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Nottingham Voice

SOME COUNCIL TENANTS have been puzzled recently by the City Council's response to requests for transfers to other council houses. In the past, transfers were generally available. But letters now being sent out from the Housing Department state that they are unable to consider requests from families without children because of the "Rulings of the Housing Committee".

This change of policy is a result of the Tory Council's belief in keeping the rates down at all costs. Transfers cost money - both in terms of officials to run the system and because empty council houses mean a loss of rent.

The Tories are cutting back on the numbers of officials available for such boring matters as transfers - an item which was discussed at the Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee. Of course this is really a matter of housing policy which should properly be discussed at the Housing Committee.

So why do the Tories opt to push such a matter through a sub-committee? It couldn't be because sub-committees are not open to either press or public whereas all full committee meetings have to be by law?

Similarly the Tories on the Housing Committee (10th March) are showing a fine regard for democratic procedures. When the committee reached the item "Hyson Green Housing Development - Decanting of families with children" they voted immediately, while Cllr Ben Allsop (who had specifically asked for the item to be put on the agenda) was still asking if he might speak.

Everyone knows that the Hyson Green flats are totally unsuitable for families with children and the Tories are no doubt afraid that policies might be suggested for allowing transfers of such tenants as has

happened in other high rise developments.

At the same meeting, Tory chairman Charles Borrett was forced to go back on a pledge he gave to tenants at Balloon Wood. He had told them that the Housing Committee would go to inspect the flats following the tenants' report to the previous Housing Committee, which showed that the flats were in a state of decay. The Tory group on the committee, led by Ted Hickey, refused to do this, and refused to back the tenants' request to use one of the flats as an information centre and "thrift shop" to provide supplies for repairs which the Council refuses to do.

This decision was made in secret by the Tory group and Fuhrer Hickey refused to give any reason for forcing Borrett to back down on his pledge. He said afterwards "I did what I was democratically entitled to do".

This cavalier attitude to the spirit of democratic procedures makes a mockery of their hysteria over trots in the Labour Party, reds under the beds, Marxists in the . . . etc. It could help to explain why certain Labour councillors were muttering "bloody fascists" as they emerged from the meeting.

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A LOCAL LANDLORD who cheated on a Council mortgage is now having to evict thirteen innocent tenants. He is Brian Eddishaw - whose problems with the Electricity Board we mentioned in

Voice 59. Eddishaw obtained a Council mortgage for 21 Langtry Grove, New Basford, and proceeded to let out all the rooms separately. As far as we can find out he hasn't lived there for over a year. And no-one knows where he does live. In spite of the fact that he was getting about £50 rent per week from the house he got into arrears with his mortgage repayments! The Council eventually caught up with him.

Council mortgages are only granted to owner occupiers who are not allowed to sublet. Brian Eddishaw broke both these conditions. He has also added extensions to the house without permission.

The Council took him to court on December 8th and obtained an order for him and thirteen named residents to be out by April 8th. He also has to pay £57 costs.

But what will happen now? City Secretary, Marcus Wakely, will personally review the situation at the end of March. And it seems that if all the illegal sub-tenants have left and Mr Eddishaw pays off his arrears and promises to be a good boy in future he may be allowed to keep the property.

Radford Councillor, Ben Allsop, has been helping some of the tenants. He accuses Eddishaw of Rachmanism and "making money out of other people's misery". He is totally opposed to the idea of the Council letting Eddishaw keep his mortgage and suspects that he will divide the

house into three flats if he is allowed to stay. Unfortunately, Councillor Allsop is likely to cease being a councillor shortly as we report elsewhere, and he will not be able to exert much pressure to get rid of Eddishaw.

Most of the tenants have gone. Some have been rehoused by Mr Eddishaw but the Council has had to find places for some to prevent them becoming homeless. Mr Eddishaw gave the remaining tenants until the end of February to get out. This ultimatum is not legal because the Court gave everyone until 8th April. Mr Rhodes, the City's Tenancy Relations Officer, has had to warn Eddishaw not to evict people illegally.

One of Mr Eddishaw's remaining tenants spoke to us because he feared that he might shortly become homeless. A number of interesting points about his tenancy emerged. Firstly, he had to pay Abacus Accommodation Agency a £7 "introduction fee". Then, before he moved in to his attic room just over a year ago, he had to pay a deposit of "a month's rent in advance" - £26 - and started paying his weekly rent immediately as well. As far as he knows, no-one has received a deposit back when they left.

And, he says, he has to pay double for electricity - he has to pay money into his own sub-meter and also pay 50 pences into the Electricity Board meter for the whole house.

We would like to know just

who Brian Eddishaw is and where he lives. And we would like to know why the Council is seriously thinking of allowing him to keep the mortgage even though they know he hasn't lived in the house for over a year. We would also suggest that they ask the police to investigate whether they should bring a charge of fraud against him.



VOICE READERS will be familiar with our prediction that Herbert Bird would shortly be taking over as Tory leader on the County Council. Events are moving even faster than we predicted. When we phoned recently and asked to speak to Peter Wright, the current Tory leader, we were told "You'd better speak to Herbert Bird".



THE PEOPLE'S CENTRE, an independent local advice agency, has just completed a month's campaign on rent and rate rebates. As part of this campaign a P.C. researcher visited the main advice agencies in the City to see what sort of help people were getting.

The City Council's Information Bureau on Milton Street had the rebate forms but did not know which was the correct one (there are three different forms for different circumstances). They directed the applicant to

the Treasurer's office in the Guildhall.

At the Housing office in King Street he had to wait for an hour before being told shortly and officiously that they didn't have the forms and he was sent to the Treasurer's office.

The Citizens Advice Bureau on Standard Hill was friendly but gave the wrong information sending the applicant to the Rent Officer and the Housing Advice Centre. But he was given the correct information leaflets. The Voice contacted the new Organiser at the CAB, Sid Morgan, who did not know what the correct advice would be. (Mr Morgan is an ex-employee of the Evening Post and would not tell us whether he had any welfare rights experience.)

Both the Housing Advice Centre and the "Rent Officer" were helpful and directed the applicant to the Treasurer's office.

At the City Treasurer's the People's Centre's researcher had to wait an hour at the enquiry counter. He was then given the correct form and told to fill it in and bring it back with his rent book. He says that while he was waiting several people left before reaching the counter and most people became upset and irritable due to the disorganisation and officious attitude.

Is it any wonder that so few people apply for rebates?

The People's Centre also circulated all the local district councils a month ago asking them what their policy is on rent and

rate rebates. Nottingham City Council has not yet answered.



ENTERTAINMENTS:

The Playhouse

THE CHERRY ORCHARD is alive . . . but the human beings around it are dead, empty, and, above all, comical. The land-owners cannot understand their poverty and why ex-serfs now buy them out and chop the orchard down. Doom lies beneath the merriment of their dances. Chekhov's pre-revolutionary Russian society is dead from the wallet upwards.

This is a modernist version by Trevor Griffiths, directed, in Lancashire accents, by Richard Eyre. Sets, as always, superb. But why does the Playhouse reduce everything to common denominators - perm any combination from Brian Glover as domineering, red-faced "character", Malcolm Storry as heavily-scented, randy "foreigner", Mick Scott as earnest, nervous young man, Anthony Sher as slapstick comedian, and you have the "Playhouse play" - "Hobson's Choice", "Knickers", "A Flea in her Ear", and now "The Cherry Orchard". Midas produced gold, the "Playhouse touch" brings, all too often, only typecasting and mediocrity.

"The Cherry Orchard" is enjoyable, is worth going to see, is treated in a refreshingly different way - but it could have been better.

EUOPRATS

THE EUOPRATS have struck again. After the butter mountain and wine lake, we now have a cream swamp.

There are only three solutions to this problem:

- A) pay the Russians to take it away;
- B) lower the price of cream, or give it away to OAPs, for example;
- C) illegalise the use of the word "cream" in foodstuffs (eg Cream Crackers) unless genuine cream has been used in the preparation - thereby encouraging the use of real cream.

No prizes to guess the one they picked. Option A) is favourite, but politically prickly - so it has to be option C).

No more Ice Cream for jun-

ior - it'll be "Iced Mixed Fats"; Cream Soda? No, sorry - "Carbonated Sugar Solution" (or possibly Double Diamond). And of course Cream Biscuits will become "Homogenised Grease Biscuits".

We pay these fools a lot of money - why doesn't someone introduce them to simple linguistics? A word's meaning is defined by its accepted usage - and the word "cream" no longer simply means "milk solids".

If they are to continue this moronic trend can we expect to say goodbye to Savoy cabbages (if grown outside Savoy), Hamburgers (if grown outside Hamburg) and French letters?

God alone knows what they'll do with Bubble and Squeak and

(continued on back page)

FACT

**MOST FAMILIES IN NOTTINGHAM
FIND CO-OP MEMBERSHIP PAYS
SHOPS EVERYWHERE · KEEN PRICES & CO-OP STAMPS
JOIN NOW AND SAVE AS YOU SPEND**

**APPLICATION FORMS IN ALL SHOPS OR FROM
GREATER NOTTINGHAM CO-OPERATIVE
SOCIETY, PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPT.,
14, BROAD ST. NOTTINGHAM. TEL: 46094**



AT THE UNIVERSITY Students Union presidential elections all the candidates were anxious to tell people that "they did not have any political convictions that would get in the way of the job". The fact that one John Taylor was elected is, perhaps, an indication that a candidate's initials were as good a guide as any to his qualities; for his opponents were Butcher and Biles and the previous presidents were Bayliss and Bayles. But his promise to improve catering for the sports clubs might have swung it!

The students' toytown politics have also risen to new heights in their column in the Post.

With stunning perception, the column recently cited "popular election" as the cause of left wing infiltration. This devious ploy, it is explained, is carried out by having a secret ballot at which everyone may vote! (Whatever will these Trots think of next.) This piece of nonsense was written by their Public Relations Officer and is expected to contribute to "the increase in respect for student opinion" that is claimed.

All this greasing up to "public opinion" in the Post and at the University indicates the general weak mindedness of student politics. The apologetic approach has been followed for three years since the moderate under graduates threw out a sit-in. Their only sensible idea is that negotiation is better than confrontation, the only trouble

being that the Union can never negotiate on equal terms.

The last report of the 74/5 President made this clear in a bitterly disillusioned attack on the University's cynical attitude. This "discovery" by a Conservative committee man is supported by a multitude of cases, the most obvious of which is their inability to centralise the administration of the halls. This would save thousands of pounds but is totally opposed by the wardens who still fight to retain engraved cutlery.

No change is possible while the moderates continue to reject such worldly issues as education cuts and fee increases in favour of beer gut philosophy. The situation is not helped by the idiot left, preaching joyless and antique versions of Marxism with uninformed sincerity while better arguments are to hand. Most students owe their places and their grants to radical action by others who sought free, and freely available, higher education. Those now cushioned by grants and regular feeding times can be shown that they owe more to that tradition than a single minded pursuit of status and paper qualifications.



THE CITY Housing Department is having difficulty understanding Department of the Environment arithmetic. The DoE figures for homelessness in the second half of 1975 show that in Nottingham

133 out of 299 applications for help were accepted while in the whole county including Nottingham 295 out of 434 applications were accepted. Some whizz-kid in the Housing Department has deduced that this means that the City rejected more applications than the whole of the County including the City (could it be that some homeless people have a negative attitude to their plight?). The whizz-kid also couldn't understand how out of 295 people in the county accepted as being homeless, 314 were permanently rehoused. The DoE is to be asked what it is talking about.



THE NEWLY FORMED Urban Aid Fightback Group has been very active over the past week. This group represents all the voluntary groups who the City Council refused to support for Urban Aid grants from the Government.

They have sent all the rejected projects to the Home Office and to Peter Shore, Secretary of State for the Environment, as we reported in Voice 59, asking for financial support. They also sent a copy of an article about the Basford, Forest Fields, Radford area which appeared recently in the Times. This showed that nearly half of the households had no-one in employment and said that unless something was done, Nottingham could become the Glasgow of the Midlands. They have asked local MP, Michael English, to follow it up for them,

and sent details to the other MPs, Bill Whitlock and Jack Dunnett.

They offered to take councillors on a guided tour of adventure playgrounds (with wellies and waterproofs provided) so they could see what was needed. This offer was very rapidly turned down, but even Tory Councillor Margaret Crowe says they will be going round adventure playgrounds at the end of March.

Now they have written to Councillor Bradbury, chairman of the City Finance Committee, asking him what has happened to over £100,000 which was budgeted for Urban Aid projects last April and never used for this purpose.

They are also asking why the £2,830,000 in capital receipts which the City has can not be used for capital projects like community centres and adventure playgrounds and whether it could be used to divert other money to the voluntary groups who really need it.

And they have invited councillors to come and discuss the problems that voluntary groups face. There is a motion supporting this before the City Council on Monday 14th March.



EX-LABOUR Housing Chairman, Bert Littlewood's latest crazy scheme concerns homeless families. Instead of putting them in "short-life houses" - normally demolition houses with one or

two years life - he says they should go into empty council houses awaiting sale or letting. This would presumably mean that people on the waiting list would have to be offered houses with somebody living in them. What would they do while waiting for these "homeless" families to be moved on? Perhaps they could report to the Homeless Families Officer and spend a couple of weeks in bed and breakfast accommodation. We trust that the City Council will not approve Councillor Littlewood's brainwave.



OBITUARY - it is with regret that we report that Ben Allsop's time as a councillor will shortly come to an end. His legal battle with one-time feather weight champion of Nottingham (OAP division), Gerry Elliott, ends on Tuesday 15th March in the High Court. Elliott has been claiming that he should have got more votes than Allsop in the Radford Ward election last year even though the Returning Officer said he didn't. (Some of the ballot papers were unfranked.) Allsop, not surprisingly, doesn't agree. But he says he can't afford to fight the case in the High Court (it might cost £5,000) so he has reluctantly agreed to a bye-election. And with the present standing of the Labour Government coupled with Gerry Elliott's undoubted "charm", it could be a bye-bye election for

Ben Allsop after such a short and uneventful career.



SO THE TORIES, if they win control of County Hall in May, are going to save money by chopping, amongst other things, price surveys. Just how much are they going to save on this? The answer is - precisely nothing. All of the money for these surveys comes from the Government.

And just how pleased are HMG about all the money they will be saved? They say in a recent circular: "The Government are anxious that price comparison work should continue . . .". When we phoned the ludicrous Tories at County Hall for a comment we were told that the only person who knew anything about it was the even more ludicrous Herbert Bird in Gedling. He was away on a jaunt to Southampton and was not available to comment.



ADVERT - Desirable Balloon Wood maisonettes for sale. All mod. cons - running water (in all rooms), ventilation more than adequate. Handily situated between Nottingham and Ilkeston. Not far from shops. Adequate playspace only 20 yards from front door (vertically). Any offer considered. Bradbury, Borrett and Green, Estate Agents, Council House, Nottingham (44331).

PORTLAND ARMS

PORTLAND ROAD, NOTTINGHAM

BEST KIMBERLEY ALE
COOL GUINNESS & LAGER
CHIP BUTTIES
BACON COBS & SOUP
JUKE BOX
POOL TABLE
FRUIT MACHINES

RUGBY PLAYERS WELCOME

Dear Voice,

I was interested to read the article on Roger Dilks in Nottingham Voice as I also had dealings with Dilks last October. I came up to Nottingham in late September to look for accommodation and answered an advert in the Post. On arriving at the property, I was shown a room about 9'x12' with broken plaster-work walls covered in toilet-like graffiti and no furniture. This, I was told, would be £8.50 per week.

After turning this down I was taken to a slightly better room in another house in Cedar Road. As I knew of the difficulties of finding accommodation in Nottingham I took the room, paying £17 including a deposit. There was no lock on the door but I was told by the Mr Dilks showing me the room that a lock would be put in and furniture to my stipulation provided before I moved in the following week.

When I arrived the following week the room was in the same condition. Some days after this first visit, following daily phone calls, a hole had been drilled for the lock but no barrel was put in. On phoning the number I had, I was told the workman had "unfortunately become deceased" while fitting the lock.

I found the address corresponding to the phone number in the directory and upon arriving there I met a Mr Roger Dilks who said that he had a younger brother to whom he had recently sold the Cedar Road property, and he himself was no longer in

the accommodation business. He said his brother lived in Mansfield and he couldn't give me his address. It took another half dozen visits over two weeks to Cedar Road or to Roger Dilks' home just to get a lock fitted. As I still had no key to the house and no furniture in the room I decided not to move in to the room and started trying to get my money back.

To do this I had to contact the City's Tenancy Relations Officer, Mr Rhodes, who put some pressure on Mr Roger Dilks who, it turned out, was the actual landlord. But it still took a lot more leg work and phone calls before I eventually had my money returned.

Yours,
M. Henderson,
23 Albert Grove,
Nottingham.



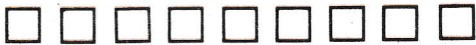
A NATIONAL conference of tenants' organisations is to be held in London on 30th April. The conference is open to any tenants' association or federation of groups. The conference will discuss problems relating to public expenditure cuts and standards of housing, a proposed National Charter of Tenants' Rights, and the general problems of organisation (should there be

a national organisation, for example).

The conference is specially aimed at organisations of council and housing association tenants but organisations from the private sector are also welcome.

It is being organised by a group of tenants from different parts of the country and is sponsored by the National Consumer Council. There is no conference fee and the NCC will pay for travelling costs above £5. Each tenants' association can send one delegate and federations or groups up to three delegates.

Further information from Tenants Conference, c/o Rachel Peto, NCC, 18 Queen Ann's Gate, London SW1H 9AA (01-930 5752).



IN VOICE 58 we reported that 51 council tenants were facing imminent eviction. Following our special supplement in that issue, which gave details of nine of these cases where children were involved, all of the cases were referred to a three man sub-committee.

Since then, the sub-committee has given the go-ahead to evict in all cases except three if necessary. Two of the exceptions followed information given by the Voice - in one the arrears had been paid, and in the other the tenant had left. The other exception was because

a tenant at Balloon Wood was complaining about the condition of the flat.

The really depressing news is that warrants have already been applied for asking for bailiffs to evict in 28 cases involving a total of 16 children. But, surprise, surprise, no warrants have yet been applied for in any case where Notting-ham Voice supplied details (though a warrant has been applied for in one case where the Voice visited while the tenant was out and we were not able to provide any information). This raises serious doubts about the information available to the committee in the other cases.

One of these tenants came to see the Voice after a warrant had been applied for. She explained that she had been asking Social Security for several months to pay her rent direct without any success. The City Treasury told us that her Social Security office had told them that she was not on their files! We had to write a letter for her to Social Security and now have assurances that rent direct payments will be made and she will not be evicted. How many more people are being evicted because of incompetence in Social Security offices? We have no way of telling.

Until people facing eviction are asked to present their case to the sub-committee and advised to seek assistance in this from somewhere like the People's Centre, this sort of maladministration will continue unchecked.

STOP PRESS - Mon 14th

STUDENTS from Trent Polytechnic Fine Art Department and others have been occupying the administration block in Bonington building on Dryden Street since Friday. The occupation is backed by the Union Executive but the Union President, Norman Draper, is opposed to it. He told the Poly Director, Ron Hedley, that he dissociated himself from the Executive backing and he tried to prevent the occupation from using Union facilities - duplicating, etc - over the weekend. But he was forced to back down by Executive members supporting the occupation.

Hedley has been trying to split the students. He closed down the libraries over the weekend even though many students have exams coming up shortly - a spokesman said they were afraid that the libraries may be "occupied" by students.

The occupation is about two things; public spending cuts and academic democracy. It started on Friday with demands from the students in the Fine Art Department for a Departmental Council composed of all staff and students - participatory democracy instead of the present "democratic" sham with students having only one or two representatives on decision making bodies.

The issues very rapidly widened to include opposition to public spending cuts and increases in tuition fees. The occupying students have had talks with the three main unions represented in the Department and claim informal support from all of them. These

are NATFHE (higher education teachers), NUPE (public employees), and NALGO (government officers). The students intend to contact other unions including the National Union of Teachers and the Transport and General Workers and they are working hard to persuade all students in the Poly to back them.

There is to be a General Meeting on Thursday afternoon at Clifton asking for the Union to extend the occupation to the rest of the Poly. Education students at Clifton occupied last year against the cuts in teacher employment, and since many students will have been starting to get their rejection slips there could be a lot of support.

At an occupation meeting this morning nearly 300 students gave almost unanimous support on a show of hands. They were told that the occupation had received support from representatives of about forty other occupying colleges who were at a conference at Sussex at the weekend. But they were warned by a representative of CACTL (Campaign against a Criminal Trespass Law) that Parliament is about to pass legislation allowing police to break up occupations. He urged people to support the national demo against this in London on Sat March 19th (for details phone 708302).

(continued from page 5)

Toad-in-the-Hole (How many squeaks to the kilo? How big is a Eurobubble? "Is that with real toad, sir, or mock toad?").

It'd be laughable if it wasn't so pathetic.

P. J. GROB WORTH