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Number 59 - 26 Feb 77 - Fortnightly



Nottingham Voice

ROGER DILKS, a well-known local landlord, is having legal troubles. A tenant in one of his houses, David Birley, who was moved out of his room at 14 Regent Street into a windowless garret applied to the County Court on the 18th February for an injunction against Dilks. This would have required Dilks to return him to the original room.

Dilks' solicitor claimed in court that Dilks was only the freehold owner of the property which was, in fact, leased to a Mr Eddishaw. This was despite the fact that one of Mr Birley's rent receipts was signed by the rent collector on behalf of Mr Dilks.

It was also said that Dilks had no control of the property. Because of this the court was unable to grant an injunction. The case will be resumed in a few weeks time. The point at issue is, of course, who is the landlord and who the injunction could be taken out against.

But Mr Birley is not only asking for damages against the landlord (whoever he may be) but also a declaration that he is a protected tenant under the Rent Acts.

If he is, he will be able to apply for a "fair rent" to be fixed without fear of eviction - one of the main provisions of the Rent Acts is that protected tenants can only be evicted if they have been served with a four weeks notice to quit and the landlord can prove in court that the tenant is a "bad" tenant.

If Mr Birley wins this case it could affect all similar multi-occupied houses throughout Nottingham.

A Voice reporter met Colin Eddishaw at 14 Regent Street on the evening after the court hearing. It's a shame we cannot go into the details that emerged from this meeting for fear of prejudicing the outstanding court hearing. But we can give

details of a couple of previous problems concerning Roger Dilks.

In Autumn last year a tenant in another Dilks' house, 403 Nottingham Road, approached the People's Centre for help because the Electricity Board was about to cut off the supply. The tenant claimed that all the tenants in the house had their own slot meters - so they had already paid for electricity used. The unpaid account was in the name of Brian Eddishaw who was described as the landlord's agent.

Mr Eddishaw had not been able to pay the bill, he said, because Mr Dilks had not given him enough money.

Why the confusion? The system is simple. One of the tenants in each of these multi-occupied houses is made the "manager" for the house. He then provides the other tenants with an evening meal. This is vital because where meals are being provided tenants are not protected tenants under the Rent Acts. They could not have a fair rent fixed, for example.

The manager can also collect rents and sign for the electricity supply. The Electricity Board then often has difficulty in getting payment - particularly where the managers have moved elsewhere. The Electricity Board decided to disconnect the supply to a number of Dilks' houses unless Dilks himself signed for, and was solely responsible for, the supply.

The fact that these tenants cannot ask for a fair rent can be

a serious problem for them. Earlier last year some tenants from another Dilks' house, 46 Castle Boulevard, approached the People's Centre for help. They were paying £12 per week for a room and an evening meal. These tenants were receiving Supplementary Benefit and were only being allowed £5 per week for rent. The Department of Health and Social Security can reduce the amount allowed for rent (normally paid in full) where it considers the rent being paid is excessive. As a result the tenants could not afford to pay the rent and Dilks was threatening them with eviction.

John Turland, who claimed to be the secretary of the Private Landlords Association, said that the PLA had intervened to prevent these evictions because it would give landlords a bad name! The PLA is a highly secretive organisation, but rumour has it that Dilks is a member - possibly the Chairman.

It was this benevolent organisation which last year threatened to take "action" against Rent Officers if they didn't start fixing higher rents. They have also said that they will try and prevent Environmental Health Officers from entering their properties. This paranoia is believed to be a result of the survey that the Environmental Health Department is undertaking of all multi-occupied properties.

FOOTNOTE: Roger Dilks has now taken over the Abacus

Accommodation Agency on Mansfield Road - the only such agency in Nottingham. People desperate for somewhere to live are frequently directed by Abacus to Dilks' houses.

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IN VOICE 58 we said that community groups in Nottingham were angry at the shabby treatment they got from a secret City Council sub-committee which turned down all their applications for money under the Government's Urban Aid scheme. Now they are even angrier because the Council's Finance Committee on February 15 upheld this decision.

Fifty people from a dozen groups assembled with placards on the Council House steps before the meeting to lobby the councillors. They asked Bill Bradbury, committee chairman, and Jack Green, Tory leader, to come out to speak to them. Both refused. Instead they said that four representatives could go in to see them. This was not acceptable to the voluntary groups because there were many different projects involved.

Many of them went into the meeting. And what a farce it was. Tory Councillor Margaret Crowe said that the weather hadn't been good enough for them to go round and see adventure playgrounds (they have been in office since last May) so they couldn't give any backing to adventure playgrounds. Seven such projects were turned down.

Jack Green said voluntary

groups shouldn't want to employ people (he didn't say how adventure playgrounds should be supervised). Labour leader John Carroll said that as far as he knew there was £130,000 available for such projects (it seems that the Tories have spent this on the Theatre Royal).

When all the applications had been turned down Mel Russell, a Clifton community worker, got up and pointed out that £6,000 had already been spent on fencing a site at Clifton and that now there was nothing they could do with it. He hoped that the committee would take immediate responsibility for it. He was listened to in shamed silence.

A dozen of the twenty-seven groups have now formed an Urban Aid Fightback Group. They intend to send all the applications to the Home Office as a protest. And they intend to write to Environment Minister, Peter Shore, to tell him to put his money where his mouth is and do something about "inner-city stress" in Nottingham by backing their projects.

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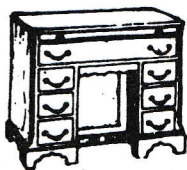
AN INTERESTING little public notice was tucked away in the ads column of the Post on Friday, 11th February. Just in case you missed it, one Narinder Singh of 36 Bute Avenue, Lenton Sands, is changing his name to Narinder Singh Johal.

All tenants of this benevolent Sikh and his affable offspring

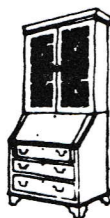
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should take careful note for in the future it will take even longer for a response to requests for rent books and repairs. His new address is V. Anher, P.O. Bara, Pind District, Jullundur, East Punjab, India.

It seems that the old man is finally relinquishing his substantial property interests to his lads - well known to generations of Lenton tenants - and spending a well-earned retirement away from the cares of being in the landlord business. After thirty years hard graft, we wish him well.

(Ed. Cheques should still be made out to the Swiss bank account.)

Ford hands over gun

PRESIDENT Carter, who insists on carrying his own luggage, wanted to carry a gun aboard the "Doomsday" plane but was talked out of it, sources said today.

Evening Post, February 14.

AND IT CAME to pass that the wickedness of the people of the land of Nott-en-Gham was brought to the attention of the Lord, and he was displeased. "My word!" he verily said unto St. Peter "Look at this little lot. Worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. Worse even than Oldham. They need taking down a peg or two. See to it would you? And by the way, see if you can find out what

they actually did in Gomorrah, would you? Gomorrahy?"

And thus, moving in his usual mysterious way, did the Lord cause an second flood to be visited on the people of Nott-en-Gham, the children of Green.

And a mighty wailing and gnashing of teeth arose from the menfolk and their womenfolk, and from the babes and elders rose a wailing and gnashing of gums.

And they spake unto each other saying, let us slay a scapegoat in sacrifice unto Dennis How-ell, the god of drought.

And Dun-et, an exceeding elder spake unto the mob saying "Hearken unto me, O mob. Truly I say unto you that the scapegoat ye seek is, by coincidence, none other than mine professional rival, Kluf." And the people looked at each other saying "The old fool, lost his marbles at last. What madness is this? Who is this Kluf of whom he speaks?"

And Dun-et spake loudly saying "Kluf of the Forest." And the people looked at each other saying "Oh, him again."

And Dun-et spake again saying "The demigods and heros of Dar-by Count-y have cursed the name of Kluf, yea, even unto conjouring a flood to drown him and wash away his place of work. My salvage tender shall be the lowest."

But the mob hearkened not to his pleas and slew him instead, even in the stead of Kluf. And within a week the flood had gone - thus proving something.

P. J. GROB WORTH

EVEN IF THE TORIES assume control at County Hall after the May 5 elections there is every indication that relations with their fellow City politicians will not be all true-blue harmony.

A clue to the way the wind is blowing was given by Tory finance spokesman Michael Spungin in his budget speech.

The normal pre-election gambits were used: a plea to Labour not to undertake major new works in the run-up to the elections, and an undertaking to their followers to re-write those parts of the Labour programme which are anathema to them. And that, incidentally, seems to mean most things that contribute to life's enrichment - "Reels on wheels" travelling cinema, support for the arts and sport, leisure centres, library services, consumer advice centres, and even an expansion of the rightly-vaunted nursery education programme.

What was more ominously significant was Spungin's promise to think again about even legally-binding contractual commitments undertaken in the next ten weeks. That puts, in effect, an embargo on all new projects and all new employment. To do this, according to Spungin, would mean assessing whether it would be cheaper in terms of ratepayers' money to break contracts rather than go on with them.

And the Labour majority's plans to introduce Nottingham's orbital bus routes, aimed at providing better services through suburban areas to shops and

workplaces, will fall foul of the Tories' contract-breaking pledge.

Even the City Conservatives, it appears, cannot get a straight answer out of their allies across the flood-waters.

Finance chairman Bill Bradbury was apparently happy with the financial arrangements for the new services after a meeting with County leader Dick Wilson and environment chief Frank Higgins. It is the County who will have to foot the bill, as they did for "park and ride". They thrashed out the prospect of a 12-month notice clause as a safeguard for the City's transport planners.

But the County Tories would not wear this. They seem misguidedly worried that if the buses run before the election - Labour wanted them on the roads in April - that they could win the socialists' valuable votes.

Even the City's Tory leader Jack Green admitted ruefully last week that they had been unable to get their County comrades to act honourably.

So in the end it was left to ineffectual transport chairman Jim Broughton, along with a sub-committee, to carry on with their review of all City services, including orbitals. But that report, of course, is unlikely to be seen before the elections.

John Carroll, who at last week's transport-finance meeting alone stood out for the agreement which the City had negotiated with Wilson and Higgins, probably got nearer the truth than anyone.

Both County Council political groups have turned their covetous eyes on City Transport. If there is another local government shake-up, or at least some change in the different tiers' responsibilities they would dearly love to take over the buses.

Is their ultimate ego-trip to have that silly "N" with the fungus growing up the middle plastered on the sides of every City bus?

DURING what will probably be his County Hall swansong, Nottinghamshire's Iron Chancellor Michael Cowan could not resist the temptation of his favourite new blood sport - Bird-baiting.

While he awaits the call to Westminster care of the Ashfield voters, Cowan kindly gave Tory group leader Peter Wright the benefit of his "advice".

Herbert "political thug" Bird, already the Conservatives' deputy leader, had his eyes firmly on the leadership. And Michael Spungin had better watch out as well; his position of finance spokesman/finance chairman could be put on the skids.

All credit to him for turning the knife in festering wounds. But we experienced Bird-watchers can claim smug "told-you-so" credit for seeing this months ago.

Perhaps Michael can't afford new copies of the Voice - he lives as a full-time Chairman on his councillor's allowances. Info on where he gets the back copies will be rewarded in the

usual confidential way.

However, tributes where they're due chaps. Cowan's masterful summing up at the close of the budget debate last week - 45 minutes with scarcely a faltering word - shows how much he will be missed from the local political arena.

Only time will tell if his Cabinet ambitions/potential come good.



HATS OFF TO Rushcliffe Borough Council. On February 24th they wrote a letter to Harry Ball and a dozen other people who had dug summer wells on their allotments on Ladybay's Trent fields to say that for safety purposes "all wells must be filled in immediately".

However, the Council undertook to see that water was made available "before the summer". Harry received his letter at 8am on Saturday the 26th and at 11am he went down to his allotment to find it under three feet of water.

"They might not move themselves very often," said Harry, "but they move bloody fast when they do."

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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CO-OPERATION between a tenants association and a Housing Association looks like producing a happy ending for the tenants of about twenty houses next to All Saints Terrace in the Raleigh Street area.

This small triangle of houses is owned by the Church and managed by Walker, Walton and Hanson. The tenants say the houses are in a very poor state of repair. So they were forced to serve compulsory improvement notices on the owners.

Canon Michael Jackson, who owns half of the houses on behalf of the Church, agreed that the houses had been allowed to deteriorate under Church ownership and that something should be done about it. He said the problem had been caused by the uncertainty, over the last few years, of Council policy towards the houses. But it is apparent from the tenants' report that in many cases not even basic repairs have been done.

The tenants brought in professionals to explain what could be done and how much it would cost. And they had discussions with the Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA) who told them that they could have full improvement done speedily with tenants involved at all stages in the plans - and tenant management of the repairs budget if they wished. In fact, NCHA suggested the tenants set up a tenants cooperative so they would have complete control of the houses - but this was more than the tenants wanted.

There was no objection from Michael Jackson - the Church couldn't afford to improve the houses properly so the only way to get a good deal for the tenants was to sell to the Council or a Housing Association.

NCHA asked the Housing Corporation (the government body that gives away money to Housing Associations) to "register their interest" in the All Saints area. Imagine the surprise of all concerned when they found that another Housing Association - Bridge - had already registered an interest! To answer how this happened you would have to know that one of the Bridge committee, Roger Freeston, is also a partner of Walker, Walton and Hanson. What could be more convenient, one asks, than for Bridge Housing Association to buy the houses and leave the management in the hands of Walker, Walton and Hanson?

But the tenants had had enough of agents - in particular WWH - and NCHA had promised them that they would not deal through agents. They insisted that the houses be sold to Nottingham Community Housing Association and this is what will now happen. So everyone should be happy - except Walker, Walton and Hanson.

"YOUR HOUSES . . . OUR HOMES" - a report to the landlord and the Church Commissioners by the All Saints Tenants Association. Price 15p from the tenants or from 118 Mansfield Rd.

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RENT ACTS

THE GOVERNMENT is reviewing the operation of the Rent Acts. It will be looking particularly at why many flats and houses are being left unlet (landlords claim that it is because of the "fair rent" system and the security of tenure given to tenants).

The People's Centre is preparing evidence to send to the Government. Anyone interested (a copy of the Government's consultative document is available in the Centre) or wishing to contribute should contact Fred Broad, 33 Mansfield Road or telephone 411676.



LABOUR councillor Michael Cowan's recent appearance on Radio Nottingham was noteworthy for the lack of a Conservative spokesman to oppose him.

The "Ring for Service" phone-in on 15th February was about the rates and both Labour and Tory spokesmen were invited along. This opportunity for publicity was eagerly seized by Cowan (Parliamentary candidate in the forthcoming Ashfield by-election) but not by the Tories who agreed to appear initially and then withdrew at the last moment.

Tory spokesman Peter Wright told the Voice that this was because they didn't wish to divulge their plans for the rates prematurely. This feeble excuse is thought to be no more than a cover for the fact that the only

Conservative councillor (Cllr Spungin) capable of holding his own in a discussion with the rather well-informed Cowan happened to be out of town on the day.



SOME CITY libraries are having problems with young teenagers. The problem is not in attracting them but in getting rid of them.

It seems that because they have nowhere else to go they are using libraries as meeting places. This has resulted in bad language, noise and very bad behaviour towards staff - according to Wyndham Heycock, Director of County Leisure Services.

In one case a library book was urinated on - or, as Mr Heycock put it, "A number of libraries have been very concerned with the activities of a relatively large number of youngsters using the libraries for non-library purposes".

About ten libraries are affected, the worst being at Bilborough and Strelley. Clifton library has had trouble but this is improving, perhaps owing to the influence of a new youth leader in the area.

Some librarians have been taking youth leadership courses to learn how to deal with the new threat, and Mr Heycock has even asked for help from the Nottingham Areas "anti-delinquency"

Project. But it seems that there is very little money available for providing youth facilities which Mr Heycock claims the Social Services Department or the City Leisure Services Department should provide.



CO-OP FOLK CLUB

THINKING that it was about time that the Voice paid a visit to one of the fair city's great institutions, Sunday, 6th February, saw a Voice reporter at the Co-op Folk Club.

At present at the Crown Hotel, Western Boulevard (junction with Ilkeston Road), the club has survived eighteen years in one guise or another when all around clubs and fashions have waxed and waned.

An all ticket affair this, so with a fair pint of Home's in one hand and a crumpled ticket in the other your intrepid reporter was squeezed into a smoky room with about 100 other like-minded souls.

Singers came and went: Barry Swan with contemporary songs, Hugh Barwell with humorous ditties, Gren Blatherwick with character and humour, and finally Haydn Taylor with a fine rendering of the cynical anti-war song "Jimmy Clay". A short intermission followed, complete with further alcoholic fortification.

The second half opened with the remnants of that fine local band "Swelkie" playing good rousing Irish tunes which set feet

thundering in time, yet also finding time to give a quiet rendering of Ewan McColl's "Schooldays over" with Steve Whiteley taking vocal honours. It is to be regretted that the group broke up after giving such a storming support to the Bothy Band last year at the Playhouse. Julie Fox sang some fine songs and Al Atkinson led up to the guest spot with stylish Irish balladry.

Following the raffle of a six foot Tibetan flute (honest!), the guest Paul Brady took the floor. An excellent guitarist in a curiously traditional style, he sang well and played mandolin and bouzouki with skill.

Songs ranged in subject matter from emigration and soldiers' livelihoods to an hilarious take-off of the early 60s blues revivalists. A longish set, but absolutely riveting and he encored with an overtly political song written in the last century calling for a united Ireland.

A really great club with entertaining singers and a genuinely humorous and competent MC in Bob Proctor. The only reservations were the lack of breathing space and a lot of talking and wandering about between songs. Well worth the money on any night and especially when there's a good guest.

A NEW CLUB, run by many of the singers from the Co-op club, is opening on the 26th February at the Victoria Hotel, Dovecote Lane, Beeston. Should be well worth a visit too!

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