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Nottingham Voice



TORY HOUSING POLICY may mean trebling the waiting list in five years. But that fact was very carefully omitted from a recent City Council Housing Progress Report.

The report came out two weeks late and officers had obviously had to work overtime to conceal the full effects of Tory policy. As soon as they got into power, the Tories cut several thousand council houses which would have been built outside the city. And recently they cut nearly 4,000 more. They also intend to sell as many council houses as they can. It doesn't need a genius to predict that this will have a serious effect on the waiting list.

But a number of amazing omissions in the report serve to conceal this:

(1) There is no mention of the policy of selling council houses in the figures for supply and demand.

If we are to believe the report, selling houses will have no effect on the supply of houses for people on the waiting list. Even if this were true, they reckon that only 6,850 families would be rehoused off the waiting list in the next five years. And the waiting list already stands at over 6,000. That means that hardly anyone registering now will be rehoused in the next five years.

The net rate of application to the waiting list (another figure missed out of the report) has been about 2,000 per year, so there will be nearly 10,000 people on the waiting list in five years' time. That is if there is no increase in applications. But in the last quarter alone there were 1,271 new applications and 318 people returned to the waiting list.

The reason for this very high figure could be because of people registering on the waiting list so they can buy a house.

Anyone can register on one of the waiting lists - even if they already own a house or live outside the city. And they are then immediately entitled to buy a new council house or a relet. On the main lodgers list people have to wait their turn - applications are dealt with in strict date order. But now people who want to buy will come first - those with money go to the front of the queue. As Jesus once said - to those who have will be given more but from those who have nothing even the nothing will be taken away.

Even if only 400 houses per year are sold to people who wouldn't otherwise get a council house, that adds up to 2,000 over five years. And that would mean less than 5,000 families could be housed off the waiting list.

(2) The figure for rehousing from clearance areas has been reduced by nearly 1,000. This was done by saying that 13% of the 5,400 families in clearance areas will rehouse themselves. But where? If they buy a house it will probably be from the council, and if they find private rented accommodation, which is in very short supply, that will increase overcrowding and homelessness. If most of these 1,000 families have to be rehoused by the council that would mean only 4,000 housed off the waiting list in the next five years.

(3) The figure for rehousing people from multi-occupied and overcrowded property, special cases, and the homeless has been reduced from 920 a year to

500 a year compared to the report last November. No explanation is given. What will happen to people who are overcrowded, etc.? If the figures had not been changed, an extra 2,000 would have been rehoused in these categories. Add that on and it would mean only 2,000 housed off the waiting list in the next five years.

That could mean a waiting list approaching 15,000 in 1982 (compared to 6,000 now), and net applications would only have to increase from 2,000 to 3,000 a year to mean a waiting list of 20,000.

But that can't possibly be true - can it?

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ONE OF NOTTINGHAM'S worst landlords, Brian Eddishaw, has been in the news again. This time nine of his tenants are being evicted from 403 Nottingham Road by the Anglia Building Society because Eddishaw got behind with his mortgage repayments.

This follows less than two months after the eviction of thirteen of Eddishaw's tenants from 21 Langtry Grove by the City Council (see Voice 60). On that occasion Eddishaw was in arrears on a council mortgage. Even though council mortgages are only for owner-occupiers who are not allowed to sublet, Eddishaw never lived there and was collecting about £50 a week in rents from the house.

We cannot go into further details about 403 Nottingham Road because the case is to be heard in

court - Eddishaw's tenants expect to get over £100 each from him for breach of contract. Also involved in that case is Colin Eddishaw, Brian's brother, who often used to collect the rents and perform other landlordly duties.

Readers of Voice 59 will remember that Colin Eddishaw is involved with another notorious landlord, Roger Dilks, in a court case where a tenant is trying to establish his rights under the Rent Act - that case should be heard in the next two or three weeks.

The Voice has written to City Chief Executive Michael Hammond to ask him to investigate how a liar and cheat like Eddishaw could con the council into giving him a mortgage out of which he has made a lot of money from "illegal" rents.

Ever felt that you should be an
ANARCHIST?

Fed up with people who take political parties more seriously than they take themselves - or the issues?

Are your intellect and ethics abused by people who can't be bothered to justify themselves in the first place?

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Our party offers serious proposals for truly libertarian co-operation on political activity.

WHY NOT GET IN TOUCH?

Send S.A.E. to Box N,
Nottingham Voice.

CUTS IN SUPPLEMENTARY
Benefits are almost certain a year from now. That message emerges by reading between the lines of a recent speech by David Donnison, chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission. He wants compulsory savings for all claimants and an end to grants for people with exceptional need.

In the speech Donnison attacks the amount of discretion which the SBC has in giving out extra money to claimants - lump sum payments for things like clothes and furniture, and weekly additions for extra heating and special diets.

He says it "provokes anxiety and hostility" and "erodes the confidence of staff" who are less and less convinced that they are getting money to "those who need it most". And he says that the additions provide very little extra money while "distracting attention from the far more important question of the adequacy of the basic scale rates". In particular he admits that the standard of furniture provided is "pitifully low".

None of this will come as news to the three million claimants who have to suffer this terrible and costly system - it costs £1 in administration for every £7 given out, yet the SBC probably make more mistakes than all the other government departments put together.

But while Donnison admits that the scale rates are inadequate, he does not seem to realise that this is precisely why discretionary payments are necessary - to meet extra irregular needs. His answer is not to increase

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the scale rates, but to extend the already discredited compulsory savings scheme to everybody. And that means cutting down the weekly payment to save up for a lump sum which would be given out every few months. People would not get any extra except for very exceptional circumstances like "fire and flood" disasters and perhaps help for families moving house "to acquire at minimum cost the basic equipment they need for survival".

What this really means is that over the last ten years since the Supplementary Benefit system came in, Claimants Unions and others have been forcing an extra few crumbs for more and more people. And Donnison says they can't afford to give everyone the same even though it is "not a lot of money". So now he wants to cut all that has been won and smash the results of ten years' struggle.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

JUBILEE SITUATION

IT'S NOT OFTEN I get fan mail - but I thought you might like this cry for help:

Dear Mr Grobworth, - For the last twenty-five years I have been putting aside a shilling a week in anticipation of Jubilee Year.

With interest and including a small bequest I find I have £108.75 in my special Jubilee Fund. I am now wondering how I should best spend my money. Have you any suggestions, sir?

Your obedient servant,
M. Cowan (retired).

I was deeply touched by your letter Mr (Ms?) Cowan and have given the matter some thought. Why not:

- (1) paint your house in red, white and blue stripes;
- (2) purchase a second-hand busby;
- (3) dig an orb-shaped flower bed;
- (4) drape your garden gnomes with ermine and velvet robes (I believe Action Man have a suitable kit);
- (5) place a loudhailer or bull horn in your garden and broadcast a tape loop of you and some friends chanting "Long live the Queen" or "Requiescat in pace";
- (6) treat yourself to one of Habitat's special Jubilee rat traps;
- (7) get legless on Guinness every day until it all blows over.

I appeal also to our readers for further meaningful contributions to the Jubilee situation crisis.

P.J. GROBWORTH

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Sir, - You made reference in your last issue to the undoubted fact that I am no longer in the first flush of youth.

However, you might have spelt the word correctly which you chose to use - it is AGEING!

After all, we all get a little older every day, don't we?

Yours,
Charles Borrett.
The Council House, Nottingham.

(Eds. "age, v.t. & i. (part. aging). (Cause to) grow old." Concise Oxford Dictionary, Fourth Edition.)

THE PEOPLE'S CENTRE may have to close soon. This was revealed at their recent Annual General Meeting when it was said that they had only £700 in the bank in April and this was not expected to last beyond August. It is hoped that they will not have to give up the premises, but even this is not certain.

The People's Centre is Nottingham's independent radical advice and aid centre on Mansfield Road. It provides aid and advice on a wide range of issues - mainly housing, welfare rights and legal matters - and is frequently able to resolve problems which more orthodox agencies such as Social Services have failed to deal with. Volunteers in the Centre have built up a considerable body of expertise and local knowledge.

The Centre has been open for three years and during that time has had to rely heavily on financial support from Karnival - the Nottingham Students' Rag Appeal. From January this year Karnival said that the Centre volunteers would have to raise their own funds for running expenses but is funding a full-time worker for a year to strengthen the development of the aid and advice work.

The volunteers have not found it possible to raise the amount of money needed - rent and rates are over £1,000 a year and telephone expenses nearly £1,000. They have applied for grants from several agencies with little success. Both the City and County Councils have regularly turned down requests for grants including those under the Government

Urban Aid scheme. An application under the Job Creation Programme was turned down last year.

The volunteers need to raise over £50 a week but are managing less than £20 in spite of strenuous efforts - that includes collecting goods for their second-hand shop (all donations of books, clothes, small household goods, etc. will be more than welcome). And they say that advice giving is suffering as result of all the time spent on fund raising.

But can't the official advice centres give the same service? The Voice reports:

□ The Consumer Advice Centre in the Square is doing a good job but the Tories in the County intend to close it - that will mean a lot more work will be necessary in consumer matters, an area which the People's Centre has been able to ignore in the past.
 □ The Housing Advice Centre on Parliament Street mainly acts as a publicity office for the City Council's housing policies. It does very little to actually help people with housing problems like repairs. But it does accommodate the City Tenancy Relations Officer who is doing a reasonable job in the difficult field of harassment and eviction though there is more work than one man can cope with.

□ The Information Bureau on Milton Street does a good job on the subjects it deals with - local information - but it does not give aid or advice.

□ The Citizens Advice Bureau on St James's Terrace has the advantage of subscribing to a

national information system which is updated monthly though it is sadly lacking in many areas of welfare benefits and housing problems which the People's Centre deals with.

CAB volunteers normally don't spend more than one day a week in the CAB so their knowledge of local agencies - like the Housing Department and Social Security offices - is limited. This means that they are much less able than People's Centre volunteers to argue people's cases over the phone - e.g. to prevent electricity disconnections or get urgently needed benefits to which they are entitled - or to accompany them to the offices or tribunals. In fact, the CAB Annual Report says it is their policy not to make phone calls or write letters for people - an area where the People's Centre is most effective.

It is particularly disturbing that the Management Committee of the CAB has seen fit to appoint an organiser who has no experience of welfare rights - they think that he only needs to "organise" the CAB volunteers and doesn't need to know what they're doing.

The CAB does have a solicitor who represents people at tribunals and in court where legal aid is not available, but there is a lot more demand than he can cope with. A Tribunal Representation Unit is planned to cope with some of the demand.

But the People's Centre is not just an advice centre - it acts as a base for several groups including a Health Group which

gives medical advice and has a doctor who can treat "vagrants", a Gay Befriending Group, a group of lawyers giving free legal advice, and a youth counselling group (the Centre also provides space for the production of Nottingham Voice).

The People's Centre is obviously needed. As the Centre says: "At a time when the budget of Social Services is severely restricted, when the Consumer Advice Centre faces closure, and housing stress is increasing because of Government and Council policy there is more need than ever for an organisation which can mobilise volunteers to give effective aid to those who suffer extreme deprivation and have no means of defending their interests".

Please give generously!



FRIENDS OF THE EARTH have just completed a survey of waste land in the city. They have found that it accounts for $5\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the total area. This is only land which is not utilised or cared for and includes derelict houses or factories and old railway land. It does not include long-standing natural habitats like woods or canal banks.

FoE found nearly 300 separate areas of waste land, some very small and some very large, adding up to over 1,000 acres. The main concentrations are in Lenton, Dunkirk, the Meadows and Bulwell, and also in Basford, Radford and Sneinton.

They suggest a number of things which could be done depend-

ing on the type of land:

☆ Allotments - there is a great call for more allotments, and many of the waste areas are suitable.

☆ Recreational areas - many areas set aside for industrial use in the distant future could be made available at low cost for short term use. Some waste land is more suitable for long term recreational development. FoE is particularly critical of the present policy of landscaping everything because this often destroys good natural habitats and forms biological deserts. More trees, bushes and wild flowers would provide a foothold for many plant and animal species in the city, would be more attractive, provide more scope for children to play and cost less in upkeep.

☆ Conservation areas - some areas such as along disused canals should be protected as reservoirs for wildlife and as public amenities.

☆ Housing - FoE would prefer to see houses built on available land in the city rather than using up agricultural land or woodland outside the city.

☆ Industry - FoE would like to see industry in the city rather than in the countryside, and sited close to housing to cut down journeys to work.

For more information contact Tony Marson, 15 Goose Gate (51405). There is a large detailed map which can be consulted. FoE want people to send in suggestions on what to do with particular pieces of waste land to the City Planning Department in the Guildhall (send copies to

FoE, 15 Goose Gate).



LAST WEEK found the Evening Post lying to cover up a mistake in its Comment column on 10th May.

This concerned a report that Jack Green, Leader of the City Council, wanted some duties transferred back from the County to the City. Green was correctly reported elsewhere in the Post as saying that if this happened no increase in the rates would be justified, and in fact economies should result by removing some duplication, particularly in Transport and Planning.

But the Comment column got it completely the wrong way round. For our readers' amusement we reprint the offending paragraph:

SOFT WAY

Coun. Jack Green, leader of the Nottingham Tory group, has frankly admitted it will lead to an increase in rates (and that does not include education). This is something that will have to be looked at carefully. An increase in rates, rather than savings in expenditure, sounds the soft way out.

The Post had to print a letter from Green pointing out the error, but they added in a footnote: "Coun. Green is right. The word 'not' was inadvertently omitted from the Comment."

Competition - the first Voice reader successfully to place the word "not" in the above paragraph so as to make it correct will be sent a free copy of "The Evening Post Guide to Elementary Logic".

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IT'S REFRESHING to see the ancient art of plagiarism alive and well in the newsroom at Radio Trent. Everyone knows, of course, that the local media all monitor one another for news they themselves have missed. But it is considered normal practice to check stories before using them.

On 12th May there were two main stories being broadcast locally. One concerned two students who had been found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment, and the other concerned a man who had stabbed a Clifton taxi-driver after being released from Mapperley Hospital. Radio Nottingham had the news that local MP Bill Whitlock was calling for an enquiry into why the patient had been released from Mapperley.

Radio Trent were quick to follow, presumably after listening to Radio Nottingham's first bulletin of the day, and added "MP calls for enquiry" to their own bulletin. But they had managed to tack it onto the wrong story - they had MP Whitlock calling for an enquiry into the case of the students for at least three bulletins before the mistake was spotted.



The "If You Don't Hit It ..." people have produced their first pamphlet, "Fighting Fascism", and what a heavy pamphlet it is!

Subjects discussed include: Corporatism, Bourgeois Democracy, Immigration Controls, Powell, Imperialism, Sexism,

Racism, Fascism.

With such a long heavy document can we expect to see groups of revolutionaries sitting around reading while Fascists are busily organising?

Our suggestion is to roll it up and use it as a truncheon.

Price only 12p from Mushroom and Sissons. Enquiries to 15 Scotholme Ave (708302).



THE TORIES TRUNDLED their massive, ungainly 66-strong Leviathan of a majority into the County Hall circus ring on Tuesday.

And what a cheap-jack medicine show it turned out to be.

Herbert Bird, who looked too much like the ringmaster for comfort, tried to peddle facts which were "more factual" than other facts.

Ernest "Prof. Brainstawn" Chambers treated his captive audience to a shambling history lesson about aldermen in the 1830s.

Newly-installed chairman Fred Rudder insisted on taking the council on a Tardis-trip back to Victorian Empire days with prayers as the curtains went up.

The two-member Hucknall Ratepayer Liberation Front gave an impressive performance as the Ugly Sisters. While Liberal David Chambers confused himself with a naive amendment which in whimsical Alice-in-Wonderland fashion he withdrew, after paternal advice from Tory finance boss Michael Spungin.

The only man to emerge with honour was new Labour minority

leader Michael Gallagher who spoke and behaved with unexpected authority.

And after nearly an hour of patronising back-slapping for chairmen and vice-chairmen, incoming and out-going, the council got down to the organisational nitty gritty, with Gallagher scoring an immediate political victory.

With a style he must have learnt from Pilate, Tory leader (?) Peter Wright had last week washed his hands of the task of deciding which minority groups should fill their overall allocations.

Quite rightly, Labour decided they could not afford to give any of their seven places on the 28-man Policy and General Purposes Committee to either rate-payers or the Liberal. They were given their whack on other

committees.

The three odd men out did not agree with this, demanding a voice on the all-powerful mini-council.

According to Gallagher, the trio presented their list of desired committee placings to Wright just ten minutes before Tuesday's show was due to begin.

And with dynamic aplomb Wright gave in.

Among the changes this necessitated was Labour giving up two of their policy committee seats to a Ratepayer and a Liberal. Even bully-Bird looked embarrassed as he read the amendments to committee places, claiming limply that the Tories had been forced to take the matter over because the minorities could not agree.

Now Labour members are pledged never to sit on the new

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policy committee until the Tories reconsider their cheap, ludicrous deal.

Since this committee will apparently form the hub of all the council's work in the future, Labour's role as opposition party will be that much more difficult and complicated.

But it should also serve as a continuing embarrassment to the Tory leadership. All the claptrap churned out since the election about open government and members acting with honour in a bright new era of consultation and consensus had been cast to the wind within seconds.

Bird did manage to pull one good ruse from his messy bag of tricks, however. When he proposed the changes in committee memberships he slipped in a plan to make Wright and himself ex-officio members of all committees except one. So they can, if they want and need to, play dictators in almost all arenas, not just their own.

Labour members were too incensed by the other proposals to pay this device the attention it deserved.

All the same, Gallagher had wasted no time in exploiting the cracks in the creaking Tory superstructure.

The Conservative group's behaviour indicated the sort of problems which too big a majority usually imposes.

What scant front-bench talent they have is now spread hopelessly thin. And oddball members will be under less pressure in divisions to heed the whips.

Still things look all set for a

slash-happy cost-cutting interlude. Teachers' unions are worried about Tory plans to phase out community teachers, and about the future of part-time and temporary staff. Full-timers could soon be on the chopping block, with Government-backed spending cuts and falling school rolls.

Social workers are also anxious about the absence of Conservative commitments to improving services.

Much of the consumer advice and information service built up over the past three years will be axed in one fell swoop at the hands of Public Protection supremo Ron Stanley.

And these are just for starters.

Doubtless they will try to save a couple of thousand quid from their £208 million budget by limiting the number of days councillors can claim attendance allowances.

The costs of increased bureaucracy and enhanced officer-power are much harder to identify.

For the cynics, there's one bright note on which to end. There should be some angry scenes at the first Police Committee meeting. The Tories want to give the chairmanship to solicitor Brendan Haigh and not surprisingly Labour members will be wondering how his full-time job can be reconciled with his part-time council responsibilities.

The weak-kneed Tory group named all their other chairmen at Tuesday's meeting, but ducked out when it came to Police.