

2p

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Nottingham Voice

THE TORY CITY COUNCIL will almost certainly be forced to back down on their housing policies. This is because there are not enough houses to do everything they said they would do.

Their main problem is the number of families to be rehoused from clearance areas - over 4,000 are still left. They were to be rehoused over four years. But the Tories have decided not to build any more council houses so they will have to rehouse most clearance families while the houses still in the pipeline are being handed over by the contractors. 2,500 are to be handed over this year, 1,300 next year, and very few after that. So the Tories said they would rehouse 2,400 clearance families this year and 1,400 next year.

If they do not manage this they will run into serious problems in two years time because there will then be very few new houses available.

But because of the Tory policy of offering all new houses and relets for sale there will not be enough houses for clearance families. That is even if no-one off the waiting list is housed. At the moment large numbers of council houses are being sold though the demand for buying houses may tail off after the initial rush.

The most reliable estimate of the number of houses being sold is 80% of the relets and 25% of the new handovers. If that is maintained it will mean that only 400 relets and 1,900 new houses will be available for rent this year - a total of 2,300 out of which 500 will be needed for special cases and homeless. That leaves only 1,800 for clearance families and the waiting list.

Obviously 2,400 clearance families will not be rehoused this year even if some buy council houses. Only 175 have been rehoused in the last two months - less than half the number necessary to reach the Tory

target.

It has to be remembered that the Tory commitment to bring forward clearance was made three days before the County Council elections and helped to defuse some of the mounting opposition to their policies which was embarrassing the Tories standing for election. It will be eleven weeks after that statement - in July - before the officers present a report. The main reason for the delay is that the Tory commitments are impossible to fulfil.

Meanwhile, in many clearance areas, people are having to wait much longer surrounded by tinned-up houses. And the selection of houses they are being offered is very limited. Because almost all relets are being sold it means that all that is available for rent is new houses mostly on the outskirts of the city and flats like at Balloon Wood. Anyone who wants a house with lower rent or a house on an established estate like Clifton or Bestwood will have to wait a long time - or else go where the council tells them to go.

Even if the Tories change their policies things will still get worse. The Voice predicts that all of the following will happen:

- 1) The Tories will back down on their sales policy - the sale of houses will get a lower priority and clearance families will get a higher priority. It will be better for them to do this now rather than getting into a really impossible mess in a year's time - just before the next city election.
- 2) The choice of houses given to clearance families will be more

restricted than in the past when they got three reasonable offers in areas where they wanted to go. It will not be possible to maintain this unless the Tories stop selling relets or at least give first choice to clearance families.

3) Less than 2,000 clearance families will be rehoused this year.

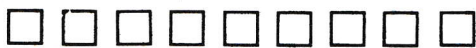
4) Over the next few years many families will be left stranded amongst large numbers of tinned-up houses waiting several months for suitable offers of rehousing to be made. This will be a great incentive for many people to accept unsuitable offers.

5) There will be more evictions for rent arrears as a result of forcing clearance families into new houses where they cannot afford the rent.

Jack Green, architect of the Tories' amateur housing policy, was not available for comment.

Meanwhile the people described by Green as "professional agitators" were busy this week producing 10,000 copies of a free 8-page newspaper called "Housing Action" to be distributed around council estates and clearance areas. These are the people from tenants associations around the city who are involved in the local Housing Action Group.

Reports suggest that the paper is not entirely complimentary towards the Tories' housing policy.



THE ENVIRONMENTAL Information Centre is opening on Goosegate on July 2nd. It will be run by Environmental Factshop Ltd,

a charity started by local people drawn mainly from Friends of the Earth and the Conservation Society.

Subjects the centre will be compiling information on include:

- ☆ local and national planning - reports, planning applications, public inquiries.

- ☆ food - ecological food policies and farming methods.

- ☆ pollution - e.g. pesticides, nuclear power.

As well as a reference library and information bank covering all areas of environmental concern the centre will provide a meeting place and a contact point for local amenity organisations. And it will be a collection point for materials for recycling or re-use including paper and clothing.

The centre will also provide educational materials for teachers and will establish a panel of experts and speakers on a wide range of subjects.

Some of the running expenses and wages of an organising secretary will be met by sales of waste paper, second hand clothes and environmental literature (the range of literature will not compete with Mushroom which is just around the corner). But they are also asking for donations.

The centre will be opened at 12 noon on July 2nd by Graham Knight from Radio Trent and in the morning there will be exhibitions on waste land by Friends of the Earth, water pollution by Severn-Trent water authority, and wildlife by the Notts Trust. There will also be information on nuclear power and a demonstration on the use of a decibel meter

to measure noise.

Details: 15 Goosegate, tel 51405.

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THE LOCAL Housing Action Group this week sent photographs of many empty houses in the city to a press conference at the House of Commons. Many of the examples sent showed council houses empty awaiting sale including a whole terrace of new houses in St Ann's.

They also sent photographs of conditions in the Brand Street, Shipstone Street and Dorset Street clearance areas. These showed people living amongst tinned-up houses suffering from vandalism, rats and rubbish. The captions on these said that the council could not rehouse them because they were offering all their council houses for sale.

And the Group claimed there were an extra 600 houses empty because of the sales policy (Eds - the figure fluctuates between 400 and 600).

The exhibition was organised by the National Empty Homes Campaign and showed details of empty houses in many cities around the country. They said there are over 850,000 empty habitable homes in the country while 1,000,000 families are on waiting lists with an ever declining chance of a better home and 50,000 homeless families apply for emergency accommodation every year.

One purpose of the exhibition was to back a Requisitioning Bill which Frank Allaun MP is trying to get Parliament to accept. It would allow local authorities to

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take over management of privately owned empty properties - this would avoid the authorities having to buy such properties. But the owners would have the right to get their property back. The Campaign says this is only a stop-gap measure and not a solution to the housing problem.

There are many empty properties in Nottingham which could be used if the bill were passed. There are about 2,500 empty properties in clearance areas, most of them in private ownership. Many are empty for two or three years before being knocked down. Allaun's bill would allow the council to use these for housing people temporarily. And there are another 1,000 empty private properties many of which could be brought into occupation by the council.

But Callaghan's private secretary hinted to organisers of the exhibition that they were wasting their time - the proposal to use empty properties to house people was too "radical" while the Labour government was only just clinging on to power. Presumably he meant that the private speculators who can make money out of leaving houses empty were better at lobbying for support than the hundreds of thousands of people who are on the waiting lists or homeless.



To: Dear an' Grayshus mos'
Honerable Queen Elizabeth of
England an' Uganda, yassuh:-
Greetins, on dis, de Silvery
Ju' jubilee you has awarded your

own mos' regal bein'.

As a loyal an cringin serf,
cowerin beneath de majesty of
your Imperial Splendour, still I
gotta hug you tight an give your
bum a little pat in familiar greetin
of one equal to another, knowin
dat you been bustin to do likewise
fo years.

But, dear lady; it do appear
dat we mus plight our trough in
vain, on account of de circum-
stances situation.

Like you knows, o mighty
earthmother, I was wantin to get
over to de Talks an grab a piece
o de action, but dat ain't oper-
ative any more - on account o de
white rascist facists in NEWS
ELAND.

Anyway, enough o my troubles,
queen o de elephants, how's you
an de kids? Fair bustin wid
esprit de corps, I hopes. Give
de corgis a kick from me.

Gotta go now. Me grateful
people wants me to open de New
Idi Amin Dada Memorial Cemet-
ary, out back o de courtrooms.

So till we can make it on our
own, I mos certainly am yours
sinserely, for ever an ever,
Amin.

P.S. I already bought de ring.
H.Samuel says dey can deliver
C.O.D.

P.J.GROB WORTH

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HAVE THE CITY TORIES lost their will to fight? At the last Housing Committee they made no attempt to defend their housing policy against one of the most powerful attacks yet from the Labour group led by John Carroll.

After Labour councillors had pulled the Tory policy to pieces Tory housing chairman Charles Borrett, looking positively youthful compared to the other Tories, asked if any Conservatives wished to say anything. Tory leader Jack Green just shook his head. It was his policy statement which had borne most of the attack from Carroll. All the Conservatives remained silent. And Jack Green was conspicuously absent from the city council four days later when Labour renewed their attack.

Even Chief Executive Michael Hammond had refused to say anything to the Housing Committee to present his Progress Report on the Clearance and Housing Programmes which contained Green's statement. This was on the grounds that he had already presented it to the Policy and Resources Committee. Carroll repeated his now familiar complaint that the Housing Committee is being stripped of its powers before launching into an attack on Green's statement.

Later in the meeting tensions started to appear between chairman Borrett and vice-chairman Ted Hickey. A disagreement between them led to a vote of no-confidence in Borrett being proposed.

Borrett's problem is that he is remote and out of touch with the Tories on his committee.

Hickey is well in touch with the vicious backwoodspeople who are in a majority on the Tory group. But he has very little knowledge of housing matters and is completely lost when it comes to committee procedures.

So Hickey is the heart of the committee firmly rooted in the gutter and Borrett is the head loosely floating in the clouds.

The item which caused the trouble was a trivial piece of political in-fighting between Labour and Tories. Hickey was proposing nominations for representatives on outside bodies. On the Community Housing Association he said Labour man Littlewood should be replaced by a Tory and named Philip Owen. Labour didn't like this and proposed an amendment to put Littlewood back. But so intelligent are the Tories that even after Borrett had explained very carefully what was happening some of them, led by the addle-headed Dorothy Adshead, voted the wrong way and Labour won the vote.

Borrett said they had to accept this and tried to move on to the next business. But little-boy Hickey would not be quiet protesting that it wasn't fair because the Tories obviously didn't know what they were doing. He persisted until Borrett took a vote on deferring the matter to the next meeting where it could be re-amended.

But even this vote had to be taken twice. The first time Labour claimed they had again won. So Borrett took another vote and this time the Tories, who have a large majority, could only manage

a tie. Borrett gave his casting vote to defer the matter.

Then Littlewood proposed a vote of no-confidence in Borrett. But after accusing the Tories of "dirty politics" he withdrew it. Labour leader Carroll had said that if he were to vote against Borrett he would want to do it on a policy matter.

A REQUEST from Nottingham Women's Aid for "second stage housing" for use as an extension to the service provided by the existing battered women's refuge was totally misunderstood by the last city Housing Committee. The matter was deferred to wait for the outcome of a Homeless Persons Bill at present before Parliament. This bill is quite irrelevant to the Women's Aid request.

What they were asking for was another smaller house to provide a more stable environment for women who have to stay in the hostel for several months. They say that out of 35 women who have been provided with shelter since the hostel opened nine had stayed for over three months.

But Housing Director Campbell-Lee misled the Committee by saying that the request was for permanent housing for women who had come from outside Nottingham - something which has already been turned down.

Hopefully when the Homeless Persons Bill is passed the council will be forced to house women who come from outside Nottingham and any other homeless people who have "priority" need who

turn to Nottingham for help (though the Association of District Councils, backed by Nottingham, is opposing this responsibility).

But even if this bill is passed it will not affect the needs of women who have to stay in the hostel a long time. That is why a second-stage hostel is needed.

Only a few minutes after saying they could not find houses for battered women the committee agreed to provide accommodation for "community workers" attached to a Methodist Church in Radford. When Labour leader John Carroll said this could be a dangerous precedent - because all sorts of people could be said to be community workers - Tory chairman Charles Borrett said they had done the same for many other churches. Campbell-Lee agreed.

THE CITY HOUSING COMMITTEE is trying to save a few thousand pounds by forcing three tenants associations to take responsibility for the day-to-day expenses of their tenants halls - in Old Basford, Balloon Wood and Lenton Abbey.

Labour leader John Carroll said that one of the groups had written to him because they were worried about this. He said it could cost each group £30 a week. And Chief Executive Michael Hammond agreed that individual committee members would be liable for any debts.

Labour wanted the matter deferred to make sure that the tenants organisations appreciated the financial responsibilities involved. But the Tories decided to go ahead.

"TOUCHED"

Nottingham nostalgia at the Playhouse - but with a sting. Steve Lowe's "Touched" is set in Sneinton, in the 100 heady days between the end of the European and the Japanese wars - between the discovery of Belsen and the (false) revolutionary dawn of the 1945 Labour election victory.

From Sneinton terraces to Colwick Woods the sets, as always, are superb. In them, three sisters endured the monotony, deprivation and destruction of war. Two of them expect their husbands home from the army, all of them expect their dreams to be fulfilled. One is Joan, cynical but with a "heart of gold". Unlike her lonely, vulnerable sister Sandra who finds herself pregnant - but with a child as much a phantom as the "new dawn" of 1945 itself. The snobs still haven't been exiled to Skeggy as one character suggests. It's just another false dawn.

Apart from a slight tendency to melodrama this is an excellent play. Catch it before it hits the Edinburgh Festival in a big way.



WE ARE HAPPY to report that the generosity of the proprietor of the Evening Post, Colonel Tom Forman Hardy, knows no bounds.

His daughter recently married. The Colonel decided that not only should he give a little something to his staff to mark the occasion but also the hacks of Forman Street would wish to drink a loyal toast to their boss's daughter.

Thus, solving the two prob-

lems at one stroke, he arranged for a can of beer to be distributed to each of his employees.

It is not thought that this amazingly generous gesture will make much of a dent in the Post's profits - rumour has it that the Colonel obtained these cans of ale at a cut rate through the local brewers Hardys & Hansons. The Colonel is of course a director and shareholder.



COUNCILLOR JIM BROUGHTON, chairman of the city Transport Committee, tells us that he sees no alternative but to make the charge of 2p for the free buses in the city centre demanded by the County Council. He says that the alternative of paying £70,000 to the County Council would cost a total of £96,000 taking into account subsidies which would be

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lost.

And he doesn't see how the city can pay this since the County is also to phase out a subsidy of £1,200,000 over the next year on peak hour services.

He said that this cut in peak hour subsidy will be dealt with without redundancies and without "great reductions" in services. He said there would be some cuts in peak hour services but claimed there would be increases in some others. He also said the changes would be phased over the year and would not be presented to the Transport Committee in one overall plan.

That is going to make it very difficult to appreciate the total effect of the cuts which will be necessary. Frank Higgins, former county transport supremo, has said that 80 buses will be lost in peak periods because of the

County Council cut.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOCAL MP Michael English has finally been nagged by his wife into giving up smoking. He apparently has no concern for his constituents who work for Players. But we hear that he is still receiving consignments of cigarettes from the company. We did offer not to print this fact in return for a small share but have not yet seen any. Perhaps he is stockpiling them for when he gets divorced.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE PEOPLE'S CENTRE, Nottingham's independent advice agency, has recently received a threatening anonymous telephone call.

The caller stated, among other things, that black people should be ground up and used as fertiliser. In a firm and frank exchange of views he also stated that the PC will be petrol bombed.

It is obviously a sheer coincidence that National Front stickers have been repeatedly stuck on the PC windows.

A similar coincidence has occurred at Mushroom, a local alternative bookshop. Following the fly-posting of NF stickers Mushroom had a brick thrown through their window.

Obviously Voice staff are unable to positively prove from these coincidences that the National Front wishes to grind black people up and use them as fertiliser and petrol bomb or intimidate people they don't agree

with.

Reports of other coincidences will be printed.



WE NOTICED a story in the Evening Post earlier this week that Raleigh had 400 vacancies they couldn't fill. We thought this was peculiar considering the large numbers of people unemployed.

So we phoned Raleigh to ask what sort of jobs they were, how long they had been vacant, and what reasons could be given.

But they said it would be next week before they could get any answers to us and couldn't even say what sort of workers they were looking for!

Are people who phone up to ask for a job told the same thing?

That could explain why it takes so long to fill their vacancies.

We hope to have a full report in our next issue.



LOVERS of peace and quiet who ride on city buses will be pleased to hear that the midlands branch of Sounds in Motion, the company which has been organising sound advertising on city buses, has gone into voluntary liquidation.

Tapes have been gradually taken out of buses over the past month and it will be another three or four weeks before the parent Sounds in Motion company can resume the experimental service.

This was explained to us by Jim Broughton, chairman of the city Transport Committee. He said the city would not lose any

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money as a result of this apart from the revenue lost while the scheme is not in operation.

And he said the receipts have been higher than expected - nearly £50,000 since last autumn. They expected £68,000 in a full year. He also said that only 38 buses had been involved whereas the contract said there should be 50. He considered the company was in breach of contract because of this but would not say what he was doing about this until he had told the committee.



WHAT ARE THE CITY TORIES trying to hide? The Housing Department is refusing to give the Voice a breakdown of the number of council houses empty in the city.

Every week they get a complete breakdown from their computer of the reasons why council houses are empty. They also work out how much money they are losing in rent.

But the Tories will not allow the officers to divulge this information. Housing chairman Charles Borrett says that the information would be misleading because the figures change from day to day. But he acknowledged that one reason for refusing to give information was that it could be used as ammunition against their sales policy.

The Voice has managed to find out the figures anyway. As Borrett says the figures change daily so the following figures are averages. It must also be remembered that the information in the comput-

er is not always up-to-date or accurate.

According to the computer there are 1200 to 1500 council dwellings empty at any one time. Of these:

500 are offered for sale or waiting for sales to be completed.
250 are waiting for improvements or major repairs.
100 are waiting for minor repairs.
300 are being offered for rent.
100 are waiting for the keys to be handed in when tenants leave.
In addition there is a fluctuating number of empty houses which have been let but the tenants have not yet moved in.

The figures do indeed provide ammunition against the Tory policy of offering all council houses for sale. They show that at any one time around 500 extra houses are empty waiting to be sold. This is because every house is left empty for three weeks on offer for sale. Those which are sold are then empty for much longer before contracts are signed.

This means that the sales policy is keeping 500 extra houses in the city empty all the time. And this means that 500 less families can be properly housed at any time as a result of the policy. And Nottingham had been designated as a housing stress area before this policy started!

We have not found out how much the council is losing by not collecting rents on empty houses but even if the average rent is only £5 a week that is a loss of £2,500 a week just on the houses empty awaiting sale - or over £100,000 loss per year.