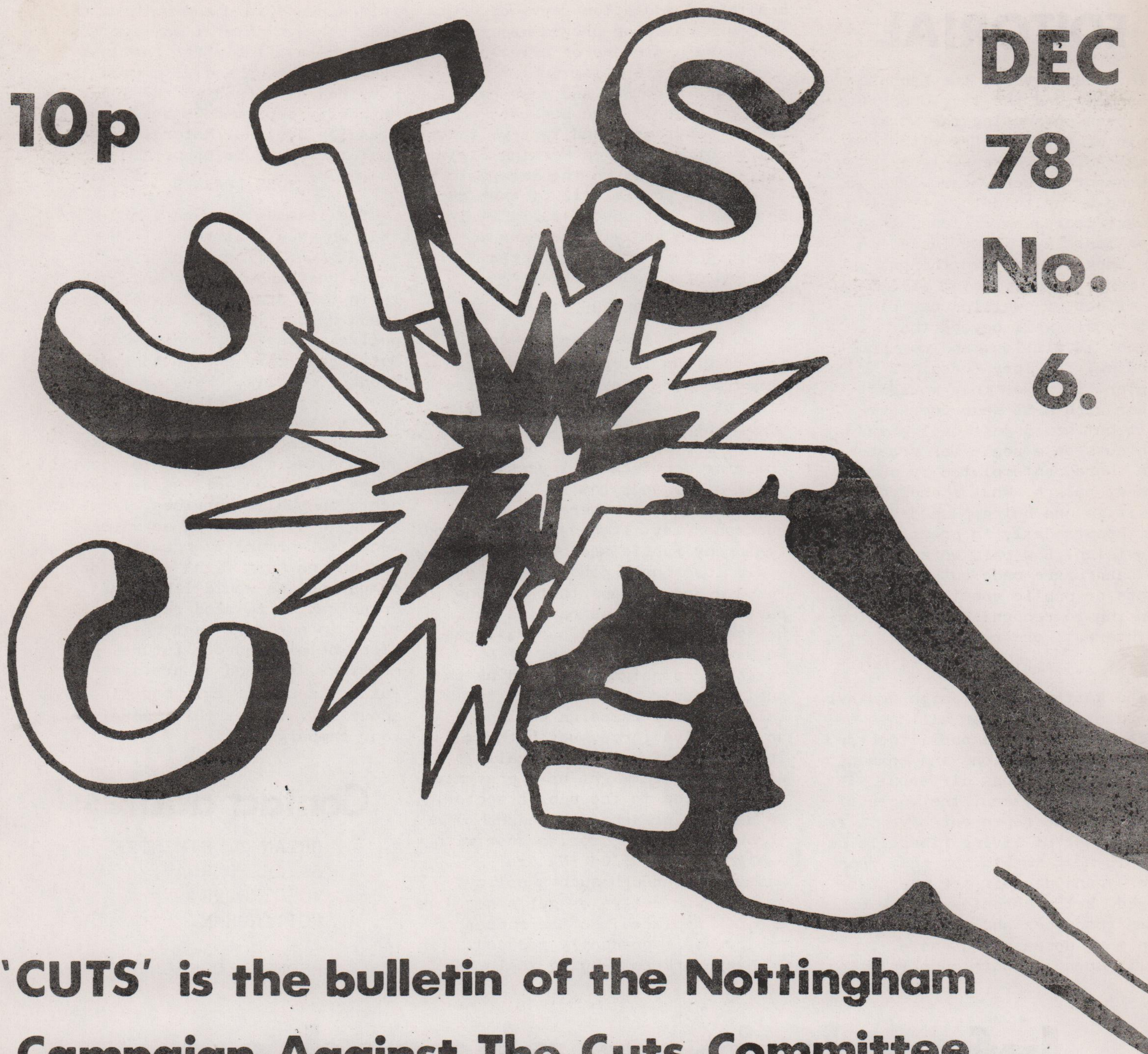


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**'CUTS' is the bulletin of the Nottingham
Campaign Against The Cuts Committee.**

CONTENTS

Bilborough bus depot closed

Hospital cripples community health services

Nursery provision ignored

Rent collectors replaced by giros

Screws on rent arrears

Defend direct labour!

Tories axe community project

Infant helpers phased out

**'CUTS' IS PRINTED AND PRODUCED BY THE EDITORIAL GROUP OF THE NOTTINGHAM CAMPAIGN
AGAINST THE CUTS COMMITTEE c/o 32 GREYS ROAD, WOODTHORPE.**

EDITORIAL

In recent weeks, the Labour Government and the Tory opposition have been presenting the working people of this country with some bleak choices. Bakers, local Government workers, car workers; all are being told to settle for 5% wage increases or less. The Government says if we insist on more they will do two things; cut the money supply, which will have the effect of swelling unemployment totals well beyond the present 1½ million, and cut public spending. The Tory threat is simpler. In power they wouldn't bother with a 5% wage increase limit but would just sail ahead with cuts on a scale far greater than those contemplated by our present rulers. What a choice! Yet it is one being pushed down our throats daily in press and television. Low paid workers like the bakers are made out to be idiots or public enemies for refusing to recognise the 'national interest' or 'reality'.

ALLIANCE

The Nottingham Campaign Against The Cuts, which is an alliance of Trade Unions in the public sector, tenants organisations and community groups, sees things differently. Over the past years, the wages of the people we represent have fallen behind cost of living rises. To us unemployment totals not only mean poverty and despair for the unemployed, but a chronic wastage of human resources and we don't want even more despair and waste. Public spending cuts mean inferior

health and education services, cuts in house building programmes, poorer maintenance of existing houses, deteriorating public transport services and less care for the elderly. The present Labour Government and Tory policies represent attacks on working class living standards in the interests of private profit. All of them must be fought, but specifically it is the cuts in socially necessary public spending, which is the concern of our Committee.

INFORMATION BULLETIN

In 1977, we produced several issues of an Information Bulletin, which sought to explain the effects of public spending cuts locally and we organised wider support for public sector workers, such as building services employees, school meals staff and others. These local initiatives were where our main successes lay. It had been expected that many public sector workers would lose their jobs. In the event few did and perhaps that was due in part to the work we carried out. However, we also had our failures. We saw ourselves as part of a national campaign organised by the public sector unions. Early in 1978 this national campaign collapsed as an effective force, which threw us into a bit of a crisis locally. Also, while we might have prevented redundancies in the public sector, we did not prevent job losses through the back door, a door with a sign on it called 'Natural Wastage'. Through such a policy, workers who retire or get other jobs are not replaced, so the number of employees is gradually reduced. To many workers keeping their jobs

this appears fair and unthreatening. Yet, through natural wastage, fewer jobs are available for the unemployed to take up and of course the services performed by the local authority departments are bound to steadily decline. Natural wastage must therefore be opposed.

LESSONS LEARNED

The lessons we have learned are that we should at this stage concentrate our efforts on local campaigns, and that we should seek to involve organisations other than trade unions in our work more actively. The Tory controlled Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils, obsessed as they are with the aim of cutting rates to win the next elections are accelerating their attacks, not just on their employees but on all of us in our capacities as dependents on public services. If we are going to defend these services, tenants, community organisations and Unions must fight co-ordinated campaigns. We would like your organisation to send representatives to our next meeting (publicised below) and our future meetings, to send us articles for future issues of this magazine and above all, to see this campaign as your campaign.

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Infant helpers phased out

As usual it's the most vulnerable sections of the community that are being hit by the cuts. Childrens education is no exception, and now it's the youngest kids who are going to lose out.

Over the last few years the school population has been declining and there have been enough trained teachers to ensure that every child could be taught in a class of under 30. Has this opportunity been used to improve the quality of education? NO! Instead part-time teachers, who usually provided invaluable specialist skills in primary schools, have been axed. Specialist subject teachers aren't replaced; the nursery programme has been stopped; and now the authority are 'phasing out' infant helpers.

HELPERS TASK

What do these 'helpers' do?

They're not fully trained teachers so is there presence of use educationally?

To start with, they free the teacher from the many non-educational tasks of the infant class room. 5 and 6 year olds aren't as well co-ordinated as older children, they're more accident prone; they're often sick, or wet themselves and can't do routine tasks like tying shoe laces without assistance.

This is where the infant helper can step in leaving the teacher to use his or her time and skills promoting the childrens' educational development, giving the child individual attention that is needed if skills such as reading are to be mastered.

But more goes on in the infant classroom than tying shoe laces and learning to read. The helpers can extend the use of individual and group work to develop manipulative skills, language

work and art and craft. Outside visits are important to extend the childrens' experience, but with classes of 30 or so, and no helpers these would be impossible. Swimming would also be cut

SAVINGS

The authority are looking for short term savings - at the expense of infant school children

The authority have been shown the crucial role of Infant helpers by their own union NUPE, by the NUT and by the parents of children in the schools affected but they are still persisting in their short sighted policies. In the new year they will be discussing the education budget. They must be made to see the opportunities they are wasting. In a situation of falling numbers we must not allow the Council to introduce short-term savings, but instead improve pupil - teacher ratios and the quality of education for our kids.

Bilborough bus depot closed

Many bus services in the city have been cut in the last two years, especially at peak periods. Over 100 buses have been cut from the fleet with a corresponding loss of jobs (through 'natural wastage').

City buses run 10,000 miles a week less than they did two years ago - a cut of over 5%. There are now 200,000 less passenger journeys per week than there were - a cut of over 10%. (These figures do not include the city centre buses 77 and 88.)

But receipts in the same two years have gone up by around 40% - a large increase even after taking inflation into account.

The latest attack by the Tories on city transport is their decision to close Bilborough depot. Ken Garrett, shop steward at Bilborough, takes a closer look at this decision:

Why should I as a ratepayer and an employee of City Transport be concerned over what is happening to the paying and travelling public of Nottingham? I have, up to now, paid my rates on demand without having to struggle, and the council have promised no redundancies for transport employees. I am sitting pretty so why should I not leave it to the experts to run this city of ours? They know more about it than I do anyway. Or do they?

Because the present ruling party think that there are too many buses in Nottingham they have decided to reduce the fleet. They inherited a fleet of almost 500 buses which they have decided to cut to 370. This in turn left them with too many parking spaces so again they made the decision to close Bilborough depot and convert it for use by the Housing Dept. This in turn allows the present old buildings occupied by the Housing Dept to be demolished and new buildings erected for the Dept of Technical Services.

COMMON SENSE OR IS IT?

All this sounds like common sense until one reads "there will be very little need for the Direct Labour Force by the early 1980's - thus wrote Councillor Brandon Brave in a letter to the Nottingham Evening Post. We shall sell all 50,000 houses, said Councillor Green to his television audience. So why convert Bilborough depot for the Housing dept if we won't have one in five years time!

QUESTION OF COST

How much is this conversion to cost? Well it started out as an

estimate for £300,000, then it was £570,000. Up yet again to £906,000 and at the time of writing it was up to £1,200,000. Do you think it will stop at that? Then there are the interest charges to be added. Does this sound like common sense to you?

CLOSER LOOK

Let's take a closer look at the closure of Bilborough depot and see what it will mean to you. But first of all let's ask ourselves if public transport is necessary? If you do not possess transport of your own, are too young to drive, too old to drive, or have never learnt to drive, then your answer is yes. There are so many more reasons why we should have a transport system and I am sure you will think of them yourselves. Who then should run this system. Should it be private enterprise or should it be run by the public bodies?

SUBSIDIES

National government subsidises public transport to the tune of several million pounds per year. Not only do they subsidise the publically owned operators but also those services that are run by the private sector. The plain truth is that there is no one who can make public service operations pay their way. If the taxpayer is to pay out large sums of money to run these services then he/she should have some degree of control over that money. Since we cannot expect to see any new services started by the private sector because of the lack of profit, then any new services will have to be provided by the publically owned sector. If you accept the need for public transport then you must also accept that it should be publically owned. If this is to be subsidised then it must be as efficient as possible.

Bilborough depot is the newest of all City Transport buildings. It can accommodate some fifty buses inside and has parking space outside for another sixty. Next to Parliament Street depot it is the largest. It was the only depot built as a motorbus depot. Situated on the western side of the city, where any future housing developments are likely to take place, it is in an ideal place to change, recover, and repair any defective vehicles on service. On average a hundred buses a month are changed on service by this depot through breakdowns, spilled paint, eggs dropped on the floor, vomit, etc. These changes are made with hardly any loss to service. When this depot is closed any changes made will have to be made from Parliament Street

depot. Even if buses and drivers are available it will take approximately twenty minutes to reach the area and so journeys will be lost. Every change will mean a bus missing from service. Is this efficiency?

IDEAL

Why is Bilborough in the ideal situation for a bus depot? Well, for a start, it is where the people live. The majority of people work in the daytime. In the morning the people of the western districts travel into, or towards the city. Similarly at night they travel towards the western side of the city. When the buses run out of Bilborough in the morning it is but a short journey to the terminus and they are immediately carrying passengers. In the evening it is again just a short journey to the depot. One immediate advantage from this arrangement is that buses can give an earlier morning and later evening service. For those living on this side of the city it means a return to the old days when the last bus left the city at 11pm when Bilborough is closed.

The mileage covered by a bus when running to and from its depot to its terminus is known as dead mileage - obviously because no passengers are carried and there is no cash return for this mileage. Apart from the 53 and 55 services the rest of the services covered by Bilborough are to be run from Parliament Street or Central Market depots. The first and last buses will be travelling in the opposite direction of the public and therefore dead mileage will be increased. Is this efficiency?

FURTHER REDUCTIONS

Are we likely to see any further reductions to City Transport? As everyone knows Central Market is scheduled at some time in the future for redevelopment. It was leased to City Transport as a temporary measure to accommodate the extra buses purchased by the previous ruling party. Some 45 buses are to be garaged there after the closure of Bilborough. Should it be decided to develop this property there will not be the space to house all of these buses elsewhere so inevitably a further reduction must take place.

Trent Bridge depot is in need of repairs to the walls. This depot is also in an area which is being developed. It is an eyesore. Complaints have already been made

about the noise from this depot, particularly noise throughout the night. At present it holds about 35 buses.

Sherwood depot holds some 40 buses and to provide working space during the day some buses have to be taken to Central Market to be parked. When this depot is full in the evenings and weekends there is not enough room even for a child to walk in between the buses. As such it is a bad fire risk and will surely fall foul of any future Health and Safety regulations. The entrance and exit to this depot is dangerous, not only to traffic

on Mansfield Road but also to pedestrians.

Bulwell depot holds 45 buses, has had thousands of pounds spent on it, but will never hold more than 45 buses. It is not capable of being expanded. Nor is Sherwood, or Central Market.

VERY HIGH COST

Should at any time in the future it be found necessary to expand City Transport then new premises will have to be built at very high cost. Bilborough could have been expanded even further at much lower cost.

The operating costs of any

three of these depots is twice as much as for Bilborough depot. Is this efficiency when Bilborough can accommodate the number of buses that any three of these depots will hold?

To be viable public transport must be cheap, convenient and efficient. Higher fares will drive the public away from the buses. Reductions in the fleet lead to a less convenient service. Inefficiency means an added burden to the ratepayer. The loss of public transport will restrict the social and working life of those dependent upon it. If it is to be saved we must act now.

Hospital cripples community health services

A recent programme document on Nottingham's Inner City Programme contains an interesting wealth of information about the problems of the city. Particularly interesting is the material detailing the relative poverty of health services in the city and county.

The document gives the following table of health services in 1974.

UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

It was this poverty of health service provision that led to the decision to build new hospital buildings or to establish a medical teaching centre.

Ironically though, while new buildings are being provided, mainly to raise acute services to an adequate level, insufficient revenue is available to open them. This is despite the fact that Nottinghamshire, as part of the Trent Regional Health Authority, will be benefiting from a higher revenue growth rate than the Health Service national average over the next decade.

The Inner City document draws particular attention to the implications of opening the University Hospital. The net cost of this is likely to be in the order of £13m per year and 'in the face of such a demand, services not directly benefiting from it will remain comparatively ill provided unless additional revenue, over and above that already planned is allocated' (p11)

PROVISION FOR THE ELDERLY

The most pressing deficiency is in provision for the elderly. In the next ten years there is expected to be a 10% increase in the number of people aged over 65 and a 26% increase in the numbers

over 74. It will clearly be difficult to cope with the implications of this increase and this is especially the case as geriatric provision in Nottingham is already probably the lowest per head of population over 65 anywhere in the country and there is an enormous backlog of need to be met.

The DHSS recommend that 10 hospital beds should be provided per 1,000 elderly people. In 1978 Nottingham was 364 beds short of this target and according to the Inner City Programme document the deficiency will rise to about 420 beds by 1988. The DHSS target for geriatric day places is 2/1,000 - Nottingham has a deficiency of almost 150 places. For the elderly severely mentally infirm the DHSS recommends 3 places per 1000 elderly - Nottingham has less than 50 places - a deficiency of over 250 places.

The problem of deficiency in health service provision is exacerbated by a similar sized

deficiency in Local Authority residential provision for the elderly - in which Nottingham is over 40% deficient against DHSS targets of 25 places per 1,000 people over 65 and 20% deficient in Day Centre places.

OTHER SHORTFALLS

There are other serious shortfalls in the level of health visitor, district nurse and nurse management levels. The health visitor establishment is about 1:7500 population compared with DHSS recommendations of 1:3000. 'At the rate of development possible with the main budget, the target level will not be reached until the early 1990's'. The district nurse establishment in the city is 1:4500 population compared with the DHSS recommended level of 1:2500. 'Development through the main budget will take at least ten years to reach target provision'. Nurse management levels in the city are about 1 manager to 45 staff compared with the recommendation

in the Jameson Report of 1:12 staff in Inner City Areas.

HEALTH PROBLEMS

Against these deficiencies evidence of the need for additional health services is clearly stated. "Mortality rates and morbidity rates are higher than average in Nottingham's inner city areas. From national statistics before 1945 and from Hospital In-patient Inquiry Inquiry Tables since 1947,..... it can be illustrated that the

difference in the mortality rate in the city between Social Classes 1 and 2 and Social Classes 4 and 5 has widened during the last 40 years. Indeed the difference in rate between Classes 1 and 5 has doubled". (p12)

INNER CITY EXPENDITURE

The Inner City Programme expenditure will make only a small impact on the problems of the scale identified above. In the first programme year 1979/80 a

total of £139,500 are proposed on Health service schemes and this falls to £92,400 in 1980/81 and £78,900 in 1981/82. These figures may be compared to the £2.5m per annum which would be required just to make up the deficiency for hospital provision for the elderly. To really deal with the inadequacies of the local health service provision will require more than dribbles from the Inner City Programme - it will require a major expansion of public expenditure.

Nursery provision ignored

"A woman's place is in the home", staying in to look after the kids and provide unpaid domestic labour for the man who is out "at work all day". If she goes out to work it is for "pin money" - a luxury to be fitted in only if and when the state happens to need her in the labour market. So of course when the cuts come, she is the first to be pushed back to her social isolation and sole responsibility for child care, and among the first provisions to be axed are facilities for the under fives.

This line of argument is so instilled into people's minds that it tends to be taken for granted without question even by the women who themselves suffer its consequences. And not without reason - after all men do have access to a much wider range of jobs, at much higher wages. And whatever paid work women may do, they are still, almost without exception, the ones who also have to fit in the housework and child care - or (if they can) find alternative arrangements. They are hardly in a strong position to demand an equal right to job opportunities with all those problems to sort out, as well as having to face the guilt of abandoning their children who supposedly need their undivided maternal attention. Those social pressures are still there despite ample evidence to the contrary that children benefit a great deal from mixing freely with a variety of other children and adults - including men! This was acceptable enough in the war when women were needed elsewhere, and there was no shortage of nursery places then.

DEPRESSION

Women often have to go out to work, either as sole providers or to supplement the meagre family budget against the ever rising

cost of living, or simply because they are sick of living on the poverty line and suffering the nervous stress of being stuck in alone with young children all day (recent research has shown an alarming rate of depression amongst mothers of young children).

But despite official recognition that women have an equal right to meaningful work, what chance is there of this in practice when they have to stop work to care for their children because there is so little alternative provision for under fives? (In 1974 an official national survey showed that 26% of mothers with children under five were at work. By the time children were four 91% of parents wanted some kind of day care. In Notts less than 20% of under fives have some sort of provision.)

LOCAL REPORT

Nottingham Workshop and the Women's Studies Unit were spurred on to investigate this problem locally. We began by getting an idea of the extent of the problem by conducting a survey on one estate, Balloon Wood, on how many mothers of under fives do go out to work, or would if there were facilities available. We found that less than 20% of children in the sample had any form of day care, of which less than 5% was of a type that fitted in with a working day. More than half of those interviewed were dissatisfied with child care facilities in the area and 73% said they would look for work if they were available.

This of course only touches the surface of the problem, but confirms what is generally apparent - that there is a terrific lack of provision for women who want or need to go out to work. From here we went on

to look at what facilities are available. This is dealt with in more detail in "Child Care Provision in the Nottingham Area", shortly to be published. It found basically that what little provision there is is certainly not geared to the needs of working mothers.

Nursery education classes are part time and are in school hours and school terms. Playgroups are also part time and involve the participation of the mothers themselves. Day Nurseries, run by the Social Services Department, provide what could be the most suitable kind of care in respect of hours but they only provide places for the children of deprived or "problem" families. Moreover, even for these "priority" children there is a lack of place and waiting lists are long.

This situation leaves most working mothers with little choice except private nurseries - including the very few workplace nurseries, registered childminders, relatives or, least satisfactory unregistered minders. (Childminders are legally obliged to register with the local authority and are subject to certain inspections and also limited help from the Social Services Department.)

There are disadvantages to private nurseries and childminders. The most obvious is, of course, that payment has to be made. This is usually in the range of £10 to £12 per child per week. This kind of amount eats quite substantially into the low pay that many women workers receive. At the same time, given that minders are not allowed to look after more than three under fives, the childminders themselves are very low paid for their work.

Another issue is the adequacy of care. The quality of childminding, in particular, has been the subject of some controversy.

Locally the County Council envisages an expanded role for childminding - but they clearly see this as a cheap option and proposed increased financial and other support for minders, in the light of their proposed new role, is very limited.

WORSE

Cuts in public spending and recent policy decisions of the County Council have only served to make this situation worse. When Labour controlled the County Council considerable resources were put into building up the number of nursery school places and in 1977 their Policy Review Panel commented that "in view of the shortage of places affecting all day care facilities for the children of working mothers, the County Council should consider increasing the proportion of full time places in nursery classes and might offer extended hours for 3-5 year old children on payment

by parents". With the Tory takeover these ideas were dropped and the nursery education programme cut saving some £167,000 in building costs and an unestimated amount in wages, upkeep, new jobs, etc.. A planned 405 nursery class places were lost. The resulting protests and petitions were to no avail, and the budget for 78/79 to 81/82 allows no increase in places either for day nurseries or nursery classes.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Obviously the Council has no immediate plans for recognising or meeting the needs of working women and their children so it is up to the unions, the women's and labour movement themselves. Further details and specific recommendations are included in the Child Care Report, and the Women's Studies Unit is continuing to work on related issues such as problems of school holidays both for under and over fives, and

maternity and paternity leave. But obviously no change will take place without involvement and action by everyone concerned.

THE WOMEN'S STUDIES UNIT

The WSU is an independent organisation of women concerned with research to identify and work for change in issues affecting women in the Nottingham area. So far we have worked with Nottingham Workshop to produce reports on the needs of working women for child care facilities, and the problems of low pay, and are at present looking into further issues related to child care provision. We are very interested in doing work with and for any bodies that need information on their areas of concern, and in any suggestions for further areas of work.

For further information contact Jill Chadwick, WSU, Women's Centre, 32A Shakespeare Street, or phone 860558.

Rent collectors replaced by giros

An experiment has been started by the Housing Committee, which, if proved successful after twelve months, will result in the closing down of the Rent Collectors Dept. and the ultimate loss of 32 jobs.

The rent Payment by National Giro scheme is being run for the trial period in four areas of the city namely; Edwards Lane, Heathfield, Greenwood Road and Billborough (south west) Estates. Whereas previously the rent collector used to collect the rent once a fortnight, the tenant is now issued with a voucher booklet containing 25 slips (one for each paying period over a year) and the tenant has to pay the rent at either a specified local post office, one of three city centre post offices, one of the four district housing offices or the city treasury.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

A detailed report was submitted to the Housing Committee in Dec 77 which concluded;

"The matters for consideration by the Committee do not hinge mainly on cost. Clearly there is little likelihood of the Giro costing more than our present system and strong possibilities of some saving, provided the present system of Council office payments is retained. The points to be taken into account are, therefore, the safety of rent collectors and risk of attack, compared with the convenience to a majority of tenants who still appear to prefer a fort-

nightly call by a rent collector."

The Housing Committee in deciding to implement the experimental system has chosen to ignore the plight of the 32 rent collectors, nine of whom are eligible for retirement within the next five years and have chosen to totally ignore the inconvenience which will be caused to the majority of their tenants.

The Basford Flats Tenants Action Group, when asking their question "Does the Housing Committee care more for their money than their tenants?", could not have been given a clearer answer. Obviously it does care more for it's money.

TENANTS AFFECTED

As a result of the introduction of this scheme a considerable number of tenants will be severely affected in the following ways to name but a few;

1. where this scheme has been introduced in other cities, there has been a marked increase in the numbers of arrears. Increased arrears means increased costs and this could well mean increased rents.
2. the elderly or disabled who used to rely on the rent collector collecting the rent will have to make alternative arrangements. But as one Tory councillor has already implied 'these people already get some one to collect their pension so they can get that person to pay their rent as well can't they!'
3. the elderly and infirm who used

to report repairs/problems etc to the rent collector will no longer have this facility available to them.

4. for those couples or single parents who go out to work, they will no longer be able to leave their rent for the rent collector with the neighbour. They will have to make other arrangements.
5. the incidence of mugging etc. particularly around Post Offices is likely to increase and if the tenant is robbed, it is highly unlikely that he or she is insured for such an event. A tenant having been robbed is unlikely to be able to find monies to replace the stolen rent and will therefore be placed in arrears. Having been placed in arrears he/she could then go on to lose his/her possessions at the hands of the Bailiff as a result of the Tory policies.

PERSPECTIVE

But, let us put the problem into perspective, nobody wants to see the Rent Collectors being robbed, and no reasonable thinking person wants to see others put to a great deal of inconvenience.

To close down the Rent Collectors Department along with 32 jobs and to replace it with a rent payment by Giro scheme which stands to inconvenience so many, does not make a great deal of sense. Alternatives do exist and should be considered.

Screws on rent arrears

Recently the Tory Housing Committee, behind closed doors, decided to be harsher on tenants with rent arrears. Rather than go through the Law Courts to evict the tenant for being in arrears, they have decided that for arrears of less than or around £50, a bailiff should be sent round with a 'Notice of Distress'. The computer now picks out anyone who is in arrears and the bailiff is sent round.

WALKING POSSESSION

The bailiff has the right of entry into your house or flat and will list furniture and possessions to the value of the arrears. This is called taking 'Walking Possession' of goods. If the arrears are not paid within five days, the bailiff will return and carry off the goods.

This five days includes Saturday and Sunday (although you can't pay on these days even if you wanted to!) If a tenant wants an extension to the Possession Order the tenant must phone the bailiff's office (865585) and ask for an extension form to be sent to him/her by first class mail. He/she then has to pay the Distress Notice's 'Levy Fee' of £2.10 and the Possession Fee of £1.25 plus 25p for every day of the Possession Order extension.

The Council have told the bailiff not to grant any Possession Order extensions if at all possible as this would only put the tenant further into arrears with the current rent. It is important to pay the bailiffs fees (as outlined above) and any outstanding arrears before paying any further current rent even though this move will only bring the bailiff round again. In the long run it would be cheaper to pay the bailiff than to replace the furniture and other possessions he/she will take.

The Council feel this is more 'effective and efficient' than endeavouring to go to the Courts for a Warrant for Possession to evict the tenant. It may be, but it gives no open and fair appeals machinery where hardship or circumstances can be explained and discussed. The Housing Committee has even refused to employ their own staff to help people sort out rent problems.

Do the Housing Committee care more for their money than for the welfare of their tenants?

HOUSE SALES CREATING HARDSHIP

The Tories are so desperate to sell every possible Council House they can, that the Transfer List and system is virtually non-existent. Hence any tenant who is

building up rent arrears in a property which perhaps is too expensive eg. because it is one of the newer estates of Top Valley or Clifton (approx. rent £21.00 per fortnight) is unable to transfer to a less expensive property at say Sherwood or Broxtowe (approx. rent £13.00 per fortnight). The Tories are so keen to put every Council House on the 'Sales List' that the option of moving from expensive to cheaper property is no longer available either as a choice to the tenant or an alternative to the Housing Department.

The Rent Payment by Giro Scheme which is creating arrears by taking more than a week to transfer rent payment from the Post Office to the Housing Account, the removal of the availability of transfer facilities and the Housing Committee tactics of harassment of tenants by means of the Bailiffs, Possession Orders and ultimately eviction, all point to the fact that the Tories ought to start thinking with their heads rather than their feet.

The Tories medieval attitude of beating the tenants into submission must be opposed.

Our thanks to the Basford Flats Tenants Action Group for much of the information contained in this article.

Defend direct labour!

An article entitled 'Direct Labour in Nottingham' appeared in Bulletin No 1 of Nottingham Workshop, which charted the deliberate rundown of the Direct Labour force in the city. It said that this run down was in line with attacks from national employers federations against the very idea of having any kinds of Direct Labour forces at all.

Direct labour is the workforce employed by local authorities for construction work. Most local authorities have a Direct Labour Organisation (D.L.O.) of some sort, undertaking the building and repair of houses, schools, roads, etc. D.L.O.'s employ over 200,000 workers.

INTENDED AS A SERVICE

From the beginnings in the 1890s D.L.O.'s were intended as a service, set up as a response to the contracting system to provide a good quality product, at reasonable cost, with good working conditions and trade union rights. However, they have had to fight continuously to maintain this service. Some have been closed down and later re-opened

as local councils changed political control. Repairs and maintenance budgets have been cut again and again, and private contractors have always tried to curb new house-building and modernization by D.L.O.'s. And it is especially at times of cut-backs in government spending on construction, such as is happening now, that the private construction industry is desperate to prevent scarce contracts falling into the hands of direct labour organisations.

In Nottingham, the two most important explanations of the declining Direct Labour Force are;

firstly, the national government spending cuts announced on 15th April 1975, Budget for the financial year 1976/77, which heralded a new wave of cuts; and secondly, the election of a Conservative controlled council in May 1976.

Every month figures are produced for the Housing Committee which show the overall employment situation in terms of employment and repairs done. Nottingham Workshop compiled a table from those figures as were available at that time (ie in February 1978) and this is reproduced below:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
WORKMEN EMPLOYED - TOTAL	589	649	759	735	603
WORKMEN ENGAGED	20	25	20	3	2
WORKMEN LEFT, RETIRED ETC.	12	17	17	11	13

(The figures given in the table are averaged out over the 12 months of each year).

The article also quoted public statements made round about that time which clearly indicated Cons-

ervative policy. At the March Policy and Resources Committee, council leader Jack Green stated: "It won't be long before the improvement section is absorbed into the repairs section." He went on: "It's being run down and that's it. We don't want a section of about 800 men, it will be going down to about 500".

THE SITUATION NOW

Well, what is the strength of the Direct Labour force at the moment? The total strength of the present workforce is now 516. Not to mention the fact that the workers are so demoralised that they are looking around for other jobs. Situations are now occurring such as when 12 workers leave, they are being replaced by 2. It's worth mentioning, however, that there are now the same number of supervisory staff as when the workforce was 800 strong.

What are the consequences of this so-called 'natural wastage' and who is suffering? In plain terms, a worsening repairs and maintenance service for tenants, and worsening job conditions for building workers.

The fact is, that work isn't being done that was previously done; and the bare minimum time is allowed for jobs to be done which, of course results in bodging - this, of course is nothing more nor less than false economy.

It is also important to realise which sections of the Nottingham D.L.O. have been hit the hardest. The fact is that it is the improvement section which has been run down the most - since the Tories have been in control, it has been reduced from 180 strong to 50. This particular section attracts workers who can BUILD - and the fact is that the D.L.O. has been doing that kind of work over the last six years, BUT this was the first section of the D.L.O. to be chopped.

What is the reason for this? As we said above, in times of cut-backs on government spending, private contractors are desperate to prevent scarce contracts going to D.L.O.'s; and as the smear stories about council building departments in the press show, the biggest firms in the construction industry, who can afford it, orchestrate campaigns against D.L.O.'s. Now the improvement work that the D.L.O. has been doing over the past six years is going out to contract while the improvement section of the the D.L.O. is run down. In fact, all building work is going to the private sector, while the main bulk of the D.L.O. is used for painting jobs.

CONSEQUENCES

What are the consequences of this this? In Nottingham, firms like Wimpey, Rollison's and Tarmacadam are getting the contracts for

improvement work - yet these firms have never done that type of work before. Nationally, more work than ever in the modernization and improvement field is going to private contractors - and this is part of the Labour Government's policy!

Relatively little builders are now doing this work such as Simmons - and it was this firm that got the contract for the modernization of the Alms Houses on Canning Circus. This work is now costing treble their tendered price, precisely because this firm didn't realise the problems that this job involved. And yet, the Direct Labour force also tendered for this job, and they tendered on the basis of these problems which they knew of, having done repairs to these buildings. What do you make of that?

Jack Green has, of course, refused to discuss this situation with UCATT.

PRIVATE CONTRACTORS POSITION

What is the position of the larger building firms in all this? The fact is that the construction industry is in a mess. Nearly 180,000 building workers are unemployed; output has slumped; building costs have rocketed; millions of pounds need to be spent on shoring up buildings and roads that are only a few years old; and yet contractors profits have reached record levels.

The fact is that the larger firms like all big companies, can 'ride the storm' of the recession while small firms go under. They survive the crisis by scrapping less profitable subsidiaries, taking over other firms like property companies or building material suppliers, expanding overseas (eg. Wimpeys) or with low overheads and fixed capital, laying off thousands of workers and biding their time till the next upswing.

And, of course, as is happening in Nottingham, undertaking work they traditionally haven't done at the expense of the Direct Labour Force ie. improvement and modernization work. To use a word, the Direct Labour force is becoming 'margin-alised'. Its ability to provide an important construction and repairs /maintenance SERVICE, with the accent on service rather than profit leading to extensive benefits to tenants and workers, is being strangled.

It isn't equipped NOW to do the repairs that these properties require - but, of course, we have to see this in the context of the lemming-like, foot in the door sales push to sell off the council housing stock. But who is going to buy the bad houses? - and the fact is that the work is not now being done on them.

IF TRENDS CONTINUE

If present trends continue, we

can comfortably speculate that, within a couple of years, there won't be a housing service of any note in Nottingham. A significant pointer to this is the circumstances surrounding the transfer of the Direct Labour force from its main base at Eastcroft on the London Road to the Bilborough Bus Depot, which, of course, is or was the most modern bus depot in the city. When UCATT representatives were first informed by Campbell-Lee at King Street of this decision, one of the most pressing considerations was whether the Bilborough Bus Depot was big enough to accommodate the Direct Labour force - the answer was 'just about'.

(It should be emphasised here that the building workers union, UCATT representatives refused to discuss this decision with Campbell-Lee. The reason they refused to discuss it was they wanted to be in contact with the bus workers union to find out what position they should take on this issue, so that they could have some form of relationship whereby the bus-workers wouldn't be knocked over the head by the authorities. This contact didn't materialise - the result is that alterations on the Bilborough depot start this month in the wake of yet another depot for workers and the public, as the buses formerly at Bilborough are dispersed across the city).

The answer now is that the Bilborough depot is TOO big for the D.L.O., while its former depot at Eastcroft is being sold off, according to the Finance and Planning Committee, for industrial development.

But, what happens when firms such as Wimpey's who are now taking over modernisation work - what happens when the upswing in construction comes, when work improves and the private firms get back into building with big contracts. - Are they going to be held to their contracts for work which to them is relative peanuts? The fact is that councillors and community activists in Nottingham have received complaints about the length of time that such jobs take now when private contractors do them - they drag on - because they are such a low priority for the big contractors. As we say, this kind of work to the big boys is just a stop gap.

Who then would carry out the work on council houses, which, in a city like Nottingham is so obviously essential? Or are council houses just regarded as a temporary market - a market which will disappear when they have all been sold. (and we don't have to spell out again the consequences of the house sales policy - which T.V. Eye was able to do with the use of all the resources that television has). Again, if the intention is to

abolish the direct labour force, as Councillor Brandon-Bravo seems to think it is, what then will be the fate of the Bilborough depot, having been converted for the purpose at the ratepayers expense? It is, after all, in a very strategic position and, just to show our own business sense, could form a very useful base for a private contractor to carry out their own work from on what were previously council houses, and thus the responsibility of the D.L.O., as far, of course, as housing management allowed.

These are all questions that need ANSWERS - and we can brook no refusal on the part of so called elected 'representatives' to give them.

The consequences of these trends for council tenants are large - they will have to wait even longer than at present for modernization and repairs, when the work is done it is more likely to be substandard. Building workers themselves will be forced back on to the dole, back on to the lump, back to insecurity. Indeed, at the moment within the D.L.O. in Nottingham there is no potential to earn bonus (often bonuses make up over half the pay of the building worker). The workers can't survive on minimum wage levels and the result is that they are forced to look for alternative employment in the private sector, away from the labour department as such which form the basis of a publically controlled and decasualised building industry.

RATEPAYERS SUFFER

And, of course, the ratepayers suffer. Private firms contract for every job they undertake, and want to make as much profit as possible. The greatest profit is made by cutting corners and generally

scamping on work. More often than not, contract terms are broken in order to increase profits. Outrageous claims for additional costs are made, which are rarely given any publicity, and completion dates are delayed.

Not only this, there is also widespread corruption. Apart from bribery scandals like Bryants in Birmingham, there is a lot of price fixing. Both the supply of materials and the tenders for contracts are affected.

To quote the Sunday Times of the 5th February 1978 'The construction industries image is already badly dented by revelations of nationwide price fixing in the ready-mix concrete industry, with firms carving up city after city across the country. Even though 133 ready mix price rings have already been revealed by the Office of Fair Trading those for the 'black top' (the familiar trade name for asphalt surface) are expected to prove even bigger'.

In Birmingham, ex employees of local building companies revealed that it was quite normal for firms to arrange who would get what contract. All other firms would then tender very high prices, leaving the chosen company with no real competition.

No wonder then that in the midst of the worst crisis in the building industry history, that profits for the larger contracting firms have reached record levels.

DIRECT LABOUR IS THE ALTERNATIVE TO THIS CHAOTIC SYSTEM.

The following demands in Nottingham must be fought for; and tenants can play a vital part in the struggle.

DEFEND DIRECT LABOUR!

TREBLE THE DIRECT WORKS DEPARTMENT

TO CARRY OUT REPAIRS, IMPROVEMENTS AND NEW BUILDING.

RESTART NEW BUILDING PROGRAMME.

All the worst characteristics of the construction industry (and there are many) stem from the basic fact that building firms contract for every job they undertake, and want to make as much profit as possible. The contracting system operates to the benefit of the larger building firms, and everyone else has to pay the cost.

Over the years the D.L.O. record (and the disastrous record of the private construction industry) shows that it is only by improving and expanding the public sector - with its potential for public accountability and accent on service rather than profit - that the crisis in building can be overcome.

The following measure would strike at the roots of the system which makes money out of peoples' housing needs:-

NATIONALISE ALL BUILDING LAND, CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES, BUILDING SOCIETIES AND PLACE THEM UNDER THE CONTROL OF WORKERS AND LOCAL PEOPLE.

Sources: Nottingham Workshop Bulletin No 1, Community Action 39 Building with Direct Labour, The Direct Labour Collective, Defend Direct Labour in Sandwell published by Midland Regional Council of UCATT. North East Trade Union Studies Information Unit 'Direct Labour - the answer to building chaos' Joint report by TUSIU and Tyne & Wear Resource Centre.

All available for sale from 118 Mansfield Road. We are also ordering 'Defend Direct Labour' badges for people who want to wear them.

Tories axe community project

Councillor Herbert Bird, defender of the ratepayers interests, summed up the Tory attitude when he said "We support voluntary groups as long as they know their place". Councillor Bird was speaking at the County Council Social Services Committee on June 21st when the decision to close down Nottingham Areas Project (NAP) was taken.

BUT WHAT IS NAP?

Nottingham Areas Project was set up some four years ago as a five year scheme to employ community workers to work in several council designated stress areas in the city, tackling the problems of juvenile delinquency. The workers quickly realised that delinquency was not a problem that could be

tackled on its own. Delinquency was created as a result of the lack of basic facilities - i.e. decent housing and accessible play facilities - and so the NAP workers set about helping groups in the areas to fight for these basic facilities. The Nottingham Areas Project even went as far as giving the control of the worker and his (there were never any women workers!) annual development money to the areas to direct on a day to day basis.

NAP was shut down for two main reasons. Firstly, it was a victim of its own success. It had enabled a great many community organisations to stand up and make demands on the Council. But secondly, and more importantly

N.A.P. was closed down because it was not controllable by the Council.

OTHER GROUP AFFECTED

The period up until June 21st saw many groups throughout the County suffering at the hands of the Tories as they increased their control, for example; The Basford Flats Tenants Action Group were using a small room in the local tenants hall. The Council having gained access to the room without permission of the Tenants Action Group went through the groups papers and took photographs. As a result the group was told to get out of the Tenants Hall without any chance to put their case despite representing over

600 tenants.

The Council for Voluntary Service (C.V.S.) was hauled before a secret meeting with leaders of the Tory group and the County Chief Executive. It was suggested that the C.V.S. hadn't got its priorities right because it was supporting a homosexual advice centre. C.V.S. was told to use its grant from the County Council properly.

The International Community Centre (I.C.C.) has had a new management committee formed for it by the City Council whereby the City Council now has the majority of members. The I.C.C. is supposed to be mainly for ethnic groups, but the Council intends to reduce the say of ethnic groups. The Council intends to develop the I.C.C. as a Centre for owner occupiers moving into the new houses immediately behind it.

The Top Valley Community Assoc. premises at 55 Flaxton Way will be closed down - against the wishes of the people using it. It is however being replaced by another building but the group will not have a major say in it.

The Community Relations Council (C.R.C.) has been moved out of the International Community Centre. The Council threatened to withdraw the C.R.C. grant unless they moved. The C.R.C. is backed by the Home Office, its main job is to change peoples' attitudes on race. Obviously some Tories don't want their attitudes changing.

Playscheme Groups - eight voluntary groups involved with providing Summer Playschemes were told they would not receive any grant aid unless they accepted two councillors on their respective management bodies. In one case the amount of grant was a mere £50.

Sutton School Centre came under a very heavy attack from the County Chief Executive and top Tories. But fortunately the school has a strong branch of the N.U.T. and they managed to force a proper Inquiry. The Inquiry showed the school was

one of the best in the country and had nothing to answer for.

Schools generally in the county have been told to tighten up on religious education and assemblies. Even the religious syllabus agreed with the Church has come under attack from some Tories.

Groups in Nottingham Areas Project Areas have been severely hit by the closure of N.A.P. No longer are they able to control a worker into carrying out research and launching campaigns on their behalf. In addition not only have the N.A.P. facilities been removed but, as Social Services Director Mr Edward Culham implied at the Social Services Committee meeting 'there is nothing to replace them with'.

QUESTION OF CONTROL

The public reasons given for the closure of N.A.P. by the Tories were that N.A.P. would not submit accounts and was being unco-operative. Both these points are absurd. All grants administered by N.A.P. were fully audited by the County Councils own auditors and the accounts had never been queried during the projects four years existence. As far as being unco-operative was concerned, N.A.P. not only repeatedly met the County Council, frequently at short notice but they also agreed to implement the majority of requests made upon them.

The Tory Council policy was one of exercising control. All those groups listed above were being controlled to one degree or another. So why the need to exercise control?

Throughout this time there was a great deal of talk and speculation as to when the Elections were going to be. The Tories didn't want anyone rocking the boat and so they threatened and/or silenced those groups which were in a position to create a noise.

N.A.P. which was potentially the most voiciferous had to be silenced. Perhaps Councillor Noble really summed it up at the Social Services

Committee meeting when he stated "I'll second it (the motion to close N.A.P.) I don't know anything about these people".

N.A.P. cannot and should not be seen as a financial cut. It was a cut, certainly, the jobs of the seven workers no longer exist, but it is worth noting that it cost the Social Services Committee more to close down the Nottingham Areas Project than it would have done to keep it running until its five year grant ran out in 1979.

118 Centre still open

Despite the action of Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Committee in axing all funding to the Nottingham Areas Project we would point out that the 118 Resources Centre at 118 Mansfield Road is still open.

It is being run by volunteers and as a result of its financial crisis there has had to be a slight increase in the cost of materials used. The 118 Centre is at the present time able to offer the following facilities:
Meeting Rooms - 50p charge for evening meetings,
Typewriters - both manual and electric,
Photocopying and duplicating machines,
Litho printing press,
Process camera and plate maker,
Electric and manual staplers,
Screen printing,
Artwork materials such as lettraset.
For further information please ring the 118 Centre on either 582369 or 50428.

We would stress that to use the building it is necessary to become a registered user. This necessitates filling in a very simple application form, spelling out the aims of your group (sending a copy of your constitution if you have one) and attending the meeting of the 118 committee which will be discussing your application.

Cuts Campaign Meeting
Tuesday 5th December
7.30pm at the
T & G W U Meeting Room
259 Mansfield Road