

# Grass Roots

Number 7

June, 1974

Price 4p

**PAGE FOUR**  
**'REHOUSE US**  
**IN THE**  
**MEADOWS!'**

## Magistrates help misery tenants

Story on page 2

### Offices: Toll House Hill is the answer

IT WAS GOOD TO SEE A LITTLE PROGRESS IN THE AFFAIR OF THE THEATRE ROYAL OFFICE BLOCK. BUT EVEN IF THE COUNCIL GET PERMISSION TO DEVELOP THE SITE THEMSELVES, THIS WILL NOT SATISFY OPPONENTS OF THE SCHEME WHO OBJECT TO THE VERY PRINCIPLE OF MORE OFFICE BLOCKS IN THE CITY CENTRE.

#### Report

WHAT OBJECTORS HAVE NOW TO RECKON WITH, HOWEVER, IS THE VERY FULL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL'S POSITION GIVEN TO THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON MAY 21st. THERE IS LITTLE IN THE REPORT WHICH WAS NOT PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ALREADY - IF PUBLIC OR PRESS HAD BOTHERED TO TAKE NOTE OF IT AS IT APPEARED (WHAT HAPPENED TO THE VARIOUS WATCH-DOG ORGANISATIONS, SUCH AS THE CIVIC SOCIETY?) - BUT IT IS REASONABLE TO ASK THE COUNCIL TO PUBLISH REPORTS LIKE THIS BEFORE MAJOR DECISIONS ARE MADE, AND BEFORE BINDING COMMITMENTS ARE ENTERED INTO WITH PRIVATE DEVELOPERS. THIS WOULD MAKE INFORMED PUBLIC DEBATE POSSIBLE, WOULD FORESTALL DAMAGING INNUENDOS,

Cont. on page 2

Right: The Empire Billiard Hall, a unique public facility. Together with the Sign of Four, Selectadisc, and a number of other shops, this will be demolished if the Council's policy remains unchanged.





# Misery tenants

MAGISTRATES AT THE GUILDHALL have made a new repairs order on 55 Hawthorn Street, the Meadows, after a legal battle that has dragged on since July, 1973.

The new order includes repair of doors, windows, kitchen ceiling and rising damp, replacement of a banister, and the checking of the roof. The Nottingham Friendship Housing Association also agreed to provide electricity for a light on the upper landing, thus providing the only electricity in the upper part of the house. Nottingham District Council were ordered to see that these repairs were carried out.

## Repairs

A second part of the order states that all the repairs necessary to remove the statutory nuisance at the property must be carried out by 31st December, 1974. This order was made after the Council had stated that the sub-phase in which Hawthorn Street is situated would be completely rehoused by July, 1975.

The court action, taken by Mrs Newton and backed by MATAR against her landlord, the Friendship Housing Association, and against the Council,

## OFFICES cont.

and moreover would be in accordance with present official Labour Party policy for more 'open government'.

As summarised in the 'Evening Post', the report reveals that the Council has little to hide (why, therefore, the heavy-handed treatment of Councillor Evans, and the frantic references to 'leaks'?). It seems rather that the Council got itself tied up in a tangle of planning applications and its own good intentions.

## Too small

As the report suggests, it makes sense to move all Council Departments under one roof. But what is difficult to understand is the Council's reasoning in preferring the Theatre Royal site to more logical alternatives. Indeed, the Council's own Consultant Surveyor recommended Toll House Hill as the most sensible site, and specifically rejected the Theatre Royal site because it was too small! Thus the Council will not, in fact, be achieving its stated object if the development takes place behind the Theatre Royal, since a number of departments will still have to be housed elsewhere.

A question to be conjured with, then, is what happened between the Consultant Surveyor's Report and the final decisions which rejected its



began in July last year. Magistrates made an order for repairs to be carried out, but both the landlord and the Corporation appealed to the High Court, where finally the decision was reached that the Magistrates had it "nearly right".

The case went back to the Guildhall, where the Magistrates stuck to their original decision and made a new order.

A MATAR committee member told Grass Roots: "We are delighted. The case has shown that people have a legal right to have repairs to their property even where the property may shortly be due for demolition. This order includes curing the damp -

something we have never pressed in the past."

Meanwhile the Council is rushing through plans to appoint six extra Public Health Inspectors in Nottingham.

## Precedent

It is believed that the Health Department plans to keep a much sharper eye on clearance areas from now on to try to avoid more cases like this one. A similar case could go through the Courts in weeks rather than months now a precedent has been established.

Cont. on page 3

recommendations. It is difficult to see why, in the light of these recommendations, a private company was allowed to develop Toll House Hill for private use, and more difficult still to see why Bentrax were allowed to press on with plans for new District Council Offices at the back of the Theatre Royal - especially in view of the Labour Group's declared policy of opposing further office development in central Nottingham.

## Puzzling

So puzzling is all this, in fact, that one wonders if the whole truth has been told after all.

The Toll House Hill development repays further study. With 200,000 sq.ft. of floor space, and costing £10 million, this ugly monster, straddling the main western entrance to the City in what is laughably presented as an echo of the old Chapel Bar, is the chief obscenity in the Council's whole development policy. As reported in Grass Roots 3, the new St. Ann's Estate, which provides homes for 8,000 people, cost only twice as much. It is this sort of figure which gives force to the Theatre Point Action Group's 'homes not offices' campaign.

It is also worth looking in detail at other blocks in the jungle of concrete and brick luxuriating around Toll House Hill.

There is Chapel Bar House with 42,000 sq.ft. of floor space, 8-18 Chapel Bar with 20,000 sq.ft., D.H. Lawrence House with 46,000 sq.ft., Chaddesden House with 40,000 sq.ft., College House with 59,000 sq.ft., 28-38 Wollaton Street with 38,000 sq.ft., and Lambert House with 55,000 sq.ft.

## Still unlet

Most of this 300,000 sq.ft. has been completed since last October, and approximately half of it appears still to be unlet. Add in Toll House Hill itself (still unlet), and there is a grand total of  $\frac{1}{2}$  million sq.ft. of office space, 350,000 sq.ft. of it still unlet, in area only three hundred yards across.

And this in a city with  $\frac{3}{4}$  million sq.ft. of office space unlet or under construction!

Compare these figures with the 120,000 sq.ft. of the Bentrax development on the Theatre Royal site, and the conclusion is obvious. The Council should set up their stream-lined District Council Offices under one roof at Toll House Hill, and should explore every possible means of breaking the agreement with Bentrax and putting the Theatre Royal site to better use.

It seems almost a necessary expiation of their sins in visiting the Centre Point plague on our long-suffering city.



# MISERY TENANTS cont.

## What the Magistrates said:

"In fairness to ourselves we must say that in normal circumstances it would be neither sensible nor just and certainly not humane to make a decision which involved Mrs Newton in living at 55 Hawthorn Street, agreed by all concerned as constituting a statutory nuisance, indeed as being unfit for human habitation, for one hour more than this court by its order could avoid."

\* \* \* \* \*

"The High Court judgment does not say in terms that we are bound to base our decision on the programme of slum clearance planned by the City Council under the Housing Act of 1957. The judgment does not say that we shall not weigh and weigh carefully the length of the period during which Mrs Newton or indeed

any human being in these unfortunate circumstances could be expected to endure conditions in which she is obliged to live."

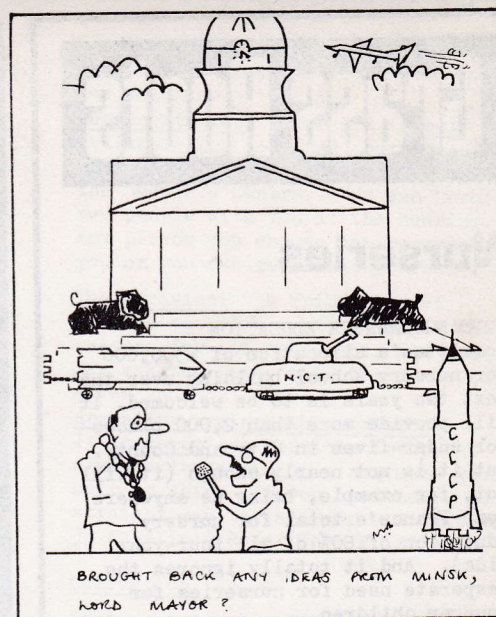
\* \* \* \* \*

"Further, in determining the period in which statutory nuisances must be abated, it is clear that we are entitled to phase more specifically than in our last order, a progression for Mrs Newton during the period we determine, towards a far higher standard of conditions in this house than exists at the present time."

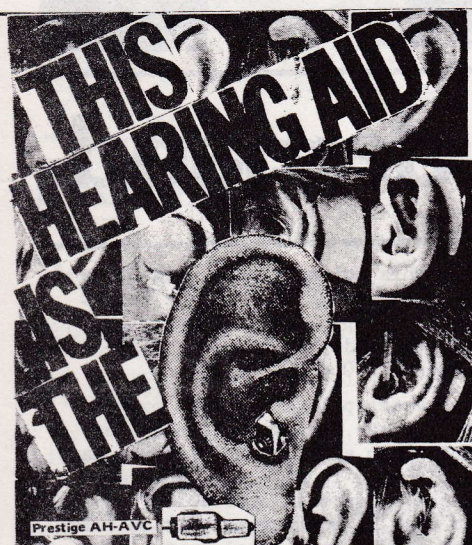
\* \* \* \* \*

## What the Public Health Inspector said:

"I was satisfied at that time (13th February, 1973) that there were no urgent repairs that required attention." (F.E. Weston, District Public Health Inspector)



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## WANTED...

People who care

Throughout Nottingham, voluntary groups have sprung up to meet a variety of different needs. The range of groups is vast. It includes helping at clubs for the elderly, playgroups, the physically and mentally handicapped, entertaining in hospitals, decorating, gardening, helping families, and befriending the housebound or lonely. Most of all, groups depend on the help of people like you. So if you've got some time to spare and you would like to help out in some way, then why don't you contact us and find out about the various opportunities that exist.

The Voluntary Work Agency,  
Nottm. Council of Social Service,  
31a Mansfield Road,  
Nottingham.  
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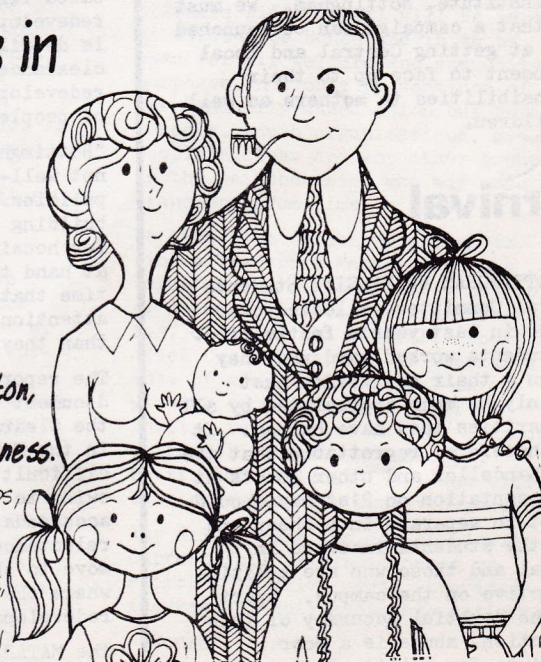


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# Grass Roots

## Nurseries

### NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EDUCATION

Committee's allocation of £300,000 for nursery school building over the next two years is to be welcomed. It will provide more than 2,000 places for under-fives in City and County. But it is not nearly enough (it will not, for example, bring us anywhere near France's total for nursery education of 80% of all four-year olds). And it totally ignores the desperate need for nurseries for younger children.

In 1960, the Government forbade the building of nurseries. As a result of that, and the wholesale closure of nurseries in the immediate post-war period, there are places for only 0.5% of Britain's children under school age. Nottingham has only 320 nursery places, and there are 305 priority children (generally those with unsupported mothers) on the two-year waiting list. It is essential for the well-being of both mothers and children that this situation be changed - and quickly. We tell the harassed, tired mother in the road-safety advertisement that her children are better under her feet than under the wheels of a car, whereas, for her sanity, we should be providing nurseries for her children.

One local firm, S.W. Sellors of Beeston, has set up a nursery in its hosiery factory in order to attract women with young children to work there. It is well run and well planned - but instead of being tied to the home the working mother is now tied to a particular employer.

Child-care facilities are up for discussion in a workshop at the NCCL Conference, "Women at Work", on Saturday, 15th June at the Albert Hall Institute, Nottingham. We must hope that a campaign can be launched aimed at getting Central and Local Government to face up to their responsibilities to mothers as well as children.

## Karnival

THE NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY Students' Karnival Committee collected over £20,000 in last year's festivities. The students worked hard and they had fun - their activities must certainly be much appreciated by all the charities they have helped. It was, therefore, regrettable that the Vice-Chancellor and other guests at the presentation on 21st May should attempt to separate into sheep and goats the students involved in Karnival and those who are politically active on the campus. Apart from the doubtful accuracy of this distinction, abuse is a poor substitute for political argument.



## Meadows demand

A MEETING called by M.A.T.A.R. at Kingsmeadow Hall on Tuesday, 21st May backed the report "The Meadows is Our Home", calling for new Meadows homes for Meadows people. The hundred people at the meeting demanded immediate Council action. A petition of local people is to be drawn up, and another meeting will be held with Councillors and officials to discuss the issues raised.

### Criticism

The report, subtitled "We want the new houses", calls for an undertaking to families in Phase 3 that they will get new houses in Phases 1, 2 and 4A, and asks that the Council should immediately adopt community-based renewal for subsequent redevelopment. The report criticises in detail the present wholesale clearance programme, and calls for redevelopment that will take notice of people's needs and desires.

"Nottingham," says the report, "is not well-known for its housing policies. However, it is rapidly building up a very poor reputation for housing. The opportunity is now at hand to change all this. It is time that the Council paid more attention to people and their homes than they do to cars and roads."

The report also quotes the Council's document "Difficulties in achieving the Clearance Programme": "Clearance in the Meadows is proving very difficult (more so than St. Ann's) owing to the acute shortage of accommodation for rehousing and the reluctance of the Meadows people to move to the other side of the City, where the majority of new housing redevelopments are situated".

The MATAR report claims that these problems can be solved by adopting community-based renewal immediately.

With this policy, there need be no delay in rehousing, and the report shows in depth how such policies have been adopted in Newcastle, London and Oldham.

The report points out that many people have very good reasons for wanting to stay in the Meadows. Many people work locally, and the latest census shows that over 40% of people who work in Nottingham walk to work. Many people have local roots and friends and neighbours whom they wish to stay with.

The report has been fully supported by the Nottingham Union of Clearance Areas Associations, who have said they welcome its recommendations.

The main feature of the report is the strength of feeling that it shows among Meadows residents. Over 50% of people who replied to the survey said they definitely wanted to stay in the Meadows. A majority of people wanting to stay said they would be prepared to wait longer than they would if they moved to another area. Nearly 60% of those wanting to stay have said they would wait up to one year if this were necessary to stay in the Meadows.

### Promises

The report includes some of the views expressed by people in the course of the survey. One reply said: "I have lived in the Meadows for 55 years, served in the Sherwood Foresters from 1939 to 1945, wounded at El Alamein. After the War, General Montgomery promised us good living facilities, a nice house and a garden. By God, it's taking a long time."

Copies of the report are available from MATAR, 63 Wilford Road, Meadows, Nottingham, price 25p.



## Know your rights

### Social Security 3

#### How to appeal

You can appeal against the decisions of the D.H.S.S. if you think that:

- They haven't given you enough on a claim.
- They haven't agreed to a claim that you have made.

But you must appeal within 21 days of the decision being made.

**First:** EITHER fill in an Appeal Form (from your D.H.S.S. Office), OR write a letter addressed to: The Clerk, Supplementary Benefit Appeal Tribunal, Dept. of Health & Social Security (at your D.H.S.S. Office), and say: "Dear Sir, I wish to appeal against the refusal of a grant for..." and then put all the points which you want to appeal against.

**Make sure:** you sign the letter, you date the letter, you put your name and address.

What happens if it's longer than 21 days since the decision?

- If there's a good reason for the delay, then the Chairman of the Tribunal can still allow the appeal.
- You can ask the D.H.S.S. to reconsider a decision they have already made, and then appeal against the refusal to reconsider the decision within 21 days of this refusal.

Having applied for an Appeal Hearing, you wait. While waiting you may be given part of what you asked for. You must then state if you wish to carry on with the Appeal - otherwise it may be cancelled automatically.

**Adjournment of Hearing:** Reasonable notice should be given of the hearing. If you feel that you haven't been given enough notice, or if you or your representative cannot attend, then you can apply for an adjournment.

**Notice of Hearing:** You will be sent form B/O 22 which sets out the grounds for the appeal, and the comments of the officer. You will

be told the time, date and place of the hearing.

**Representation:** Legal Aid is not available for hearings, but you can get free legal advice and help from the People's Centre. You can have two people with you at the hearing. Any person you choose can represent you or you can represent yourself.

**The Decision:** The Tribunal must provide you with a statement of the reasons for its decisions, and you may ask the reasons if these are not given you.

**Appealing against the Decision:** It is sometimes possible to appeal against the decision - get some good help on this. If you need help, go straightaway to the People's Centre, 33 Mansfield Road (Tel. 411227).

#### Correction

Last month's 'Know Your Rights' was incorrect. In fact the tenant of a furnished property cannot be legally evicted without a Court Order. But it is still wise to go to the Rent Tribunal, because a Court Order is very easy to obtain for furnished property.

## Letters

### Don't turn us out

**Dear Sir,** - Like my fellow residents at Porchester House, I am confused and concerned with the decision to temporarily close our Addiction Unit.

There may be some alternative to offer us concerning our addiction to alcohol or drugs. This is debatable. However, there is no alternative to offer us in what we have built up together as a working community.

What we all benefit from is the continuous treatment programme which we entered into with each other. As a community we can plan constructively and cope with all our community problems. In doing this and by seeing it, we learn by it. The continuation of this is always going on in groups, and because it goes on like this continually we all gain a better understanding of ourselves as individuals and others as members of our community.

This then builds up and gets stronger as we continually examine and expose ourselves to each other. Then we can leave when our time is felt right, knowing in leaving that what we have achieved here was beneficial to us, and that it is still going on and on and others are taking our place, taking what we took out of it and adding to it, so it is passed on and gets stronger.

This "treatment programme" that we have here at Porchester House - there is no alternative to this. What we have at the moment is what we all want to continue with because it works and can be seen to work. We do not need drugs or medicines or prescriptions from doctors. What we need is people like ourselves with common problems that we share, & as a community we will in the sharing of those problems treat ourselves.

In deciding to close this Unit in July, those responsible are denying

us our treatment. Instead of withdrawing a drug or doctor's service from us, they are withdrawing people from us. By people we mean patients like ourselves. This is the raw material that the community needs to survive and get well. That is why the present community sign this letter to register our protest on the decision to close this Unit.

(**Editor's note.** This letter was delivered to us by hand just before we went to press - unfortunately, the signatures were indecipherable.)

### Free soup kitchens?

**Dear Sir,** - Re 'Homes v. Offices' (Grass Roots 5): this is an old tale - there is no evidence to show building of commercial property in any way hinders the construction of dwelling houses. In fact, in times when private houses cannot be sold the industry would suffer still further if construction of such office blocks were not permitted. As to the building of council houses, this is entirely a question of finance, quite unrelated to office building.

Concerning the fares freeze: I wonder if Grass Roots would have welcomed the announcement of free soup kitchens in the Market Square, or would this be socially unacceptable? I can see no reason for giving free transport to some at the expense of others. Why should we be marshalled like penguins into bus queues? As 52% of householders over the country as a whole have the regular use of a motor vehicle - and the demand increases daily, and is quite unrelated to any particular social group - it is about time the Planners and those wishing to ban the private car realised that they should take into account the wishes of the people. It is this restrictive attitude of the little do-gooders, the petty officials and

the organisers which needs sweeping away. If hard work had its just reward our Society would be healthier and happier and we would all be suburban car owners and dwellers, not collectors of free bus vouchers.

- Yours faithfully,  
W.P. Radford.

Churchside House,  
Wollaton,  
Nottingham.

### 'Cyril'

**Dear Grass Roots,** - A 12-seater minibus, 'Cyril', has been given to Sherwood Community Care and Neighbourhood Group by the Nottinghamshire Students' Charities Appeal, and it is the wish of the students and of ourselves that maximum benefit should be enjoyed by the whole community from this really splendid gift. Cyril will be kept at Woodthorpe House and is to be used for all welfare and community purposes, not only by sections of the Community Association but by schools, youth organisations, old people's clubs and any other groups in the neighbourhood who may need transport from time to time.

We have been fortunate enough to find a Transport Manager who has taken on the responsibility not only of maintaining, re-fuelling, servicing, cleaning and generally looking after Cyril, but also of keeping a rota of his availability. Anyone wishing to make use of Cyril is invited to apply to Mr H.S. Johnson, 8 Grouville Drive, Woodthorpe, Nottingham (Tel. 263881), who will be pleased to help whenever possible.

Any driver over the age of 21 with a current full driving licence is entitled to drive Cyril, provided insurance requirements are satisfied.

- Yours sincerely,  
Jean Crossland,  
Hon. Secretary,  
Sherwood Community Care and Neighbourhood Group.



## Urban Aid

ARE YOU CONCERNED with helping the young or the disabled, running a neighbourhood advice centre, or organising local or city-wide help for the homeless or the elderly? Projects concerned with these and other needs groups might be successful in obtaining a grant under Urban Aid, if the Local Authority is prepared to support the application.

The Home Office prefers projects aimed at a small area rather than a whole town, and is keen to support co-ordinated projects concerned with more than one aspect of need.

The final date for application to the Local Authority is July 1st, 1974. Schemes approved by the Home Office will be notified on December 20th, 1974. Anyone requiring further details or help with making an application should contact the appropriate Local Authority department, the Council of Social Service, or the Community Relations Council.

## Gingerbread

VICKI STEVENS, secretary of the newly formed Gingerbread, the self-help organisation for one-parent families, said she was delighted with the response to Gingerbread's first meeting on Monday, 20th May. Nearly fifty people came to find out what Gingerbread was all about, and discuss what they wanted their local branch to do.

It was decided to start off with a social gathering every Monday evening in the People's Centre. In addition, it was suggested that small groups could be formed to look into certain issues, e.g. extension of school opening hours for working parents. It is hoped that each area of the City will have a 'contact person' to help one-parent families in difficulty, and that members will man the People's Centre at certain times to provide help and advice.

If you'd like to know more, contact Vicki at 1 Glebe Road, West Bridgford, or through the People's Centre, 33 Mansfield Road, Tel. 411227, or just drop in any Monday evening from 7.30 p.m. onwards, and find out what it's all about.

## Committee chosen

FOLLOWING A BALLOT of voluntary organisations within the new enlarged County Council area, the ten members of the voluntary side of the Nottinghamshire Social Services Joint Consultative Committee have been chosen.

The voluntary members have already met twice and are producing three papers dealing with current problems for discussion at a Joint Consultative Committee.

Two members - Mrs McGuire and myself - have been chosen to represent the voluntary interests on the Social Services Committee. We are the link between voluntary organisations and the Social Services Committee. We cannot be a viable organisation unless we have support and information from all voluntary bodies. You can get in touch with us at 31A Mansfield Road.

S.J. Bargent (Chairman)

## USE GRASS ROOTS!

A NUMBER OF NEIGHBOURHOOD and special interest groups publish their own newspaper or newsletter. If anyone has any item of general interest which they would like brought to the attention of a wider public, Grass Roots would be happy to consider it for publication. Copy should reach the Editor by the third Friday of each month.

Sid misses the System this month because of exams.



## Volunteers wanted

THE NEED FOR VOLUNTARY HELP in the Hospital Service is more urgent than ever. In our type of hospital which caters for mentally ill patients, volunteers are needed for elementary non-nursing tasks which so often have to be neglected because of insufficient staff. The main need is to give patients an opportunity to feel wanted. Depression can be a lonely illness, and to have someone come along to talk with and befriend a patient can help so much, especially those patients without family or friends.

A rota of volunteers is needed to man the Tea Bar (6.15 - 7.45 p.m. on weekdays and 2.00 - 4.00 p.m. on Sundays). Groups of volunteers are also needed to assist patients to Church on Sundays, and to help at dances and entertainments, ward parties and coach outings. Others can take patients to football and cricket matches, to the theatre or cinema, or even on shopping expeditions.

A very special volunteer is required to assist in coach outings by driving the Hospital Coach (with lift and special adaptations). A PSV or HGV licence is necessary to do this. Without this help it is not possible for the patients to be taken out into the countryside very often, and for the majority not at

all. This special appeal is directed towards the male volunteer with the above qualifications (times: afternoons, evenings, and some for weekends).

We would welcome invitations for patients to visit Pensioners' or Women's Clubs. Sometimes we need help to settle a patient back home again into the community.

Mapperley Hospital is noted for its progressive work on behalf of mental illness. **WILL YOU CONSIDER HELPING?** Arrangements can be made by phone or letter for you to come and talk about the Voluntary Service Scheme, and visits by groups of not more than twelve persons can also be arranged for an afternoon, or we can visit your Club and give a talk on Voluntary Services.

For further information, please write or phone 68144 to Ken Andrews (Voluntary Services Organiser), Mapperley Hospital, Porchester Road, Nottingham.

## Clifton clippings

\* The newspaper 'Clifton Circle' needs paper (foolscap duplicating) - offers for this one-man venture to Reg Davies, 23 Tintagel Green.

\* The Clifton Adventure Playground Association are holding a Summer Project during August - contact Mrs L. Parradine, 181 Southchurch Drive if you want to help.

\* An idea to revive the Festival at Clifton was mooted at the Garden Holders' Association recently - have they sown the seed of a good celebration that could come to fruition next year?

\* 'For Your Information' is being distributed to all organisations - apologies from the Care Group for the delay. Alterations (owing to change of officers) should be handed in at the Library.

\* There are now six playgroups in Clifton and Silverdale, with the new one begun by the Social Services at Clifton Youth Club. With co-operation, none need ever close down again.

\* The Clifton Cage Bird Society leaves Clifton to return to its parent organisation in the city's own Ornithological Society, and we look forward to your return in a year's time when you have been able to build up again.

\* Six churches are praying together for a campaign this coming October, and the churches' Christian Aid Group are hoping to celebrate passing the target that they set last year.

## Forum news-sheet

THE MONTHLY NEWS-SHEET published by the Forum for the Handicapped can be sent to anyone interested on request to the Editor, c/o The Goodwill Complex, Notintone Place, Sneinton.

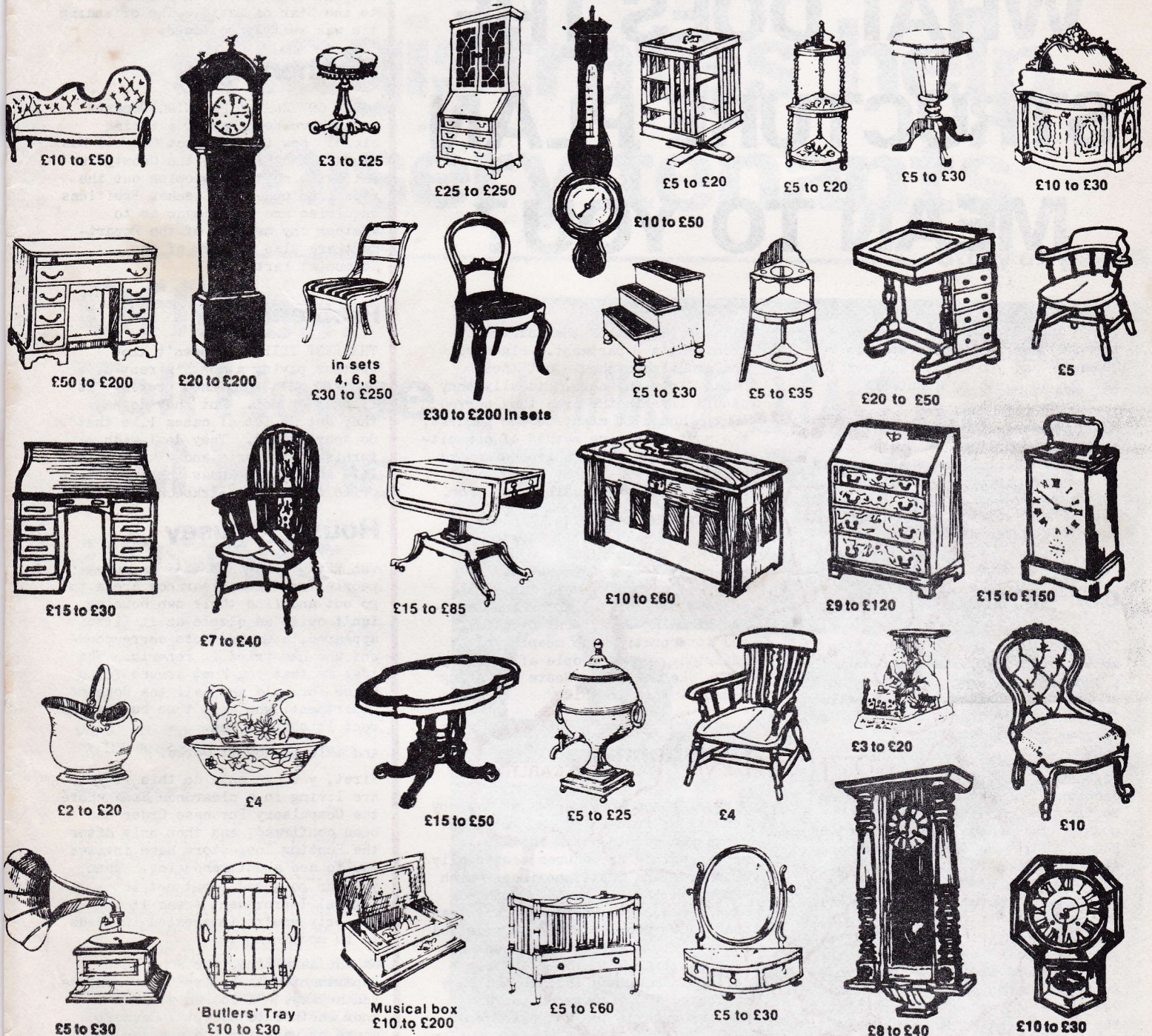
The newspaper is free and relies on donations for financial backing.



# WANTED

We urgently require to purchase items as illustrated below in any condition. We also require any old Barometers, Mechanical Money Boxes, pieces of Porcelain, China, Pewter Plates, Furniture, etc., in fact, anything which is old. Our Buyers will be pleased to call any time to value or buy.

(We will also purchase any parts of Clocks, Music Boxes, Mechanical Toys, etc.)



## The Jug & Bowl

5b ARKWRIGHT STREET, NOTTINGHAM

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# Grass Roots

## WHAT DOES THE STRUCTURE PLAN MEAN TO YOU?

THEY COULD BE PLANNING a motorway through your front room at this very moment - and you might find out too late to do anything about it.

'They' in this case are the giant Nottinghamshire County Council which came into operation on April 1st, for the Council Planning Department is busy preparing a 'Structure Plan' to decide main planning policies for Nottingham and its surrounding suburbs for the next twenty years.

### Complicated

Unfortunately, the Structure Plan is so big and complicated that only the planners themselves understand some of its finer implications - until the bulldozers start work at the end of your street, that is.

This was the sort of problem highlighted by top local planner Howard Jackson at a meeting called by the Nottingham Council of Social Service on May 21st at the Friends' Meeting House, Clarendon Street to discuss 'Participation in Planning' (previewed in Grass Roots 6). Mr Jackson is Assistant Director of Planning and Transportation to the County Council, and like most planners is keen to get the public involved before all the decisions are made. But, in spite of elaborate 'participation exercises' for the Structure Plan, the public remains frustratingly uninvolved.

Why this is so and what can be done about it was the main theme of the open discussion which followed Mr Jackson's introduction.

The most radical criticism came from community worker David Horne, who said that the planners had got it the wrong way round. Instead of expecting the public to learn the specialised language of planning, it was the planners' responsibility to speak the same language as the public. This feeling was echoed by

Michael Tempest of the County Architect's Department. Planners and architects should get their hands dirty, he said. Ideally they should live in the area they served, and although it might be the hardest, the most effective method of consultation was not through brochures and questionnaires, but by going into people's homes and talking to them.

The Rev. Bernard Green, Minister of Mansfield Road Baptist Church, believed that a middle group was necessary to link planners with people and had himself formed a successful group of this kind, meeting Planning Department officials and interpreting the meaning of decisions to the people affected by them. He saw Grass Roots as having a useful role in this.

### Questionnaire

A brief guest appearance was made by Councillor Frank Higgins, who also expressed doubts about the usual participation procedures, especially brochures and questionnaires, which were read largely by the educated middle class. He revealed that less than 2,000 replies had been received from 23,000 questionnaires sent out in connection with the traffic collar scheme, and that he had once collected 100 signatures in 20 minutes outside the Council House for a petition to the Home Secretary requesting that black should be changed to white. Structure plans covered too large an area, he thought - local issues got the most response, and he would be doing his consultation in the local at a quarter to ten.

Winding up, Mr Jackson said that planners were constantly trying new methods of consultation and were learning all the time, but the ultimate solution lay in the schools, and in better education about how Local Government worked.

## Star turn

THE RECENT TRIP to Minsk by a Civic party from Nottingham was not all sweetness and light, reports our Minsk correspondent. It seems that one member of the party had the idea of borrowing a Shipstone's tie for the occasion, since the Shipstone's symbol is a red star. But there is more to expressing solidarity than wearing a brewery tie. The Russian star is, of course, a five-pointed star, while unfortunately the Shipstone's star is a six-pointed one and bears a strong resemblance to the Star of David. The offending tie was swiftly replaced.

## Red herrings

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNING Departments have been having a spring clean. Now the District Council has plugged the "leaks", the County is following suit by sweeping out the reds from under the leaks. Fruitless enquiries are being made as to whether any members of the Department are also members of the Communist Party.

## Problem

THE RENT TRIBUNAL doesn't know whether paying a month's rent as a deposit on a furnished property is illegal or not. But they do say they get "a lot of cases like that". So they should. They deal with furnished property and fix rents for it. Anyone who knows the answer can write to them at Birkbeck House.

## Housey-housey

THE COUNCIL'S SCHEME for encouraging people from slum clearance areas to go out and find their own housing isn't quite as simple as it first appeared, a Grass Roots correspondent who has tried it reports. The idea is that you hunt around for a house for sale and tell the Housing Department, who will then buy it and rent it back to you.

And this is how it works.

First, you can only do this if you are living in a clearance area where the Compulsory Purchase Order has been confirmed, and then only after the Housing Inspectors have invited you to see about rehousing. Then you can go ahead - but not in General Improvement Areas if the property you're interested in needs to be modernised.

At the same time, the Housing Department will be trying to rehouse you anyway. Of course you don't know whether to accept a Council house or wait for the one you picked out, because there's no way of knowing whether they'll buy it, or whether you'll get it even if they do.

## Catch-22?

COUNCILLOR J. CARROLL on rehousing: "It has always been our policy to try and keep people in the same area, but they must appreciate they are the ones who have to be moved out ..." (A prize for the first correct solution)