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Nottingham Voice



PLANS FOR AN URBAN FARM in Nottingham took a severe, though not fatal, blow at the City's Policy and Resources Committee on March 22nd.

The "farm", which has already started on a site for education purposes, is situated in the Raleigh Street slum clearance area - designated by the planners as the most deprived area of Nottinghamshire.

But Tory councillors rejected an application for the use of land left derelict to run a farm for an experimental year. Unable to fall back on the usual excuse for throwing out any ideas for community initiatives not emanating from the Chamber of Commerce (the scheme will not cost the ratepayers a penny) the Tories floundered around for a decent reason.

The farm would attract vermin, said councillors. But the Raleigh Street Farm Committee point out that not only will it be in their interests to control vermin (to protect crops and livestock) but that it is the state the council normally leaves clearance areas in that attracts vermin.

The farm would lead to vandalism, parroted the Tories. "There's incredible support in the area," Ron Binstead told the Voice on behalf of the Farm Committee. "We've not had one instance of vandalism since we started. Anyway that's our problem, it won't affect anyone else."

It will cause damage to the area - claim. "We're not doing any damage at all - unless you can say we've damaged the council's heap of rubble" says Ron. "In fact we're salvaging plants and top soil that would otherwise be bulldozed. We've transplanted rhododendrons, for example, so we'll have mature plants later in the year."

Councillors are also worried that the land will not be available when needed for housing. But the farm organisers have already told the council that they will move

off as soon as contractors need access. "These are all things we've already answered", says Ron. "They just ignored our letter."

So, with luck, we will be treated to the sight of council bailiffs evicting savoy cabbages and spring onions from the present site before too long - an action which would precisely reflect their petty mindedness over the whole affair.

So what is the real reason that the Tories have turned down this rather nice idea. It could be because the farm's supporters had gained the backing of some Labour members and the Tories voted against it by reflex action.

Or perhaps the real reason was the one finally given. It would set a precedent, they said. Ah yes. Ordinary humble mortals actually aspiring to control - albeit for a short time - a little bit of land owned by the council.

Where would it end? Factory occupations? Rent strikes? Free vegetables for OAP's? Workers producing something they ended up owning? Anarchy would be loose upon Nottingham.

And it wouldn't be a moment too soon.



THERE IS TO BE a demonstration against the public expenditure cuts on Wednesday April 27th in Nottingham. This is part of a national campaign by NUPE, the National Union of Public Employees, whose members are suffering badly from public

expenditure cuts. There is to be a week of meetings and other action starting on April 25th backed by the local Trades Council and by many other unions, mainly from the public sector.

But Nottingham will not see as much action as many other areas in the East Midlands where NUPE has also called a one day strike on the 27th. NUPE in Nottingham is leaving it to individual branches to decide whether to stop work. And it looks as if none of the other unions will be calling their members out to support the demonstration.

But NUPE still expects a large demonstration, by Nottingham standards, and they will probably assemble at County Hall to lobby County Councillors who are busy taking the decisions to make their workers redundant. On the same day there will be a demonstration in Mansfield against the £1m cuts made by the Area Health Authority.

It all makes a welcome change from the usual pathetic May Day rally in Nottingham.



COMMUNITY TEACHERS in Nottinghamshire are worried about their prospects if the Tories are returned to the County Council in May. The Tories have said in their manifesto that they will "phase out the community teacher service".

Many people think that the work that community teachers do

- they provide a link between parents and the school by spending half their time teaching and half their time in the community - is invaluable. The Tory proposal is proving very unpopular not least amongst teachers.

The local NUT, the largest teachers union, has just passed a motion condemning the attitude taken by the Tories and stressing the value of community teachers.

But what exactly will the Tories do? Will they make any teachers redundant? Will they immediately take away community responsibility from these teachers and force them to teach 100%?

Or will they just wait for teachers to leave and not replace them?

Mrs Carol Minkley, a Tory

education spokesman, spoke to the Voice. And it was obvious that either she hadn't read the manifesto or she wanted to forget what it said. She praised the work that community teachers are doing and said the Tories had no intention of doing away with them. She even said that where a community teacher left he may well be replaced! All they wanted, she said, was for headteachers to promote people to community teachers from within the school rather than bringing in "outsiders" (all community teachers are qualified teachers with many years experience). She added that there would be no redundancies amongst teachers.

Tony Taylor, a spokesman for the NUT, doesn't believe

FACT

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Mrs Minkley. He bases his assessment on what the Tories say in their manifesto and their proposals last year for cuts in the Education budget. He says they wanted to cut £4m and this would have meant cutting 166 teachers. He said the NUT would oppose any redundancies or cuts in salary.

Roy Francis, county secretary of the NAS/UWT, the other large teachers union said his union would also oppose any action against community teachers. He stressed the valuable service they are giving to the parents, the schools, and the children.

So what is going on? Do the Tories genuinely not know what they are talking about? Or are they lying to defuse opposition to the obnoxious policies they will put into practice if elected? Our advice to community teachers is to vote Labour.



WE HEAR THAT Nottingham Young Socialists are being hammered. Two local Labour agents, Les Bridges and Roy Lakey, have both been busy trying to reduce the influence which Young Socialists have in the Labour Party.

The problem is that YS groups have representation in Labour Party constituencies based on their membership and there may be disagreement on what the actual membership is. It has been suggested that the North Nottingham YS group may

be disbanded unless it provides the party with a list of names and addresses.

All this probably has something to do with the promotion of Militant YS Andy Bevan to national Youth Officer against the wishes of the Labour agents who thought one of them should get the job. Now agents around the country are busy getting their own back on Young Socialists.

Meanwhile, it is rumoured that the Tories are out on the streets canvassing for the County Council elections in May.



NOTICE

There is to be a housing workshop on Sat April 2nd organised by the Nottingham Federation of Tenants Associations. The aim is to form an action committee which will fight housing cuts. For details contact Centre 118 (582369).

BAZAAR AND JUMBLE SALE

2.00pm EVERY SATURDAY

THE HYSON GREEN
COMMUNITY CENTRE
Gregory Boulevard
Hyson Green

ALL WELCOME

The following letter has been heavily cut for reasons of space:

Dear Voice,

I moved to Nottingham seven years ago and found a small terraced house in an improvement area one mile from the city centre to live in.

The house was well built and comfortable, the walls were soundproof unlike the modern house I had lived in before where we could hear the neighbours talking. It had thick walls and was well insulated by its neighbours and never got really cold even in winter.

The council gave me an improvement grant and I spent several hundred pounds on conversions.

The neighbours were friendly and sociable. There was a wide variety of shops, etc within a hundred yards. Three bus routes stopped 150 yards away. It was an ideal situation.

Later, when the neighbours moved into a larger house, I bought their house to give myself more room, and connected the two houses making them into one. The spare rooms I let to University students. The addition had no damp and had been maintained in excellent condition.

All was well until one day last summer when a man from the Council came and asked to inspect the place. He found one fault - a broken sash cord - and expressed his admiration for the conversions.

The shock came when I was to learn that my side of the

street was to become a possible clearance area. This would mean the displacement of 25-30 people from their homes, all of which were in good condition, capable of improvement, in spite of what the council may say. If the terrace is to be demolished, they would have to be rehoused at a cost of £30,000 or more and another piece of the community would be destroyed.

Obviously, all common sense in a Conservative-controlled Council bound by economic restrictions suggests this is madness, but the blindness of housing and technical services officers will decree otherwise, unless we create enough fuss to cause the council to say No.

The destruction of our inner housing areas must stop. Nottingham has acquired a national reputation for building some of the worst new housing areas in Britain, and possibly the worst housing estate in Europe, outside Glasgow. But it has a legacy of fine, well built Victorian terraces (some of them, of architectural value, were pulled down recently in the Dryden Street area against the privately expressed wishes of the town planners) which can be improved and maintained at a fraction of the cost of new houses.

D.H. Lawrence once looked out from the castle and imagined a Nottingham where "the interesting diversity of shapes had vanished from the scene, all that remained was a dark matrix of sorrow and tragedy, the same in all the houses". It was a proph-

ecy. He said the English are town birds through and through, yet they don't know how to build a city or how to live in one. At least, in Nottingham, we know how to destroy one.

Geoff Shears,
15 East Grove,
Forest Fields.

Postscript - on 10th March the City Council Housing Committee approved the demolition of 1-15 East Grove in spite of strenuous representations from Mr Shears (he is a former town planner with a Town and Country Planning Certificate). The committee was told by Royce Young, Chief Environmental Health Officer, that 15 and possibly 13 were fit but the other houses had rising damp over six feet up the walls and crumbling brickwork. Mr Shears will now have to present his case to a public inquiry which will be held in the next few months.



ADD-VICE COLUMN

The sacrifices made by our public servants can be extraordinary. We have all met the dedicated councillor in the Lounge Bar soaking up his electorate's surplus wealth, but Councillor Michael Cowan has touched us all very deeply by his decision to take up smoking. He feels, it seems, that the burly miners of Ashfield constituency will not vote for him in an election unless they can identify with him.

"I don't drink, and I'm a bachelor", says Michael, "so I

thought I'd better take up smoking". Identification by vice is a novel political idea. I wonder if it tells us anything about the candidates opinion of the electorate?

Smoke what? Woodbine nubs, culled from the spittoons of the 'Rat and Weasel' at closing time, or Supa-Slim Concordes at a quid a packet? Should he roll his own? If so, what from? Old H, or just H?

So, Michael - our Add-vice to you in your difficult situation: by all means take up smoking, but be sure not to lose anybody's vote. Try it this way: Roll your own (get the working class), from nub ends (get the ecologists), in fancy American ciggy papers (get the Hips and Aesthetes).

But! Add a filter (get the health fiends), and use a ciggy holder (get the fin de siecle decadents and Noel Coward fans), and take fewer puffs (get the Gay Lib vote). You could try adding a little marijuana (get the Young vote), but this could be controversial.

We think this could work well for you - but if any of it makes you feel or appear cynical or dishonest, please ignore it.

P.J.GROB WORTH

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AS PREDICTED in Voice 60, despite the assistance of two City Council Tories, solicitor Martin Suthers and barrister Andrew Hamilton, Ben "I'm the people's man" Allsop has failed in his bid to retain his Radford ward seat without a new contest.

Gerry Elliott, out in political limbo since his "defeat" in last May's elections, has at last won his High Court battle for a re-run because of the batch of unfranked ballot papers that would have given him a lead over Allsop.

Our Ben, who has been re-adopted as candidate by the ward which boasts whimsical Len Maynard, deputy Labour leader, as its other spokesman, has been campaigning hard for headlines.

And he was particularly peeved when Housing Chairman Borrett, as reported in Voice 60, prevented him from speaking on moves to decant children out of Hyson Green flats complex, which were tabled before the last meeting. The report, which could have wide implications on future allocation policies was prepared by Director Malcolm Campbell Lee at the request of a councillor . . . yes, Our Ben. And his shock revelations about Hyson Green district heating rip-off should help him to win a few votes.

Gerry has his own problems however. After the High Court judgement he declared "I was successful last year and I am confident of success again".

That is . . . if he is re-adopted as the official Tory

candidate. The stigma of the court case which bedevilled him during his year as Sheriff of Nottingham, still sticks in the minds of some Conservative backwoodsmen.

But more important, grocer Greenie, who is still rumoured to be council leader, doesn't really want Gerry back on the Council. He would immediately pose a leadership threat, since he is ambitious, entertaining, eloquent at times, and would indeed be hot favourite for a senior committee chairmanship. With many years' background experience he would be an articulate and progressive housing chairman - at least in Tory terms - and a long overdue change to the disorganised burblings of the over-tired Borrett.

If the Conservatives rat on Gerry his only course of action would be to stand as a Tory Independent. But this would only give Our Ben a soft ride home, splitting the Tory vote on the basis of Gerry's considerable personal following.

Wake up John Carroll, now's the time to look round for a nice safe seat with which to lure the bewhiskered Gerry across the floor of the chamber, before bitterness and cynicism get the better of him. Then we would perhaps see flesh flying with the fur.



NOMINATIONS for May's County Council elections are not yet complete but the immediate

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COOL GUINNESS & LAGER
CHIP BUTTIES
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RUGBY PLAYERS WELCOME

changes make interesting reading.

As we knew John Carroll and Len Maynard are bidding County Hall a somewhat aggrieved farewell - they don't like the way things are run over there and they want to help the city keep as much power as possible, particularly if there is to be another local government reshuffle.

In steps the likes of Betty Higgins, hoping to join hubbie Frank, but after being defeated in home patch St. Ann's for a city seat last year, she will be less confident this time.

Close behind comes Bill Dinwoodie, pro-Dunnett Chairman of East Nottingham Labour Party, who is debarred from City Council membership because he collects rates for their Treasury.

In too comes left-leaning Peter Price to join Mairi Yuill in a bid to oust Housing-Charlie's wife Brenda Borrett from her County Council seat and her ambition to become county Social Services Oberfuhrer. Another anti-Dunnett campaigner Chris Richardson will also be making a bid for power.

Most of the heavies - Wilson, Gallagher, Cairns, Alf Burton, even Michael Cowan - have been renominated. Cowan is apparently still hedging his bets. MP David Marquand, having completed his Ramsay MacDonald white-wash job, is heading for full-time work with Woy's European Commission. But he has still not announced his resignation from the Ashfield constituency.

This of course is putting

back young Michael's timetable for a cabinet post, somewhat.

Dennis Pettitt, intelligent Labour leader on Broxtowe Council, must be fairly certain of a seat in May, taking over from the somnolent Harry Walker, for Eastwood.

But apart from these and a handful more most of the punters are the same old party division cannon fodder.

But rest assured the struggle for leadership of the Tories will continue unabated whether it's a Tory council or not - Peter Wright, Herbert Bird and Michael Spungin are all assured a pretty comfortable return.



WE HAVE HARDLY been reticent in the past in highlighting the unmitigated relief being felt by both officers and Tory members at County Hall at the eagerly anticipated departure of the obnoxious-tho-articulate Cllr Cowan for Westminster glories.

But uproar at recent meetings has shown how this feeling is spreading through Labour ranks like wildfire. The cracks, smeared over by clever use of words in the past, are now beginning to make the Red Tower of Babel crumble.

At the February Finance Committee meeting which Cowan adjourned on three occasions without consulting any committee members, elderly Socialist Eric Foster threatened to punch "bighead" Cowan on the nose.

During this week's full coun-

cil meeting Cowan displayed the colourful extent of his non-charm in a full-blown public slanging match with elderly, admittedly feather-headed, council chairman Beatrice Sharrard.

Because he did not get precisely his own way he behaved like the archetypal petulant schoolkid who resorts to insulting teacher. Beatrice told both Tories and Labour members to stop interrupting Michael during his speech. Cowan insisted, in his pedantic standing-orders fashion, that Canon Frank Worwood be told individually to shut up.

When the chairman refused Cowan started to berate her, saying she was not fit to be chairman and suggesting she was not a worthy member of the Labour group.

The Tories marched out, and took no further part in the meeting. And during the adjournment, as members milled around the chamber, elderly Tory Fred Rudder - incensed by the insults hurled at Mrs Sharrard - threatened to punch Cowan on the chin. Undeterred, Bro. Cowan turned to his old "friend" on the press benches bawling "Do you hear that Mr Leveen, he is threatening to punch me. Disgraceful".

Entertaining though the events may have appeared from the public gallery, in a gladiatorial sense, it was an expensive stunt: it probably cost over £1,000 in printing costs, councillors' allowances and officers' time.

Let's hope it's Cowan's swansong, acrimonious though it

may have been.



Dear Voice,

In view of the Council's predictable rejection of all those obviously useless Urban Aid projects, it is time to start thinking of some sensible, worthwhile ideas that will have some value. We need something that will capture the imagination of our elected representatives, such as the establishment of a team of underwater social workers. The recent floods make me think this an idea that is at least worth floating. An ability to see through muddy water and fill in forms in triplicate at the same time would be considered an asset, as would a working knowledge of ark-building.

In the future, more and more people can be expected to sink below the waves without trace unless we do something now.

Yours etc,
Ned Cullum,
County Hall,
West Bridgford.



NOTICE

THERE IS A NEW group investigating who owns and controls Nottingham. It is called the Political Economy of Nottingham Group. They want people to get involved in their investigations into the impact of political and economic changes

on people's living and working conditions.

So far they have been looking at industry in Nottingham and the County Council's proposed structure plan. Some of the questions they are asking are:

Who owns the factories and what are their investment plans? Who owns the land which might be used for future development and what are the local government's plans? Who owns the housing? Which jobs are declining, what sort of jobs are available for men, women, immigrants, and who is on the dole? What does the State influence and what is the nature of educational and health provision?

If you want to get involved the next meeting is 7.30, 18th April, International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Road. For further details contact Ceridwen Roberts, 3 Dunlop Avenue (708871).

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WE HEAR THAT one of our heroic city councillors is conducting a secret one-man campaign against vice in his ward. He claims to have closed down a few shebeens (illegal late-night West Indian drinking clubs). His secret formula for doing this is to wait for neighbours to complain to him about the noise from the shebeens and he appears smartly with the police. "I wouldn't dare go in one on my own" he says.

He is also backing up the police in their impossible task

of exterminating the world's oldest profession. He says the police are very pleased with this support because they say that most councillors aren't interested in doing anything to get rid of prostitutes. And we hear that our hero has been doing some research. "How much?" he asked one particularly young lady who caught his attention. "Five pounds for twenty minutes, ducky" came the reply. Reliable sources indicate that he did not pursue this particular piece of research any further.

What he is not doing is campaigning for adequate social security benefits or more nursery schools and a fair deal for women at work - reforms which would clear more women off the streets than a whole army of policemen.

He did ask us not to say who he was or which ward he represented. "We don't like to advertise that these women operate in our area", he said, "because men may come to look for them". But we can say that his ward probably has more prostitutes than any other in the city. And men are not only looking for them but also have very little trouble in finding them. In fact they are having a lot more success at finding them than even the combined forces of the police and our lone councillor.

COMPETITION

There will be the usual extravagant prize for the first reader to identify the councillor and the ward in question.