



Nottingham Voice

THE MASSIVE TORY MAJORITY in the County elections, though hardly a surprise, still comes as something of a shock. Tory domination of Nottingham is now complete.

And this will have repercussions on the quality of life of the people of Nottingham. "Less government and fewer ideas" is how the Tories sum up their attitude. There will be less meetings, fewer council initiatives, less discrimination in favour of the poor and underprivileged.

And useful experiments in County policy will go. Consumer advice will be chopped back - but the rich will still be running to their solicitors when they have faulty goods.

Community workers and community teachers will go too. But those communities too deprived to be able to fight for decent basic standards will still be able to admire democracy at work in the Vale of Belvoir, where action groups will never be short of the odd solicitor or hundred quid. Or of the odd local newspaper proprietor.

Sensible attempts to curb cars will go. Freedom will be restored to the motorist. Freedom to pollute the air, freedom to keep morgue attendants in work and the casualty departments busy, freedom to use irreplaceable resources, Tory freedom. And the rest of us will be free to wait in bus queues for increasingly expensive buses.

County Tories "anticipate needing more office blocks in Nottingham", while their colleagues in the City are stopping council house building. So those with money will be free to buy houses, developers will be free to build yet more office blocks, and the homeless and the slum clearance families will be free to go on waiting for a decent house.

It's a common attitude that it doesn't matter who gets elected. And it is often difficult to tell whose side the Labour Party is on. But the Tories know whose side they are on. The rich.

"THIS IS NOT a stop to council house building but a severe limitation on the building of municipal dwellings". That was how the aging Charles Borrett, Tory city housing chairman, explained the council's policy to stop building council houses to a special meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on April 28th.

And finance chairman Bill Bradbury was just as confused. He said that Environment Secretary Peter Shore's criticism in the House of Commons of their decision not to build council houses was false because they would be building council houses on a one-to-one basis for clearance. Chief Executive Michael Hammond looked very puzzled at this. And not without reason - less than 2,000 new council houses are to be completed between 1978 and 1982 while 3,500 families will lose their homes because of clearance. Simple sums are obviously not Bradbury's strongest subject. This is a pity because as finance chairman he is responsible for all the sums done by the City Treasury. Perhaps this explains some of the ludicrous policies which the Tories are pursuing.

(But strenuous efforts were obviously then made to get the facts to fit the sums because only four days later at a full council meeting it was explained that the clearance programme would be brought forward so that more people would be rehoused this year. But even that doesn't work because at the moment there are still 5,000 families to be

rehoused and only 4,000 new council houses being built. Never mind - a good try, only 1,000 out. Better luck next time.)

Meanwhile, back at the Policy and Resources meeting, Tory leader Jack Green and Leisure Services chairman Cyril Swift also had problems. Swift complained that rumours were being spread in the city that all their houses were being offered for sale (it is Tory policy to offer all empty council houses for sale before offering them to people from clearance areas or on the waiting list). He said people on the waiting list were getting confused because of all the false information they were being given. He wanted the Tories to produce a pamphlet to explain the "real" information.

Jack Green agreed. He said the Housing Department was giving false information - telling people there were no relets available. They should be telling people, he explained, "houses are being held vacant pending sales".

With all this double-talk from these megalomaniac Tories you might have expected Labour men Carroll and Littlewood to have made a killing, especially since their colleague Ben Allsop was fighting a by-election in Radford on the same day and he could have used all the press publicity about the Tories he could get. In fact they were so limp that even the inoffensive Cyril Swift was able to keep them down - with the help of the occasional bit of ignorant abuse from Jack Green.

"You're always complaining - you lot" Green told the Labour group. And as Labour man Percy Holland opened his mouth, before he could say anything Green bawled "I'm not listening to you - last week you were advocating that squatters should move into empty council houses".

In fact squatting is the only way that most people could ever get into a council house now. Even Labour leader John Carroll has been trying to persuade the People's Centre, Nottingham's independent advice centre, to encourage homeless people to squat in all the empty council houses - different to the Labour policy of immediate eviction of squatters when they were in power. The People's Centre say they will continue the policy they have always had - they will tell people who wish to squat what their rights are, and will tell them where to find houses suitable for squatting. But they will also have to tell them that the council will probably get them out within a couple of months - hardly the basis for a settled way of life.

No, John, you will have to think of something better than that - a concerted effort by the local Labour movement to get the Labour government to reverse the massive cuts they have made in housing and force the Tories to reverse their policies is what is needed.

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GREENS GARDENS, Belvoir Hill, Sneinton was recently the

subject of a public inquiry. This was over an appeal by the Oliver Hind Trust Ltd against a City Council planning decision.

Planning permission for residential development has been sought for some time by the Trust but has been turned down regularly by the council as it does not accord with their plans for the area.

Greens Gardens consists of allotments surrounding the old mill where George Green, the mathematician, used to work and which is now protected by a Preservation Order. The site is a vantage point from which it is possible to see Belvoir Castle on a clear day and is highly regarded by local residents as a valuable asset to the community.

Local opposition to the plans was encouraged by the council and one result was the formation by residents of the Sneinton Environmental Society which backed the council decision at the inquiry. The result is eagerly awaited but the group intends to remain in existence whatever the outcome.

Their attentions may well eventually be drawn to the council's own improvement plans for Sneinton. So let us hope the council does not rue the day it mobilized local feeling.



IT COMES AS NO SURPRISE to find that almost the only provincial newspaper in the country to be produced normally on May 6th was the Evening Post.

The National Union of Jour-

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nalists called a national stoppage in support of 60 journalists at Kettering who have been locked out after refusing to work with nine journalists who tried to leave the NUJ and join the rival management organisation - and thus break the NUJ's closed shop.

And just why a closed shop is so important is illustrated by the problem at the Post. After the strike at the Post in 1973 several journalists were expelled from the NUJ. There are still 22 non-NUJ members who could produce the Post almost normally if necessary.

So the 44 NUJ members were in an impossible situation - if they went on strike they would have no effect and many would be in danger of losing their jobs as happened after the last strike.

So in the end they decided to work normally but donate a day's pay to the Kettering strike fund. It remains to be seen whether the NUJ will take any disciplinary action against them.

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THE BBC is starting a new TV series in June about "self-help" to be called "Grapevine". They want to know about projects which community groups and individuals are involved in. They say the content will be "very much dictated by response from viewers". They are interested in failures as well as successes and want to know about problems which people would like discussed or shared. Write to: Grapevine, Community Programmes Unit, BBC TV, Wood Lane, London W12 8QT.

SACKCLOTH AND ASHFIELD

THE EDITORIAL BOARD and principal shareholders of Nottingham Voice have long felt that an organ of our stature should thrust itself further into the public eye. So, after detailed discussion with our staff, we have decided to award an occasional Porteous J. Grobworth "Naughty Fido" trophy to groups or individuals who, in our opinion, have made outstanding contributions

- a) to bumbledom and mindless bureaucracy
- b) in the field of legal brutality
- c) towards vindication of public cynicism
- e) to a/c 365582, Crédit Geneva and Cie.

And it is with great pleasure that we announce the first award, under category d), to a Mr Michael Cowan Cllr and Bar, MP (failed). The official citation, inscribed on the trophy, is for "doing for the Ashfield Miners what Ghengis Khan did for flower arranging". It is believed he will wish to share the trophy with a Mr Gallagher for "standing where the hand of man has ne'er set foot before" and the selection committee of Ashfield Labour Party for "nitpicking".

On the subject of awards - we've just heard that the Wollaton chapter of Hell's Chaps on Motorcycles have awarded their biennial "Chaps with Big Ears and Bigger Mouths" clockwork raspberry trophy to HRH Prince Charles RN ret'd - (OK for some).

P. J. GROB WORTH

JUST BEFORE EASTER four representatives of the "Urban Aid Fightback Group" met with City Council leaders to discuss why the Tories weren't giving much backing to voluntary groups. The meeting didn't achieve anything but it was useful in showing what sort of people these councillors are.

Although they restricted the Fightback Group to four people they lined up five councillors against them plus Leisure Services Director Brian Loughborough (who mostly remained silent).

They started off by attacking a booklet which the group had distributed to councillors giving details of fifteen voluntary groups and why they needed money. Disgraceful, they said, it's just like Nottingham Voice (the Voice played no part in its production). It must have cost a lot of money to produce, they said (it cost less than £3 for 100 copies). Are you all marxists? they asked.

Bill Bradbury, Finance Chairman, came over as a quiet, competent Tory who knew his job and had done his homework. He knew what the Urban Aid applications were about and just why they had been turned down - basically because they would cost money. He was able to show that a figure of £100,000 given by the group as having been budgetted for Urban Aid applications and not used was not correct because it referred to borrowing powers and not to real money. But he did admit that £50,000 had been put into the Urban Aid budget last year and not used - it had been put back

into the council's "balances" so it was no longer available.

Jack Green, Council Leader, came over as - well - Uncle Jack Green - too friendly and talkative to be a really competent politician, saying all sorts of things which the group could quote against him. "We get more votes by turning you down", he said, "because you're minority movements". "It's very likely I haven't read all the (Urban Aid) applications", he said, even though earlier all the councillors were howling at the "untrue" allegation that there were no signs that they'd read the applications before turning them down. And he said that representatives of "ethnic minorities" had told him that if their applications were turned down they'd "tear the city apart" (all "ethnic minority" applications were turned down - even a one week camping holiday for 30 West Indian children). He also found time to praise Nottingham Voice for having had the best ideas for keeping the Nottingham Arrow (the Voice said it should be run by an independent team of journalists and not by council officers - the Tories axed it instead). None of the Fightback representatives had mentioned the Voice.

Cyril Swift, Leisure Services chairman, was too nice to be a Tory or a politician. Rumour has it that Vice-chairman Margaret Crowe makes the decisions. Swift was enthusiastic about the sort of applications put in - especially those for adventure playgrounds. The problem, he claimed, was not him but the

Tory members on his committee.

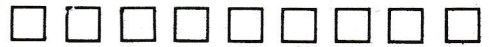
Margaret Crowe, obviously Nottingham's answer to Maggie Thatcher, was harder than any of the others. She didn't like the Fightback representatives and she didn't like suggestions that Leisure Services Committee members weren't really interested in adventure playgrounds. But she did claim that a lot of children don't like adventure playgrounds.

Philip Owen, a Tory member of the Leisure Services Committee, played the part of the new boy trying to make an impression and determined to be the loudest and most objectionable person in the room. He said he was in favour of adventure playgrounds but Voice readers will remember that it was Owen who opposed a playground in the Raleigh Street area - he said there were fields in the area that children could play in! What a nasty piece of Tory work this man is. And vain as well - he claimed that Top Valley and Rise Park had never had it so good since he has been their councillor. Exactly what had he achieved? - he said that two pieces of land had been earmarked for community centres. Swift chipped in that people didn't mind so much about having to wait for a centre to be built - they would be pleased just to see a notice board telling them where it would be.

Perhaps this idea will catch on - "notice-board politics". Homeless people will no longer have to journey to the Homeless Families Officer - instead they will make regular pilgrimages to notices saying "houses to be built

here", and mothers will be able to take their young children to see the sign "site of new nursery school". Doesn't it make you want to vote Conservative? - pay now, live later.

(This piece was written by one of the Fightback representatives - Nigel Lee from the People's Centre. It doesn't necessarily reflect the views of the other three representatives or the Fightback Group.)



HAVING STARTED the renovation and repair work on the Kendale Road block of flats at the end of last year, Wimpey are now, amazingly, several months behind schedule. The Kingsthorpe and Kendale Tenants Association may have another battle on.

They are still fighting several other issues one of which concerns compensation for disturbance and general discomfort during repair work. The Housing Department have offered two weeks rent free. But this is no help to people claiming Supplementary Benefit - the Department of Health and Social Security is just cutting down the money which claimants receive in the weeks when they don't have to pay rent. So the people who suffer the inconvenience of the repair work get nothing - it is DHSS which gets the compensation! And this applies to a considerable number of people in the flats.

There is no truth in the

rumour that DHSS suggested this form of compensation.



ONE OF NOTTINGHAM'S notorious slum landlords, Mr Singh of 89 Goldsmith Street, was up before the courts again last week.

This time it was because he tried to illegally evict the sole remaining tenant, Mr Greensmith, from a crumbling house on Goldsmith Square. On Wednesday 20th April Singh told Greensmith to leave, the following day he removed his bedding, and on the Friday he tried to change the lock so Greensmith could not get into the house.

Greensmith went to the People's Centre, Nottingham's independent advice centre, and they helped him get a solicitor who got an emergency injunction to stop Singh evicting him.

At a court hearing the following week Singh's solicitor admitted that, had the court not intervened, an eviction would have taken place. But he said Singh believed that Greensmith was responsible for stealing piping from the house and his client was in the habit of dealing with such matters in a "simple and straightforward manner". He said there was no further need for the court to make an order and he could see no reason why Greensmith should seek an order to continue to live in such "intolerable conditions". The judge did grant the order. Another hearing in a few weeks will decide how much compensation Singh will have to pay

to Greensmith.

One disturbing fact to emerge was a nasty mafia streak in the Notts County Council Estates Department who lease the building to Singh. Singh's solicitor claimed Singh had been under pressure from the County Council to give them vacant possession.

The People's Centre phoned the Estates Department who confirmed this - they said the houses would be demolished to make way for development of the Polytechnic. But, they said, they didn't expect this to happen for four years - until then Singh could keep the houses but he had been told that it would be "convenient" if, when the houses were needed, the tenants had left "in an orderly manner".

This is not the first time that the County Council has leant on landlords in this way causing untold misery to tenants who have been forced out of their accommodation.



ONE INTERESTING PROBLEM hit supporters of Ben Allsop in the recent Radford ward by-election. At one house they were told that nine of their supporters had been told not to vote.

The house is a "half way house" for ex-psychiatric patients leaving Mapperley hospital and the manager's husband, Mr Lewis, told these people they were not fit to vote even though their names were on the electoral register! He also told candidate Ben Allsop to stay away from the

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house.

Undaunted, the fearless Labour workers enlisted the help of people's hero John Carroll to ferry these valuable voters to the polling station in his car. They were carefully instructed in how to put a cross against Allsop's name.

The Community Nursing Department at Mapperley hospital told us that it was not their policy to stop people voting once they had left the hospital and they did not back Mr Lewis's action.



A RECENT public meeting at Trent Poly once again raises the question of what the Government is trying to hide. The meeting was organised by the defence campaign for two journalists, Duncan Campbell and Crispin Aubrey, and a social worker, John Berry, who were recently charged under the Official Secrets Act. This followed the decision to deport two American journalists, Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball. The campaign sent us this piece which unfortunately we could not print before the meeting:

"The Government seems determined to make an example of those who question or investigate its more dubious secret activities. When the state talks about "national security" these days it usually means securing itself and its interests from internal attacks - that's why they have secret "emergency" government headquarters, large scale strike-

breaking plans, "D" notices, telephone tapping and secret intelligence services.

"The latest moves by the government form a direct attack on the freedom of the press and our right to know what is being done in our name".

The minister responsible is Home Secretary Merlyn Rees. Only last November he outlined plans to scrap Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act and told the House of Commons "Mere receipt of official information should no longer be an offence". He is now using this same section to gag journalists and others who are trying to inform the rest of us what is going on.



THE GOVERNMENT is preventing Nottingham City Council from upholding the law! This remarkable piece of information emerged from the last Policy and Resources Committee meeting.

The committee was told that the Department of the Environment would only allow the council to spend £60,000 in 1977/78 on buying houses. But they are already legally committed to spend £85,000, most of this because of the law on compulsory improvements which compels the council to buy some properties. The council expects the total to reach £150,000 for the whole year.

So are they going to obey the law or not? Or will the Government change the rules? Those on the side of law and order will be watching with interest.

● Co-op Action Group - Sun May 8th, 2.30, 118 Mansfield Road - for anyone interested in finding out about the Co-operative movement.

● "Militant" public meeting - Mon 9th May, 7.30, ICC - with speaker Bob Mckee from the Militant editorial board: "The Lib-Lab pact - road to defeat?"

● International Marxist Group public meeting - Wed 11th May, 7.30, ICC - "The Technology of Political Control" with Karen Margolis, author of Penguin book on the subject.

● National Abortion Campaign demo in London - Sat 14th May. Coach leaves Salutation 9am. Details: 43081.

● Disco in aid of Battered Women's Refuge - Sat 14th May, 8.30-11.30, late bar, Yorker, Mansfield Road. 60p.

● "The War Game" - Sat 14th May, 7.30, ICC - a film made for the BBC but banned by them because it showed the aftermath of a nuclear attack a little too realistically for comfort.

Organised by Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The group is holding a vigil by St Peter's Church on the 13th and 14th. Details: David Lane, 33 3398.

(ICC - International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Road)

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THE PEOPLE'S CENTRE, Nottingham's independent advice centre, has been in the news again this week. This follows their refusal to rejoin the City Council's Homelessness Advisory Committee which has representatives from voluntary organisations as well as councillors. The People's Centre has been on it since it started in 1975 but left it earlier this year because they could not get the council to do anything about the 4,500 empty houses in the city.

The committee asked them to reconsider but they have refused and give two main reasons. One is because the Tory City Council's policy to sell council houses and not build any more will seriously increase homelessness by the 1980s. The other reason is because they have no respect for Ted Hickey who has just been made chairman of the committee.

They have worked out that there will be about 9,000 fewer homes for rent than were originally planned. This is because the Tories have cut nearly 4,000 houses from the building programme, they have sold nearly 1,000 council houses already, and will be selling about 4,000 more in the next five years. And most working people can only afford rented property.

Also the People's Centre says that in the next five years there will be 5,500 less allocations to people from the waiting list than were originally planned (because of some points they overlooked the figure could be nearer 4,500 but that still means that very few people will be

housed off the waiting list). That is going to mean a lot more overcrowding and a lot more homelessness.

Other points made by the People's Centre are:

- ✧ The council is not replacing hostels, boarding houses, and multi-occupied properties which are demolished in clearance areas. This is the sort of accommodation which homeless people have traditionally been able to turn to.

- ✧ The council has been putting up rents - and that has meant more evictions for rent arrears.

- ✧ The council does not even allow squatters to stay in houses which are going to be left empty - some houses in clearance areas for a couple of years.

About Ted Hickey the People's Centre says he knows little about people who are homeless or in bad housing and has even less sympathy for them. They say it was Hickey who refused to go and see conditions at Balloon Wood, Hickey who wanted to knock down the houses on Canning Terrace instead of making them fit to live in and they say he is on record as saying he wants less council houses and more prisons. None of this will come as any surprise to readers of the Voice who will already be well aware that Hickey is the last person who should be given the job of combatting homelessness.

- City Councillor Ben Allsop was told this week that the Housing Department has no houses to offer for rent - but Technical Services has 300 houses for people to buy!