little to do with Home Ales' abrupt withdrawal of its ad. immediately afterwards - especially as this was closely followed by demands for substantiation of the

"allegations". This was duly supplied, but, alas, the brewery was not to be pacified, and we were left reflecting ruefully on the difference between profits of £2,131,000 p.a. and ads of £8 p.a.



NO WONDER IT THINKS IT'S A QUART!! AT THE PRICE IT OUGHT TO BE!!

SQUATTERS' LOT



EVER HEAR OF A SHOP-STEWARDS' committee having a meeting with the management to ask them for permission to occupy their factory for a work-in? A group of "radicals" calling themselves the "Homelessness Action Committee" seem to be doing something equally bizarre. They've had a meeting with Bert "get off my back" Littlewood, Chairman of the Housing Committee, to ask permission to occupy empty council houses on a "legalised squatting" basis. Predictably enough, no agreement was reached at the meeting.

More impressive was the Homelessness Action Committee's march through the city and meeting in the Market Square, which preceded the meeting with Bert Littlewood by several days. The Market Square meeting called for more council housing and for a better range of housing to cut back the appalling 11,000 council house waiting list. Everyone now knows that the

housing situation in Nottingham is dreadful, and getting worse rapidly.

And those worst hit are families right at the end of the waiting list who are forced to battle it out in the furnished slums that are advertised as "bedsitters" and "furnished flats", trapped between private landlords who don't give a damn about how people live and a council powerless to help.

Meanwhile, back on Forest Road, the rank and file squatters are being harassed in unpleasant fashion. Accompanied by members of the Drug Squad, Housing Department officials have been making early morning visits to some squats, and in one case have illegally evicted a group of squatters. Someone ought to tell Bert about the 1381 Forcible Entry Act.

Grass Roots will be watching for developments in this area with interest.

Interesting landlords (3)

MR S.G. DOMEIKA, OF 9 BRADBURY ROAD, Colwick, is the landlord of 1 Carey Cottages in the Meadows. Mr Domeika is renting the premises from Turner, Fletcher and Essex, who in turn are agents for the Clifton Estate. Mr Domeika is on to a good thing. He pays 75p per week for the property and charges a handsome £6 to the tenants. It's not that Mr Domeika is particularly fussy over his tenants. He is currently offering a bedsitter to single people, with no children, who are not teenagers and who must be working. And he wants two weeks rent in advance.

Problems for Mr Domeika's tenants don't end there, however. Not only did Mr Domeika not supply a Rent Book until pressed (an offence under the 1962 Landlord & Tenant Act), but it was soon discovered that Mr Domeika had let 1 Carey Cottages after the Corporation had served a Notice of Entry, which meant that no-one had the right to let it in any case, since management of the property was then the right of the City Council. Furthermore, Mr Domeika had the tenants of 1 Carey Cottages sign an "agreement" when they moved in.

As the tenants remember this agreement, it said that they were not to hold any parties, were not to ask for any repairs and would vacate the property on being given notice "whatever the Government of the day may do!" The reason we say "as the tenants remember this agreement" is because Mr Domeika failed to give them a copy.



DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL THE 9.18 IS NOW THE 10.38 OR PERHAPS IT IS THE 11.42

Light touch

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE "POST" FOR A superbly organised November 5th event at the Trent Bridge cricket ground. As their report so aptly stated, "it was a night to remember".

Selfish people may argue, of course, that their 50p admission money entitled them to actually see what was going on, but others will dismiss this as a trifling objection.

Main problem was the dismal flood-lighting, which failed to illuminate the various performances and led at one point to the following friendly exchange:

Announcer: Ladies and gentlemen, you have just seen the Ukrainian Folk Dancers.

Crowd (as one): Oh no we haven't!

REMEMBER!
NEXT MONTH WE'RE
CHANGING OUR NAME

FROM

Grass Roots

TO

NOTTINGHAM
VOICE

WANTED!

EAGER SALESMEN to distribute Grass Roots (a thriving and expanding magazine) among an enthusiastic, discerning and rapidly-growing public. Street sales, pubs, etc. Contact the Grass Roots Committee, via the People's Centre, 33 Mansfield Road (Tel. 411227).

GRASS ROOTS is published by the Grass Roots Committee, People's Centre, 33 Mansfield Rd, Nottm (Tel. 411227). Contributions, criticisms, letters to the Editor, etc. are welcome - send by post or call in at Mansfield Rd.



Banning the bombers

ON THE 25th NOVEMBER, THE HOME SECRETARY announced measures in response to the recent wave of bombings in England, particularly those in Birmingham. These new measures, now in force with the sanction of Parliament, include the banning of the IRA and the introduction of sentences of up to five years for membership or support of that organisation. In addition, the police now have powers of arrest without warrant and the power to hold suspects for 48 hours for questioning, and further have new powers to control travel in and out of Britain.

These measures have been introduced against a background of mounting hysteria, contrasting sharply with previous complacency about the infinitely worse situation in Northern Ireland. On no account can the bombings be sanctioned - but it is surely more important to tackle the basic causes than to introduce "Draconian" measures which do no more than attack the symptoms. There is a danger that the new measures will be seen as a substitute for the political action in Northern Ireland which is the only permanent solution to the problem. Since exactly the same kinds of measure in Northern Ireland have proved futile in stopping the troubles there, it is difficult to see why they should prove any more effective over here.

Disturbing

A disturbing feature of the measures is that they were sold to the British public as a means of preventing incidents such as the Birmingham bombings before a definite link had been established with the IRA or any other terrorist organisation. This, together with the reactions (understandable enough) of hysterical crowds outside the courts, suggests how easily the pressures of the moment may lead to a dangerous flight from cherished standards of British justice, in particular the principle which presumes the innocence of the accused. There will be fears that in a deteriorating situation similar measures and similar standards could be applied to other organisations inimical to the government of the day.

This is not to condone the bestialities of the IRA and of other terrorist organisations. It must be clearly stated, however, that legal mechanisms already existed before Mr Jenkins' measures whereby those who committed crimes in this country could be brought to justice. This point is underlined by recent police successes, which were the result of investigations already initiated rather than the new legislation. We must insist that our democratic system should be based on the principle that is possible to defend society against terrorism without eroding the very freedoms which we are seeking to defend.

ENEMIES of the PEOPLE

A SPECIAL **Grass Roots** EDITORIAL

PEOPLES CENTRE



SINCE GRASS ROOTS WAS FIRST PUBLISHED just over a year ago, we have learned a few interesting things about our free society, especially from City Council leader John Carroll and his happy band. We have learned, for example, that criticism of the Labour council is "seditious" (Councillor Carroll's word for Grass Roots: does he really know what it means? could this be slander?), and that it is wise to protect the identity of some of our contributors.

Skirmishes

It seems that constructive criticism from the left is the easiest way to provoke the Labour establishment in this part of the world, so we have had one or two skirmishes since our first issue, in which we published a favourable report on Labour's "rent rebels". We haven't let it worry us too much, because none of us really cares what the Labour group thinks anyway.

Recently, however, we have been forced to take a little more notice of Labour group psychology. It is now clear that the grudge against Grass Roots has been carried into the County Council and has been misdirected with wilful irresponsibility against the People's Centre, to which Grass Roots is affiliated.

The People's Centre was set up in March this year by a number of voluntary groups (not including Grass Roots) to improve and co-ordinate their services. It gives free advice, especially on legal, welfare and

housing rights, is staffed by unpaid volunteers, and is now dealing with 500 cases a month.

Both City and County Councils have refused financial support in the past, but there seemed a reasonable chance that a successful application could be made for an Urban Aid grant of £7,900 to set up a much needed action and research team, especially since the application conformed very precisely with the purpose for which the Urban Aid scheme was set up by the Home Office - namely, to finance "projects in areas of special social need".

Specific reference is made in the relevant Home Office circular to "Advice Centres and Volunteer Bureaux . . . whose functions may include giving on the spot advice, guidance and assistance to members of the community, giving information about where to go for help on specific problems or, in some cases, actually giving that help". It was to provide exactly these services that the action and research team was to be set up.

Urban Aid is financed jointly by the Home Office (75%) and the local authority (25%), and includes both volunteer schemes and schemes submitted by departments of the local authority itself. All applications by voluntary groups must be made to the local authority, which weeds out those it considers unsatisfactory before forwarding them to the Home Office for final consideration. Normally, this power of veto would

only be exercised over obviously frivolous or unworkable projects.

The People's Centre project is clearly not one of these. Yet on September 10th the County Council's Policy Sub-Committee approved all the Urban Aid projects recommended to it by a joint Education/Social Services Liaison Sub-Committee, with the single exception of the application from the People's Centre.

It is worth looking at the process which led to this somewhat unusual decision, and at the composition of the committees involved. The application passed first through the Social Services Committee, where it was placed ninth out of twelve in order of priority. The Committee consists of 16 Labour councillors and 11 Tories, with only 6 members representing Nottingham divisions.

Recommendation

All applications, including those from the Education Committee as well as those from the Social Services Committee, were then passed on to the joint Education/Social Services Liaison Sub-Committee. The joint Committee has 12 Labour and 4 Tory councillors, with 7 members from Nottingham divisions. The People's Centre application was demoted by the joint committee to twelfth out of twelve of the Non-Capital Projects (i.e. those not requiring expenditure on buildings or fairly substantial equipment), but was still forwarded to the Policy Committee as a recommendation.

The composition of the Policy Sub-Committee which rejected the application is the most interesting of all: all 21 members are Labour, 9 represent city divisions; only two are also members of the Social Services Committee and only three of the joint Committee.

What emerges, therefore, is a pattern of increasing hostility, apparently related to the number of city members on the committee. It is clear also that the Policy Sub-Committee is a party political body - there are no Tory members and the Press is excluded from its meetings - and that it has very little common membership with the committees which originally approved the application. The evidence points quite clearly, therefore, to a political decision based on very slender background knowledge of the application, and made with wilful disregard for the essentially social implications of Urban Aid.

Nothing we have learned since challenges this conclusion - on the contrary, the evidence we have collected only reinforces it.

No explanation

The People's Centre was naturally not a little annoyed by the Policy Committee's decision - especially since the Committee didn't bother to send official notification, let alone offer any explanation. Having learned the news at second hand, the Management Committee of the Centre wrote to the Council's Chief Executive Officer, Mr R.F. O'Brien, requesting an explanation, and also wrote to Nottingham's three MPs (all Labour) requesting their help.

The response was revealing. Mr Michael English replied by return of post and immediately wrote to Coun. Dick Wilson, leader of the County Council and chairman of the Policy Committee. Mr William Whitlock replied that he would make inquiries, but the matter was a County Council affair and not within his province. Mr Jack Dunnett (in whose constituency the People's Centre is situated) did not reply at all.

On November 6th, apologies for the lack of notification and a copy of Dick Wilson's reply to Michael English were sent to the People's Centre by Mr O'Brien.

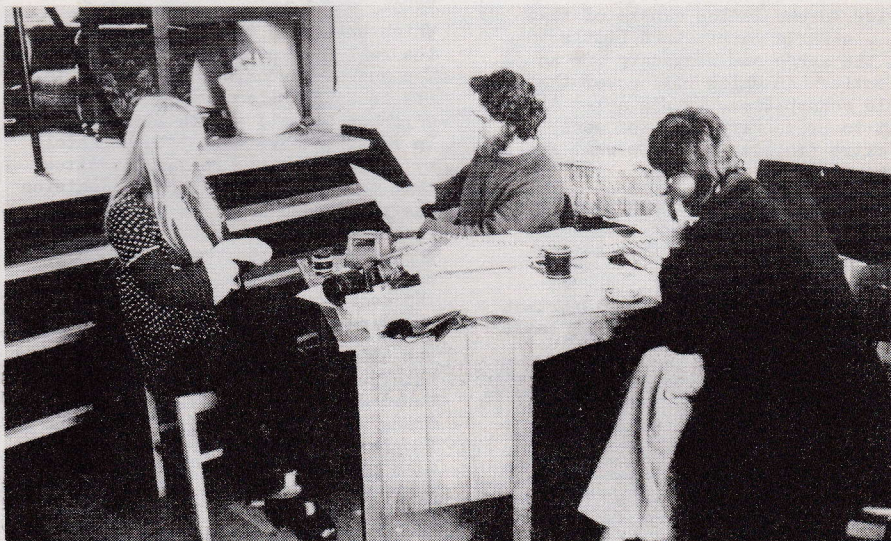
Mr Wilson is by no means our least favourite politician (in fact, he contributed a front-page article to Grass Roots last May), but he now found himself with the thankless task of rationalising the irrationalities of his colleagues. He did not make a very good job of it.

Mr English was told that the reasons for the rejection fell into three categories. The first was that "a majority of councillors, including a large number of the Labour group, clearly find themselves out of sympathy with the views of many of the people involved in running the People's Centre, particularly as expressed in recent editions of their paper 'Grass Roots'".

Mr Wilson did have the grace to add: "I do not think myself that this is

(continued overleaf)

REPORT FROM THE PEOPLE'S CENTRE CASES FOR TREATMENT



MRS T. FIRST NOTICED THE "EVENING Post" advertisement for the People's Centre in April.

She had fallen down the stairs at work some months before discovering the existence of the People's Centre, and felt unjustly treated because she had received no compensation from her employers' insurance company although the accident had caused her severe pain and greatly inconvenienced her in her day-to-day routine for some time.

A volunteer from the People's Centre took up Mrs T.'s insurance claim, handling it from start to finish. Four months after her first visit to the People's Centre, Mrs T. received a substantial sum of money from her employers' insurance company to compensate her for injuries sustained at work.

MR C. CALLED IN AT THE PEOPLE'S Centre in July because, although his own GP had declared him unfit to work, two Social Security doctors had decided that his problem was psychosomatic. Mr C., an Indian gentleman with a limited grasp of English, was bewildered by all this, as he very definitely was experiencing all the symptoms of an illness. He had also received no money from any source for some weeks. Bills were mounting and anxiety growing.

Feeling that this was indeed a genuinely needy case, and despite the fact that one Appeal Tribunal had already turned it down, a volunteer from the People's Centre visited the Manager at Castle Gate Department of Health and Social Security and discovered that Mr C. had the right to appeal to the Commissioner - a fact that the DHSS would have been very unlikely to reveal if these further enquiries hadn't been made.

Approximately one month later, a very relieved and grateful Mr C. dropped in to the People's Centre to inform the person who had helped him that the appeal to the Commissioner had been successful and that he had

received his back-dated sickness benefit.

AFTER PATIENTLY WAITING FOR TWO AND a half years for a housing transfer to enable her to live closer to, and attend, her bedridden father, Mrs M. decided that she needed some support in persuading the Housing Department to comply with her request.

Within one month of her first visit to the People's Centre, and after a gruelling struggle by a volunteer to "get through" to the Housing Department, a delighted Mrs M. telephoned to say that she now lived within walking distance of her disabled father - on the same road, in fact!

ADISTRESSED, IN FACT ONE COULD almost say suicidal Mrs H. walked through the door of the People's Centre one Friday evening, her face covered in bruises and two frightened, cowering children clinging to her arm. She could stand no more, she said. Her husband had knocked her senseless for the last time. She didn't intend going back this time!

Social Services appeared uninterested to say the least, and as Peel Street hostel happened to be full, better try the People's Centre!

The volunteer on duty consulted the far too short list of names of people willing to offer "short stay" accommodation for "battered wives", cursed the Housing Department for their lack of compassion, and with crossed fingers dialled the first number on the list. Luckily, Mr and Mrs B. agreed to put up the distraught Mrs H. and her kids in their small council house for a couple of days, at least until she could sort her thoughts out and an emergency injunction could be obtained to prevent Mrs H.'s husband from attacking her again.

Where, one might question, would Mrs H. and her kids have been sheltered for the night had it not been for the existence of the People's Centre?

(continued from previous page)

sufficient reason for turning down the grant for a different part of their activity but it must be admitted that it weighed with some people."

The second reason was that the Council was already "putting a large amount of money into a Citizens' Advice Bureau in the centre of town . . . after a fairly hard battle to get the large sum necessary for an effective CAB which will cover the whole conurbation, it was a bit difficult to press very hard for money for an extra facility of a somewhat similar kind".

Third, "the most important reason", was that "some doubt was cast on the quality of the advice given at the People's Centre".

We will deal with "the most important reason" first. It is really the least impressive.

In fact, the People's Centre has yet to receive any complaint about the quality of its advice - quite the reverse (see Grass Roots 12, page 6). This is hardly surprising, since it calls upon a large number of specialist advisers - solicitors, social workers, planners, experts on welfare rights, etc.

Council money

Ironically, councillors may not recognise this, but council officials do. The Housing Department regularly refers homeless families to the People's Centre, while the Social Services Department and the Probation Service also regularly refer clients. In fact, the Social Services Department even paid good council money for some of its workers to attend a 12 week welfare rights course run by those same givers of poor quality advice!

This "important reason", then, looks very like hypocrisy. It is unlikely that either the Social Services or the Liaison Committee would have passed on the application if they had not been satisfied with the quality of the service offered by the People's Centre. It is clear also that the Policy Committee has much less expert knowledge with which to make this kind of judgment. Certainly, none of its members has ever been seen in the People's Centre!

The second reason offered by Coun. Wilson is hardly more substantial. The People's Centre is now well established and obviously meets a considerable need (20 cases a day is not a negligible service). It also provides a whole range of services not available at a Citizens' Advice Bureau. In particular, it goes beyond merely giving advice: it undertakes advocacy on behalf of clients, and follow-up work and home visits where necessary. It also offers accommodation and secretarial facilities for community groups and similar organisations. Citizens' Advice Bureaux do not undertake any of these functions. It is hard, therefore, to see how the People's Centre can be duplicating an as yet non-existent Citizens' Advice Bureau.

It is also difficult to take seriously the question of finance. The County Council's contribution to the

People's Centre grant would be less than £2,000 - the sort of sum voted for civic entertainments without a second thought.

Clearly, both these "reasons" are based on ignorance. In fact, it seems doubtful whether most of the Committee even bothered to read the original application.

Which brings us to the question of the real motives behind the decision. The answer, astonishingly, seems to lie in Coun. Wilson's first reason - which he himself admits is inadequate. In fact, we have been told privately by a member of the Policy Committee that the main reason for the decision was that Grass Roots is published from the People's Centre. Presumably, the other two "reasons" were concocted to hide the irresponsibility of the decision - which at least explains their flimsiness.

But blaming it all on Grass Roots is hardly less silly, and seems to be based on yet another misunderstanding. Grass Roots is not the paper of the People's Centre. Except in connection with Grass Roots, the majority of the Grass Roots Committee, including the present writer, have nothing whatsoever to do with the People's Centre. Nor do most members of the People's Centre have anything to do with Grass Roots. Three people are closely involved with both, but they do not form a majority in either. Grass Roots, in fact, though affiliated to the People's Centre, is a totally independent newspaper.

It is worth listing the other affiliated organisations simply to make this clear. They are: Shelter, the

Fair Housing Group, the National Council for Civil Liberties, Response, the Women's Liberation Group, the Nottingham Community Planning Group, the Child Poverty Action Group, the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, Unit, Gingerbread, and the Claimants Union.

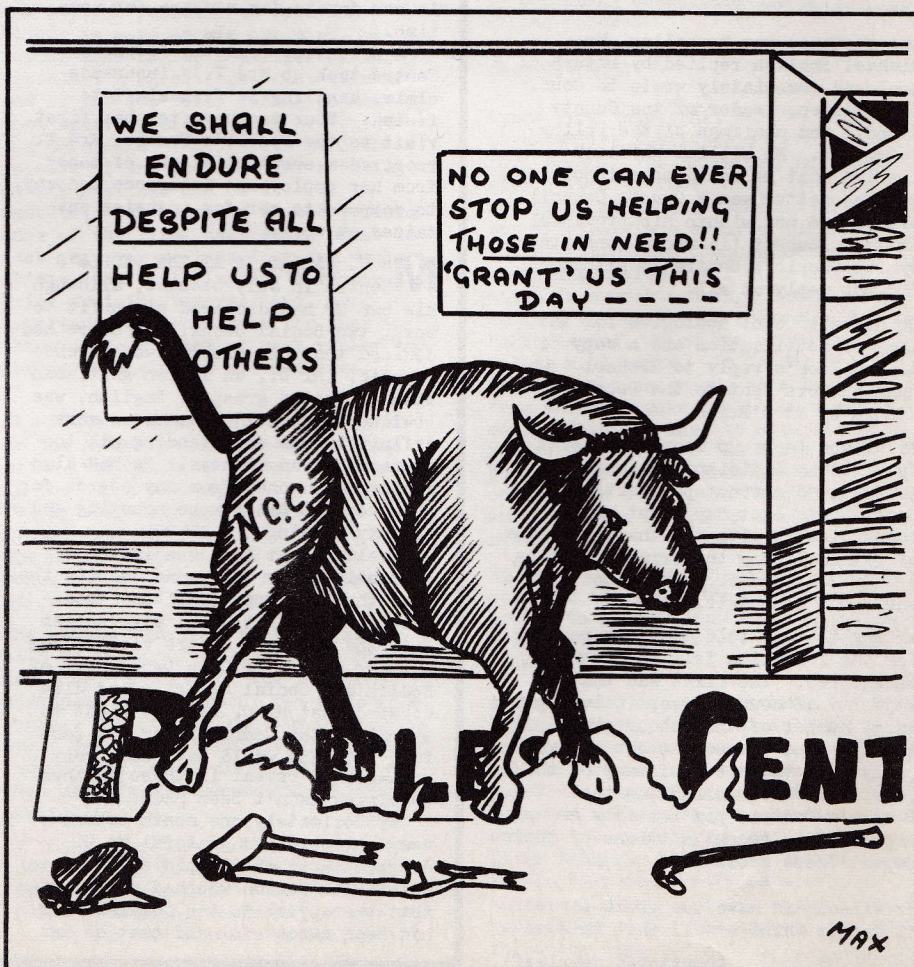
To victimise these eleven organisations and those who benefit from them because of a grudge against Grass Roots is an intolerable indulgence of party spite at the expense of public interest.

But what has really astonished us about all this is how very, very little it takes to provoke the Labour group. Compared with most papers of its kind, Grass Roots is notably restrained. We have even been labelled "right wing liberals". Obviously, the Labour group is badly out of practice at handling shots from the left.

Formal complaint

Sadly, Coun. Carroll and co. will just have to improve their goal-keeping. They will have to learn to live with Grass Roots and with the People's Centre, which will certainly not fold up simply because of the irresponsibility of a few politicians.

The People's Centre committee has submitted a formal complaint to the Commissioner for Local Administration (the "local ombudsman"). It will be good for Nottingham politics if the complaint is upheld and the County Policy Committee forced to choke on its own malice.



Know your rights

Council watching

SOME PEOPLE MAY ALREADY KNOW THAT nearly all Council meetings, both County and District (i.e. City), are open to the public. This includes committee meetings as well as full Council meetings. Of course, you do not have the right to speak at these meetings, but you can go along to see how a particular decision is reached, or just to see what happens. Here, then, is a Grass Roots guide to Council meetings.

The full District Council usually meets on the first Monday of every month in the Council House at 2.30 p.m. Entrance is via a special door marked "Council Chamber Galleries" just inside the Exchange Arcade opposite Littlewood's. It's quite a steep climb to the Public Galleries if you're old or infirm, go to the main entrance on Slab Square and (running the security gauntlet of lions and doormen) ask to use the lift.

City Council committee meetings have proved difficult to get into in the past, apparently because many of the staff weren't told that the public had a right to be present. However, we now understand that the position has improved, but if you do have difficulty getting in, insist and ask that the Chairman of the Committee be consulted.

The City Council holds its committee meetings in four places: the Council House, the Guildhall (easiest approach is through the side entrance marked Town Clerk's), D.H. Lawrence House (Clarendon Street), and at the Housing Department on King Street (good luck).

Below are the times, places and dates of the main committees. The week numbers refer to the first complete week in the month, and so on. For example, January will start on a Wednesday - so the first complete week will be the following week and will start on Monday, 6th January. The Housing Committee meeting for January would, therefore, be on January 9th, the Thursday of Week 1.

Housing Committee: Housing Department: Thursday, Week 1, 11.00 a.m.

Leisure Services Committee: Guildhall: Thursday, Week 4, 2.30 p.m.

Planning Committee: Guildhall: Thursday, Week 2, 2.30 p.m.

Planning (Plans) Sub-Committee: Guildhall: Friday, Week 4, 2.15 p.m.

Policy & Resources Committee: Council House: Tuesday, Week 3, 2.30 p.m.

Policy & Resources (Finance) Sub-Committee: Council House: Tuesday, Week 2, 2.30 p.m.

Policy & Resources (Land) Sub-Committee: D.H. Lawrence House: Thursday, Week 3, 2.30 p.m.

Public Protection Committee: Guildhall: Wednesday, Week 3, 2.30 p.m.

Transport Committee: Guildhall: Monday, Week 4, 4 p.m.

If in doubt about any of these meetings, 'phone or call in at the City Information Office, 54 Milton Street (Tel. 40661).

UP THE STEPS



LUCKILY, MY DENTIST ISN'T A GREAT conversationalist, which is just as well because, apart from all the scaffolding usually associated with my dental surgery, the whole business of a visit generally puts me right out of conversation.

Now I would have thought that a compulsory visit to a Police Station for questioning would have a similar effect (without the apparatus). Yet day-by-day experience of the Courts suggests that there is nowhere like a Police Station, and nothing like the company of curious Policemen, to prompt a veritable flood of conversation, much of it comprehensively incriminating.

It is often surprising how a Defendant in Court will have "nothing to say" to the Magistrates, when he has poured his heart out to the Police.

Misconstrued

Of course, there is a small proportion of those arrested to whom the situation is familiar, who keep their own Counsel and call for their Solicitor. For the rest, what gives rise to concern is the frequent claim that what has been said to the Police at the Station has been misconstrued, or that what was said was dictated by the pressures of the moment - the wish, for instance, to be released on bail to return to the family, or the belief that, unless "something" is said, there awaits an indefinite period of custody. Few seem to understand that, in the words of the caution which will be given as soon as the Police have reasonable grounds for suspecting the commission of an offence, "there is no need to say anything", and that they can reserve an explanation, if need be, for the Court of trial. Fewer still appreciate how long the Police can keep a detained person in custody before either releasing him or charging him and bringing him before the Court.

It is difficult to escape the feeling that the overwhelming majority of people, when confronted by investigating officers in a Police Station, are in the worst possible situation to

MANY A TRUE WORD

collect their thoughts and to give a true and fair account of themselves. It is at this moment that many would benefit from objective advice from a Solicitor, and that's precisely when, more often than not, that advice is not available.

What many practitioners would like to see is a directive that when a person is taken into custody by the Police he should be given a list of Solicitors available, and, on his request, a Solicitor should be asked to attend at the Police Station forthwith. Such a scheme would not be without difficulty. There is no "right" to have a Solicitor at the Police Station during a Police enquiry, and there may well be occasions when the Police would object to his presence, at least until enquiries have progressed. Furthermore, it may not be easy always to raise a Solicitor to attend at a Police Station. Nevertheless, these difficulties should not be insurmountable, if the need for such a scheme is accepted.

SOME OF THE MORE GLOOMILY INCLINED visitors to the Guildhall in the last month have been rather dismayed by the wooden structure being slowly erected in the entrance hall. It was rumoured even that this might herald rather more summary justice than that available in the twelve courts elsewhere in the building. However, I can set all minds at rest: it was nothing more than a new notice board containing the daily "menus" for each of the Courts.

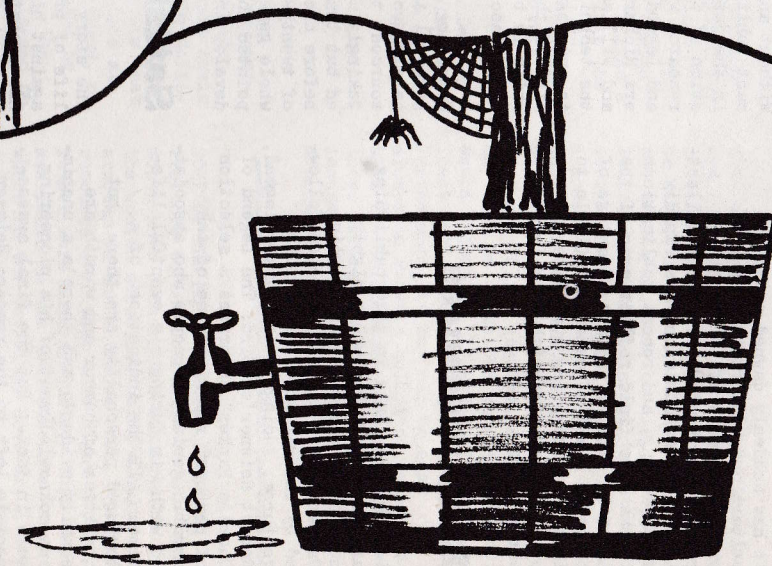
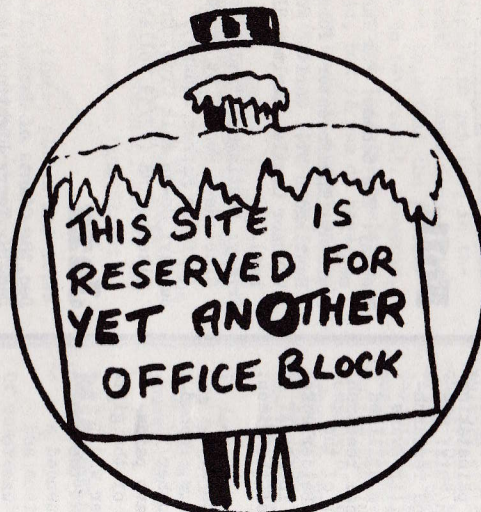
Overheard in the Courts this month:

1. A man with a dog to the Magistrates: "Thank you my lady, we have really enjoyed being here."
2. A man in a crowded waiting room outside Court No.7: "Let's all have a song, then." Few joined in his lone ballad.
3. A man charged with being "Drunk and Disorderly" was found too drunk to enter his plea and was adjourned to sober up.

A CHRISTMAS CARROLL

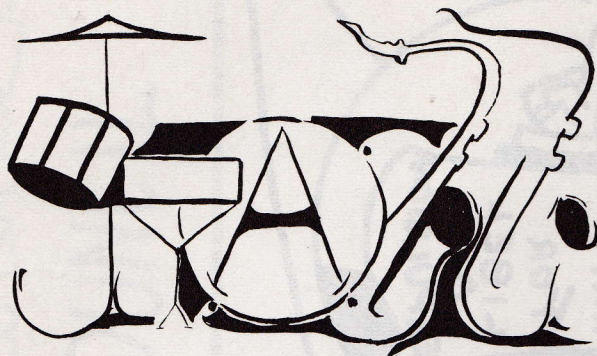
SEASONAL GIFTS FROM THE COUNCIL





Max

JAZZ BOOKS



MANY OF THE GREAT NAMES IN JAZZ WHO were active during the formative years in the first four decades of this century are now either dead or coming towards the end of long and distinguished careers.

It has suddenly dawned on jazz writers and historians that the primary sources of information represented by the personal recollections of these musicians are rapidly disappearing, and recent publications in the jazz field reflect some of the haste of writers to take advantage of the rich field of memory available to them from surviving musicians and others associated with jazz in its early years.

Reminiscences

Leading the field in jazz publishing are Quartet Books, whose highly successful biography of Charlie Parker, "Bird Lives", has been followed by several other significant ventures. Adding to the Parker legend, Robert Reisner's "Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker" comprises a selection of personal reminiscences of the erratic genius by people who associated with him during his eventful lifetime. All the indications of a tortured personality are there, but qualities of humour and warmth are equally evident, and there's a unanimous acknowledgment of his pioneering role in jazz. But the final assessment is left to the reader; Reisner has been satisfied to collate the evidence.

A book of a very different kind is Leonard Feather's "From Satchmo to Miles". It is in the form of a compilation of his writings for several magazines, both British and American, during the many years he has been actively involved in the jazz movement. Portraits of many key figures are there, including descriptions of his association with such diverse personalities as Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday, and there's a typically straight-talking interview with Miles Davies. Perhaps the book's strength lies in the insights into the complex characters of most of the musicians he discusses, arising from his lifetime involvement in jazz and his close contact with its exponents.

Equally important is what it reveals about the kinds of pressures which successful jazz musicians are submitted to in the course of practising their trade.

Without any doubt, the most significant publishing venture of the year in the jazz field must be the culmination of fifteen years of painstaking research which resulted in "Bix: Man and Legend". Co-authors and researchers Richard Sudhalter, Philip Evans and William Dean-Myatt have utilised the techniques of historical research to put together an account of the life of the legendary Bix Beiderbecke which is both interesting in itself and a fascinating record of the times.

Compiling their information from personal interviews, letters, record catalogues and a host of other sources, the co-authors have painstakingly charted the life of the gifted but tragic cornet player who, before his death in 1931 at the age of twenty-eight, had influenced a whole generation of musicians and pointed the way that jazz was to develop in subsequent years.

Satisfying

The story of Bix's adoption of the life of professional jazz musician against his family's wishes, and of his premature death from the effects of alcoholism is carefully pieced together, and several long-held misconceptions are put right after thorough investigation. "Bix: Man and Legend" is satisfying at every level, whether the criterion is concerned with its historical accuracy or its level of interest, and it is compulsory reading for all committed jazz fans.

"Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker". Robert Reisner. Hardback £3.95. Paperback £1.75.

"From Satchmo to Miles". Leonard Feather. Hardback £2.95. Paperback £1.50.

"Bix: Man and Legend". Sudhalter, Evans & Dean-Myatt. Hardback £4.95. Paperback £1.95.

All published by Quartet Books.

CLIFF LEE

Dates

Cinema

Nottingham Film Theatre

Fri. & Sun. 7.30 p.m., Sat. 5 & 8 p.m. unless otherwise stated. Co-op Arts Centre, Broad Street.

Dec. 6-8: Cries and Whispers (X)

Dec. 13-15: O Lucky Man (X) (Sat. 4.00 & 7.30)

Dec. 20-22: Psycho (X)

Dec. 27-29: Traffic (U)

Peachey Street Flick

Thursdays, 7.15. Adult Education Centre, Shakespeare Street.

Dec. 12: The Last Laugh (dir. F.W. Murnau)

Dec. 19: Student of Prague (dir. Stellan Rye)

Backstairs (dir. Leopold Jessner)

Folk

Tuesday: The Scheme: Fox Inn, Parliament St.

Thursday: The Forester: Foresters Inn, Huntingdon St. Carlton Folk Club, Windsor Castle, Carlton Hill (39/72 bus).

Friday: Nottingham Traditional Music Club: News House, St James's St (off the Market Square).

Sunday: Co-op Folk Club, Crown Hotel, Ilkeston Rd (72/39 Wollaton terms).

Jazz

Dec. 18: Giants of Jazz (Albert Hall).

Dec. 19: Terry Lightfoot (Nottingham Rhythm Club, Test Match Hotel, West Bridgford).

Dec. 21: Spear (Jazz/Rock group from South Africa) (Imperial Hotel, St James's Street - provisional booking).

Rock

December

5: Gentle Giant (Sheffield City Hall)

7: JSD Band (Nottingham University)

7: Roy Wood's Wizzard (Loughborough University)

10: Curved Air (Nottingham Univ.)

10: Argent (Sheffield City Hall)

January (provisional bookings)

11: John Martyn (Nottingham Univ.)

17: Decameron (Nottingham Univ.)

18: PFM (Nottingham Univ.)

Theatre

Nottingham Theatre Club

The Lace Market Theatre, Halifax Place. Bookings: Tel. 57201, 7-11 p.m., or 233695, daytime.

Dec. 11-14, 18-21 (7.30 p.m.): The Owl and the Pussycat Went to See . . .

Jan. 11 (8.00): Emma Theatre Company in a production to be announced.

ROCK

AFTER TWO EXTREMELY HECTIC MONTHS AS far as rock music is concerned, December is somewhat quieter, with considerably less concerts, probably because Universities and Polytechnics are taking their winter break. On the other hand, a fantastic number of albums flood out in readiness for Christmas and I'll be taking a look at a couple of them in a moment.

Genesis have just released a double album set titled "The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway", and you could win this or the Seventh Wave album "Things to Come" in this month's easy-to-enter competition. Seventh Wave played a superb gig at the University last month and I'm sure that if you saw their performance there you'll have realised the great heights for which they're destined.

In concert

CURVED AIR: Nov.9: Loughborough Univ.

I greeted the news of a Curved Air revival tour with a considerable amount of scepticism. Curved Air were the first rock band I saw live and since that memorable occasion I've followed their metamorphoses with some interest. I was, however, pleasantly surprised by their concert at Loughborough University last month; rather than being stale after their absence of two years the band seemed full of new ideas with some exceptional variations of the old favourites.

After starting with "It Happened Today", the band followed with a gentler number, "Marie Antoinette", but whereas the group had obviously matured in their musicianship, Sonja's voice was harsh and stagnant, although as the concert progressed she became more fluid and relaxed. "Melinda", one of Sonja's own compositions, was performed with considerable ease in a totally new style.

As usual, the opening strains of "Vivaldi" heralded the climax to the evening. Darryl Way's violin playing was as impeccable as ever and Francis Monkman's synthesizer break was suitably original, conjuring up some amazing sounds from his box of tricks. The band encored with "Stretch" and "Everdance", illustrating Monkman's ability not only as a proficient keyboard player but also as a lead guitarist. The audience screamed for more and after five minutes or so the group returned to repeat their new single (a dire concoction which doesn't stand a chance of making the charts).

Loughborough, however, was only the second gig on this revival tour, and if the performance there was anything to judge by, Curved Air's concert at Nottingham University on December 10 should be quite a momentous occasion.

KEVIN AYERS: Nov.16: Nottingham Univ. As expected, the Kevin Ayers concert

Roxy Music



at Nottingham University last month was a highly enjoyable affair. Presenting a musical pot-pourri, Ayers played some excellent numbers, including "Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes" and a somewhat unique version of "Falling in Love Again". Kevin also performed a couple of new numbers, one ditty with the highly unlikely title of "Guru Banana". The other four musicians were also highly proficient, notably Olly Halsall of Patto, who played impeccable guitar. All in all a good concert, but far too short: the band only played for 65 minutes.

On record

TONTO: "It's About Time" (Polydor)

Thanks to the superbly efficient Polydor Press Office, I received this album just in time to review it. If you're even vaguely into electronic music then this is for you. It's infinitely superior to the first album, "Zero Time", which in 1971 was heralded as "magnificent". Side two is the most interesting, probably because it's devoted to one track, "Pyramid Suite", which exhibits TONTO to the full, featuring an exceptional synthesized thunderstorm (TONTO is the name of the synthesizer). We've waited three years for "It's About Time", and it's great.

ROXY MUSIC: "Country Life" (Island)

After they'd reached such heights of musical eloquence with "Stranded", it

would have been easy to assume that the next Roxy album would take a turn for the worse: not so. "Country Life" is their magnum opus - so far. My favourite tracks on the album are both penned, surprisingly enough, by Phil Manzanera: "Out of the Blue" and "Prairie Rose", the former being akin to a more cultured revival of early Roxy material with Manzanera displaying his talents to the full. "Prairie Rose" is the masterpiece on the album: Ferry never sounded as good, and there's an excellent sax break from Andy Mackay. A great set, and I reckon we've still only heard half of what Roxy are capable of.

Competition

This month simply answer the question relating to the album you want to win. Send your answers to Grass Roots Competition, 33 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, to arrive no later than 23rd December.

GENESIS: to win "The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway". Write down the titles of all the Genesis albums released on the Charisma label.

SEVENTH WAVE: to win "Things to Come". What is the present line-up of Seventh Wave (instrumentation, not the names of the group)?

Last month's winners were: Jed Sams, Wollaton (Barclay James Harvest double album); Stephen Cresswell, Victoria Centre (Sparks: "Propaganda").

DAVE BRETT



IN MY LAST ARTICLE I SAID THAT THIS issue's subject would be about pubs to be avoided. Actually I'm not going that far and will just talk about the clues that you can use to decide whether a pub should be avoided or not.

It's not only people that have uniforms - pubs have them as well. In other words, brewers tend to have their own styles of outside decoration: what I call "livery", which includes things like colour, signs and general appearance.

The local Nottingham brewers all have their own particular "liveries" that appear to have developed almost accidentally, and what is so good about them is that they seem to blend in with their surroundings, except for the new "theme" pubs that the rulers (previously known as architects, interior designers, and market-experts) have inflicted upon us.

As you know, Home Brewery use a rather quaint combination of cream and green (rumour has it that they obtained a huge quantity of War Disposal paint many years ago and are still committed to sloshing it all over Nottingham).

Shippos have the same level of sophistication, except that they use red and cream (or is it ageing white?). This theme is often echoed inside their pubs with what can only be described as "Shippos Red Rexine".

World record

Examine their pubs and you will see that they have nearly all got it - where it came from God only knows. They probably have the World Record for the use of Red Rexine - I calculate about 200,000 sq.ft., but I'm prepared to be corrected on this figure. (Apart from competing on colour schemes, Home Ales and Shippos also have slogans - "The HOME of good ALES" and "IVOR Thirst for SHIPSTONES ALES" - no comment.)

Kimberley use green and yellow, and their pubs show the sign of the plastic hop. Luckily they don't use the same in their beer like other brewers (who shall be nameless because of the libel laws).

To describe the "liveries" of the big national brewers is much more difficult (the complication is that nearly all of them own several other breweries that used to be independent). I feel that all people who care about the quality of their beer should make an effort to not drink the products of the "big boys".

This is where the liveries come in useful - they don't attract, they repel.

BEWARE WATNEY'S. This creature can be recognised by its Red flash across the pub with white lettering superimposed. The persuasive exterior resembles a circus or bingo hall.

BEWARE BASS-CHARRINGTON (sometimes known as Bass-Worthington). In its civilised state (several years ago), a harmless and benevolent creature. Now recognised by the seductive "Welcome Sign" - that's the plastic cube with the red triangle and superimposed Toby-jug. Incidentally, the red Bass triangle was the first registered trade mark in this country. (Another point of information - all Worthington "E" is now keg beer. It does not resemble its original namesake, having now been converted to a fizzy, sweet, relatively weak and expensive beverage.)

CHRIS HOLMES

RACING RACING

THE ADMINISTRATORS OF THE RACING industry have increasingly realised that without the punter's presence on the course and, more importantly, his money at the betting shop, racing would be unable to survive. Thus more information is given to the general public than ever before. Where only a few years back there was no overnight declaration of runners, we now have overnight declaration of runners and blinkers, knowledge of the draw, riding plans, betting forecasts and going reports.

Newspapers

Most punters rely on the media, mainly newspapers, for their information, but how do the media measure up to the racing follower's needs?

All the daily newspapers from the "Financial Times" to the "Morning Star" carry a racing page or column of some description. At the top, the "Sun", "Mirror", "Express" and "Telegraph" offer brief form summaries for each race at the main meeting of the day in addition to the results in brief, reports, news, and discussion of the day's main selections. At the other extreme, the "Guardian" contains no form analysis and often, in the winter particularly, very little discussion or news. The remainder, the "Times" and "Morning Star" being typical, fall indifferently between the two extremes.

Every paper offers selections for each race and, of course, the nap selection of the day. It is difficult

to see the logic behind this practice, since for most selections no justification is offered. The nap selection, supposedly the best bet of the day, is often a runner in a difficult handicap, and may represent a long price but hardly safe betting!

The serious follower of form who wishes to make up his own mind, rather than follow a particular correspondent's selections, must turn to one of the two daily racing papers - the "Sporting Life" (10p) or "Sporting Chronicle" (6p). Both publish reports of the previous day's racing at all meetings and details of results, with comments on the performance of the first half dozen or so in each race, as well as four day declarations, the following day's runners, brief training reports, and, most important, the form over the past three or four races of each runner in the day's racing at all meetings.

The value of these papers lies less in the opinions and selections they offer, which are no better than those in the other newspapers, but in their fairly comprehensive coverage of form. Of the two, the "Sporting Life", as the price suggests, has the more pages and in general a better presentation and deeper analysis.

The weekly "Handicap Book" (15p), on sale on Fridays, publishes the runners for the whole of the following week plus discussion of the weekend's racing, but its tendency to give different selections from different training centres serves to confuse rather than clarify the assessment of any particular race.

If still more information is required, the next step is to buy the weekly "Raceform Up-to-Date" (70p), which offers a detailed breakdown of all results for the current season, the obvious advantage being that one can

follow a horse's form for the whole of the season regardless of how many races it has run. Abbreviated comments are given for virtually every horse in each race. It is valuable, too, for following up comparative lines of form, which cannot be done by confining oneself to the daily racing papers.

Analysis

Apart from this, Phil Bull's Timeform Organisation publishes a variety of form books. The "Timeform Racecards" give a race by race, horse by horse analysis, including comments on each runner's previous efforts and an assessment of its chances in the race under discussion. All this information is summarised in a numerical rating, but beware of following the bare figures, which can often be rather misleading. It is far better to use these racecards as a basis from which to make one's own assessment. This can also be said for the same organisation's "Raceform Notebook", a weekly publication which comments on every horse's performances to date and gives numerical ratings.

My remarks on the "Timeform" ratings apply to all the rating services - better to make up one's own mind than rely on the figures and opinions of others.

A final word on local coverage. The "Evening Post", since it is Nottingham's only major newspaper, could well afford to improve its racing page. In comparison to football, rugby or angling, racing hardly gets a look in. A daily column for the later editions discussing the following day's racing would be a welcome and overdue improvement, as would the publishing of all the runners for the following day.

ALAN FOUNTAIN

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ARTS

33 Mansfield Road, Nottingham

Mummers

"THERE WAS A SLIGHT HOAR-FROST THAT night, and the moon, though not more than half full, threw a spirited and enticing brightness upon the fantastic figures of the mumming band, whose plumes and ribbons rustled in their walk like autumn leaves." So, Thomas Hardy describes a band of rural mummers making their way towards an isolated community to put on their humble play.

The midwinter festival of regeneration was traditionally heralded by the performance of Mummers plays. These festive dramas involved all members of a rural community; as individuals became hastily and momentarily transformed from their workaday selves to the figures of pageant, the new characters tramped from house to house laying on the good cheer and laying in the good ale.

In the Mummers play the whole of traditional English life is conjured up; the Bold Slasher confronts the figure

of St George and is rapidly quelled, the doctor stumbles forward and offers the necessary antidote. All the injured are regenerated and the drama ends with the strengthened figures combating the dark forces of Beelzebub that crawl out of the hoary marshes. The Mummers play was a truly community activity designed to bring joy and reassurance to performers and audience alike. More especially the Plough Monday (traditionally the first working Monday after Twelfth Night) Mummers play brought the pagan festival to a close with a promise of goodwill henceforth.

Sadly, the Mummers tradition has all but died out in most areas. Communities become larger and the need for group reassurance is catered for in more materialistic and less communal ways. However, Nottingham does have a band of revivalist Mummers - "The Owd Oss Mummers", who take their name from a local Mummers play. The group has been functioning since 1967 and has collected about fifty Mummers plays from the Nottingham area. There will be a number of tours over the Christmas period, the following being fixed at time of press:

Thurs. Dec. 5 (8.30-10.30): Gotham, at the Windmill, the Cuckoo Bush & the Ship. Christmas Eve: at the Vale Hotel, Mansfield Rd (8.30), the Grove Hotel, Daybrook Square (9.15), & the Robin Hood, Mansfield Rd (10.00).

There will be further dates to follow. If you are interested in helping the Owd Oss or would like more information, contact Arts Page via People's Centre. Venues of Plough Monday mumming will be given in the January issue of Grass Roots/Nottingham Voice.

International evening

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CENTRE is launching an "International Evening" on Saturday, December 7th at its headquarters at 61B Mansfield Road. The evening aims to further the Centre's basic intent - "to develop an enjoyment of the contributions that the people from various cultures can make to our multi-cultural society" - with entertainments and exhibitions from a variety of sources. The evening will open with Carribean drink and develop with music from Nadia Cattouse and Commonwealth food tasting. In addition, paintings by Bruce Hurn will be on view and Indian jewellery and trinkets will be available for sale. Further details can be obtained from the ICC, and admission to the cosmopolitan evening is only 50p.

Tall windows

THERE ARE SHOP WINDOWS IN NOTTINGHAM that you have to look through on tiptoes; the price of admission prohibits any further contact. Yet, these shops often present attractions for the penniless wanderer dallying on a dark and wet Monday evening.

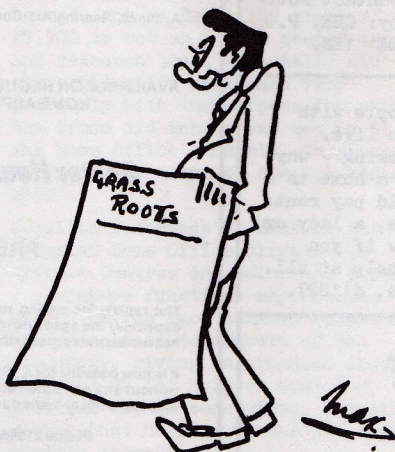
"Focus" on Derby Road is one such bazaar. If you can make your way around the acres of "cute" felt toys and the flat baroque coffee pots, there are a number of worthy articles to reward the climb out of town.

At the time of going to press, the window is largely bedecked with the stoneware of Bernard Rooke, which combines the clumpiness of a Pennine tor and the iconography of an Aztec sun god - a warming sight at a late hour. His decorative items loom out of the darkened windows of "Focus" like totems to some wet and windy god; perhaps, this is aided by viewing them through the glass darkly rather than face to face.

As your breath begins to frost the window pane catch the contrastingly delicate glassware of Mike Fisher - this superb glass is rather marred in the context of yet more of those grotesquely after-dinner coffee cups. Still, if you squint hard enough the trees come to you.

Over and above these items, the works that catch my eye are the etchings of Phil Greenwood which, if you can ignore the emblazoned prices, offer some real excitement in the centre of the winter city. His work seems to be largely concerned with the effects of light upon a variety of scenes at different hours of the day. The titles of the etchings at present on show give some idea of his preoccupations; "Night Reeds", "Bramble Moon", "Late Light", "Yellow Dawn" and "Red Spires". The latter is a bold piece of work which leaves a firm impression as you turn up your collar, leave the window of "Focus" and head back into the December murk and the festive lights of the beleaguered city.

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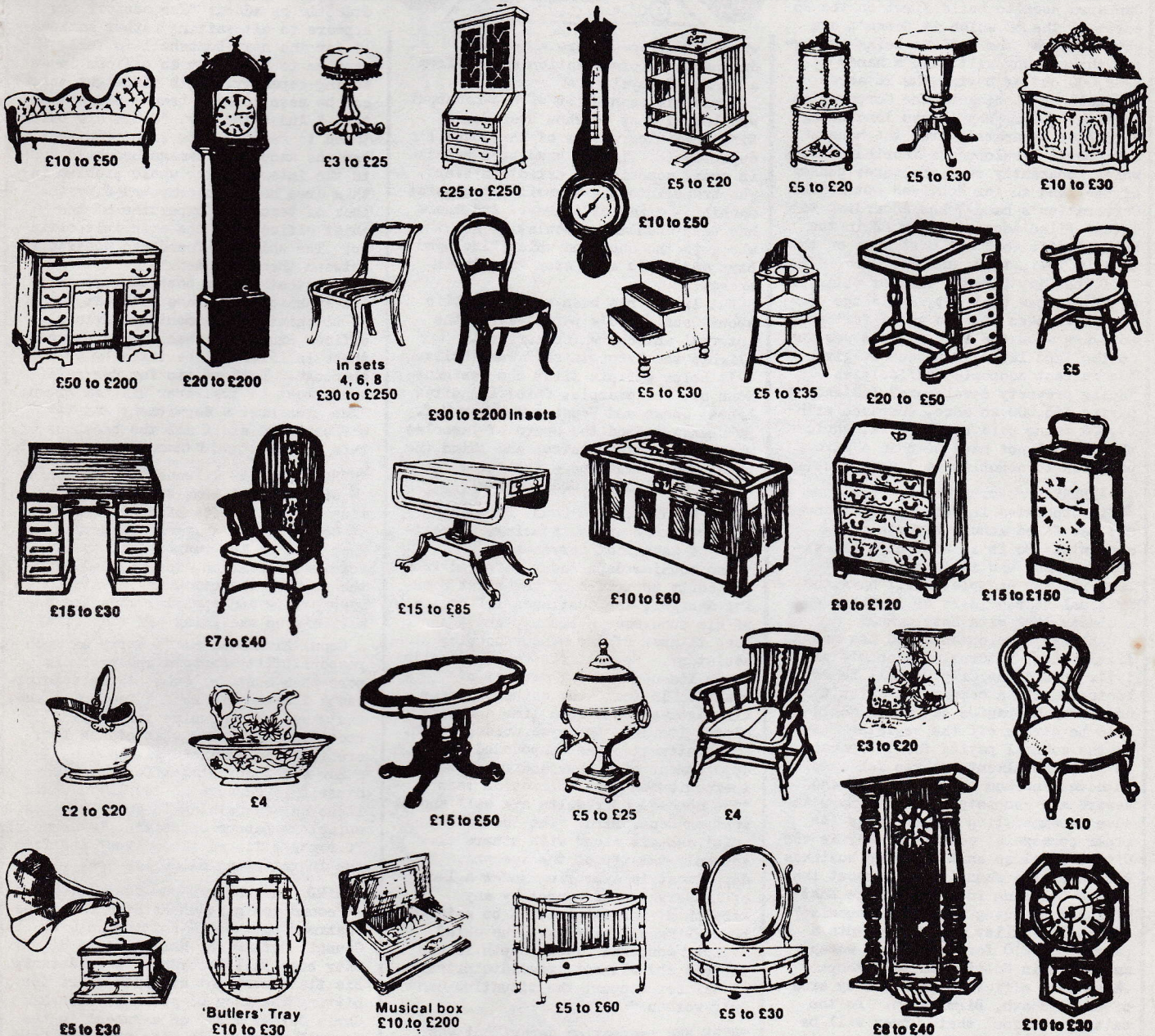
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THE CITY Council's Labour leaders have now done their usual professional whitewash job on the Top Valley deal with Canberra Developments Ltd, who are building 319 council houses for just over £3 million. Badly needed housing, honouring legal obligations, no skulduggery and no backhanders ... explanations fell thick and fast, but they by no means answer all the questions.

Why, in 1971, when the Tories, in their usual "quick-buck", short-sighted manner, decided to sell this land at Top Valley as surplus to housing needs, was it not properly advertised and put out to tender? Why does Canberra need to build first on the 26 acres of the 58 which it doesn't own yet? The way the deal is being arranged, the company will make a handy £208,000 out of buying the 26 acres and selling it back to the Corporation straight away. Why is the land being sold back separately from the houses?

Canberra Developments (Northern) Ltd, which apparently owns the three phases of the land so far conveyed out of the Corporation's hands, has according to latest filed accounts only £2 in the bank. Yet it took out mortgages on the land in 1971, 1972, and again in 1973.

If the City Council was not obliging with this new contract, would the company have been able to get a further mortgage when the next payment was due on the land later in December, given the current economic difficulties facing property developers? Instead of paying £15,000 an acre, compared with £9,000 being paid by Canberra, would the Council not have been in a strong position to negotiate a lower price?

CANBERRA Property Group, which was incorporated in February 1971, has not yet filed annual reports and accounts. So it is well nigh impossible to know who is involved in it. Does it, for example, still have the original shareholders or is there now a closer link with Nottingham?

Canberra Developments Ltd has not filed annual returns or accounts since 1971. Should the City Council be doing business with a company in default under the Companies Act which could even be struck off the register? Why is the council paying for the houses in four instalments, three for completed homes and one when the roads and sewers are complete? Does it make the same accommodating arrangements for other commercial concerns? Why is the City Council so anxious to do business with Canberra when it could boost the ailing building industry in the East Midlands by going to local companies?

This Top Valley deal represents a payment of £10 for every man, woman and child in Nottingham to a company whose head office is in a shabby area of Small Heath, Birmingham. Do the rate payers feel their money will be safe and well-invested?



IN TRUE HIGH TORY TRADITION, COUN. Herbert Bird, self-presented King of Gedling, has always been obsessed by the philosophy that if rates are kept, at all costs to services, at a minimum then the ratepayers will bless you.

And he has not minced his words in proposing the latest manpower economies - hacking out alleged dead wood at the top of the borough council's seemingly chaotic hierarchy, many of



whom, he alleges, were appointed during the reorganisation simply from a sense of loyalty.

There has been a lot of hoo-ha about who leaked what to whom over Coun. Bird's acidic rundown of the council's departments. Fingers have been pointed in every conceivable direction over who broke into the council's photostat machine - crime of crimes. And there has been abundant speculation about who gets the chop and which blue-eyed boys and girls will step into their shoes.

But little has been said in public about Coun. Bird's portrayal of the internal anarchy which currently blights the "reorganised" Town Halls.

It helps explain first the resignations of, for example, Chief Executive Ernest Jones and Housing Manager W.T. McEneaney, second the sword of Damocles which hangs over others, and third the predicted promotions - the rules for snakes and ladders Gedling-style.

THE COUNCIL, said Coun. Bird, has three weak areas: housing, recreation and technical services.

The housing department suffered from the early departure of the first housing manager, the continued ill-health of his successor McEneaney, and the long illness of the senior housing assistant. Sounds like Gedling really needs its own medical officer of health. In fact, the authority some time ago went out on a limb and appointed its own, Dr Joyce Goldsborough.

The situation was compounded by the appointment of a "new and relatively inexperienced rent collection team". "The consequent results are well known," went on Coun. Bird. "The 'notices to quit' debacle along with others ... are only the tip of the iceberg. The department is labouring under a lack of leadership and cannot by any stretch of the imagination be said to be working efficiently. The chief officer concerned lacks depth in his subject and without immediate principal officer support the situation can only worsen."

THE NEW recreation department was designed, went on the report, to strengthen and promote the new authority's leisure services. "It has achieved neither aim. Indeed the situation is perhaps worse than before April 1, 1974. The principal officer in control can at best be described as inconsistent preferring 'theory' to practice." Sounds like Bill Moody is working on borrowed time.

"The harsh reality of day to day detail has yet to be tackled by this department," Coun. Bird also criticised "inadequate support and control work at Carlton Forum, together with marked

lack of liaison with the recreation maintenance section under technical services. Strong leadership and direction is again at the basics of the problem."

BUT COUN. BIRD saved the pearls for the technical services section. "More criticism has descended on this section than any other. Refuse collection or lack of it, gully emptying, verge cutting - the list of complaints from members and public alike is terrific and unacceptable. Leadership, expertise, organisational ability all appear to be missing in the technical services area."

And with his renowned flair for the dramatic he added: "The council now appears to sit waiting rather anxiously for the next bombshell to fall. The section is headed by an officer in an acting capacity. With hindsight this can be seen to have been a serious mistake." And ominously, "Steps are being taken to rectify this situation, but a serious amount of damage has been done in the interim. The whole problem in this area has been compounded by the lack of technical expertise of the chief officer and the principle officer. The ship has foundered somewhere between these two men."

On latest Barker betting forecasts, the technical services hot seat should go to chief environmental services officer Ernest Marshall. His place there is likely to be taken by Dr Goldsborough. Hottest tip for new chief exec. must be treasurer William Brown: "The treasurer's department and its officers and staff are the backbone of this borough," said Coun. Bird's report.

THE SCREAMING silence from the chief officers confirms suspicions that they have little to offer in rebuttal of Coun. Bird's charges. But what has been said of the responsibility of committee chairmen, the elected men of the people, the community's watchdogs over policy and spending when the town hall circus was going off the rails?

Coun. Bird admits: "I carry as much responsibility as some and probably more than most for some of the appointments I have outlined. I recognise the mistakes. I recognise the need to rectify them." But what of his Tory cronies? Embarrassed silence?

How can Coun. Bird afford to expose himself to censure so readily? Could it be he has nothing to fear from the spineless Labour opposition leadership? from the officers themselves? and from the ingratiating NALGO leaders?

BIRD, the showman-cum-dustman, had a sound training as Estates Committee chairman on the old Nottingham City Council during the halcyon days of city boss Bill Derbyshire's leadership. His flair even got him into court for hitting the then 66-year-old Alderman Chris Coffey after an argument in the Council chamber. It also took him into legal wrangles with former Town Clerk Philip Vine over his voting and speaking rights in the light of his building contracting interests.

I understand he has his eyes on Philip Holland's parliamentary seat - indeed, it was suggested in some quarters that a disenchanted Tory businessman offered to help him stand as an independent candidate in the last election. If his Labour opponents and the officers launch a "get Bird to Westminster" fund, many will consider it money well spent.

Barker