

Lawyers step in as author attacks police

A NEW BOOK dealing with police treatment of Blacks in Liverpool has been heavily censored by lawyers for the Panther paperback publishing firm.

The opening chapter of Derek Humphry's 'Police Power and Black People' is entitled Agriculture in Liverpool. It raises the two big cases of alleged pot-planting on blacks by Liverpool police, and the indications of the wider scope of the practice given by former police officers.

When the book was launched in London, Derek Humphry, who is a race relations writer on the 'Sunday Times', said: "The lawyers have cut more than half this chapter. They have knocked the guts out of it."

Frightened

"They were frightened that the police elsewhere might react to particular charges quoted about Liverpool as if they were against all police forces all over the country, and might take action."

Among what has survived, as well as truncated details of the Rogers and Cruickshank cases, is praise of the treatment given to the allegations by Radio Merseyside and some of Liverpool's non-commercial newspapers — which, of course, aired all the details Panther have censored, without as yet being sued.

Together with praise for the Mersey People and Free Press come roadside attacks on the Daily Post and Echo.

Acquittals

These papers, says the book, "reported the drug cases in a few paragraphs. Along with most British newspapers they apparently consider that only a conviction, and a heavy sentence and fine are newsworthy. Acquittals, unless of famous persons with whom the readers can identify, are considered of little news value."

The local press in general, said Humphry at his conference, are at fault by always "waiting for the balloon to go up before they look at it. In particular they don't pay

sufficient attention to what goes on in the courts."

The Post & Echo were stoutly defended at the conference by their London editor, Dennis Smith, who came along in addition to the reporter already covering the event, to speak up for the Liverpool press and police, and the city in general.

It was up to the press not to inflame situations, he said. Replied Humphry: "The absence of reporting inflames the situation."

Sensational

Asked why the Post & Echo had failed to give extensive coverage of the potentially sensational drug trials in which the accused made grave charges of planting by the police — and were acquitted — he said: "They were treated on their merits. I was in Liverpool at the time and I didn't even know they were going on."

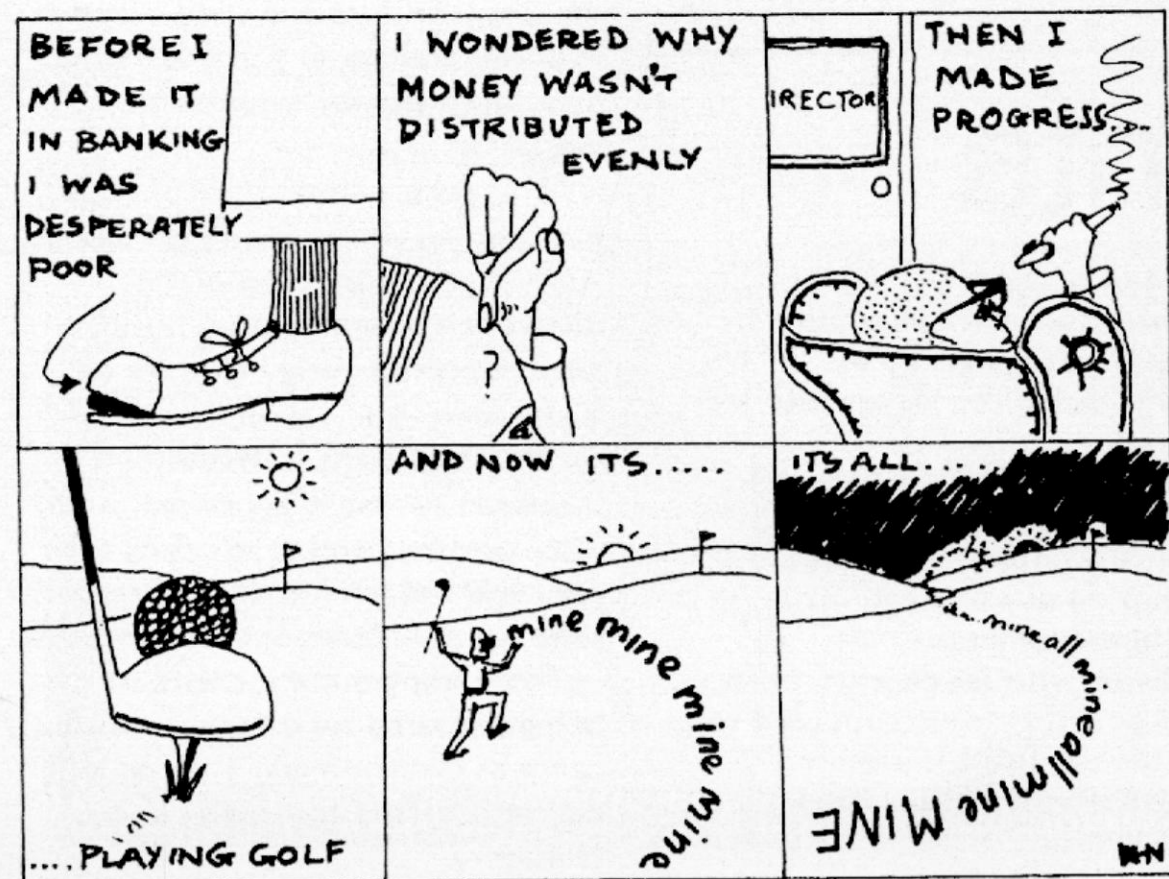
The book still contains some powerful evidence against the Liverpool police's treatment of blacks. It details complaints against the Task Force put forward by the city's Senior Community Relations Officer, Dorothy Kuya, and records the inevitable response: "The Chief Constable would welcome complaints from anyone who thought the police had behaved in an unauthorised manner."

Hostile

But when people do complain they wait a year or more for the Chief Constable's usual answer: "I do not propose to take any further action."

Doctors and community workers who visited police stations to help arrested blacks "met with a hostile response," the book says. And when the Chief Constable said he would take no action against a sergeant said by a policewoman (on Radio Merseyside) to have beaten up an innocent youth, even the Police Federation magazine commented, "the force was let down badly by its leaders", the book adds.

The Panther paperback firm is owned by the Granada TV empire.



Offices to let...

- CONCOURSE HOUSE (44,000 sq ft)**
Lime Street. One floor let, twelve still empty. Likely to be hot in summer, cold in winter. Central core gives only one escape route in emergency. Rent now reduced from £1 per sq ft to 75p.
- SPINNEY HOUSE (42,000)**
Above Littlewoods, Church Street. 32,000 sq ft available now, another 10,000 next year. £1.10 per sq ft.
- J.M.CENTRE (33,000)**
Old Hall Street. Headquarters of Littlewood company, but 8th and 9th floors empty. £1.05 per sq ft.
- HAMILTON HOUSE (71,000)**
Pall Mall. U-shaped block due to be completed this October. Liverpool Polytechnic a possible tenant. Ground floor £1.50, other five floors £1.25 per sq ft.
- HOLIDAY INN (42,000)**
Paradise Street. Surprising addition to the list — it was supposed to be a hotel. But when it's completed this year the 6th, 7th and 8th floors will be offices. Considered as a possible home for the new Merseyside County Council, but the address: "Holiday Inn, Paradise Street" would look pretty silly on their notepaper. £1 per sq ft.
- WHITEACRE HOUSE (84,000)**
Old Hall Street. Brown-windowed, air-conditioned luxury tower above new Post & Echo building. Ready next year. Possibly only (!) 69,000 sq ft to let. Expensive: £1.75 to £2 per sq ft.
- DOCK OFFICES (152,000)**
Pier Head. Dock company want smaller premises near Seaforth dock. Five floors plus basement. Interior dignified (some might say antiquated). Most likely home of new Merseyside County Council, but for the first year or two they would probably need less than half the total space. £1 per sq ft if you rent the whole lot.
- RAIL HOUSE (72,000)**
Lord Nelson St. Up to eight floors available if British Rail move their offices to Manchester in 1973/4 as expected. £1 per sq ft.
- SILKHOUSE COURT (10,000)**
Tithebarn Street. "Accommodates the new Liverpool Stock Exchange and many of the city's leading stockbrokers," say the corporation. Perhaps there aren't so many leading stockbrokers because there's still 10,000 sq ft empty.
- STANLEY HALL (41,000)** Edmund Street. Available late this year.
- RICHMOND HOUSE (20,940)** Chapel Street. Details not known.
- MERSEYSIDE HOUSE (12,000)** Lord Street. Details not known.

...and to be built

- MANN ISLAND (1,000,000)**
Land owned by Dock Company and corporation. Scheme involving 1,000,000 sq ft likely to be approved. "If required the site is capable of expansion into the Albert Dock area where use could be made of the warehouses, a historically interesting, listed group of buildings capable of conversion into offices," say the corporation.
- EXCHANGE STATION (400,000)**
Site of old Exchange Hotel. Scheduled for offices under 1966 City Centre Plan. "Suitable" for 400,000 sq ft.
- ST PAUL'S SQUARE (300,000)**
Run-down area between J.M.Centre and Liverpool Stadium. Designated for 300,000 sq ft of offices under amendment to City Centre Plan last year. Littlewoods own much of the site and are keen to see it developed. The corporation are prepared to slap compulsory purchase orders on any smaller owners who turn awkward. Demolition of the Stadium [announced on Page 3] is just the start of something very big here...
- MOORFIELDS (231,000)**
Part of the so-called Moorfields Action Area. Perhaps "Speculation Riot Area" would be more accurate. Just to make the whole thing more exciting, "a competition amongst selected developers to undertake the construction of 231,000 sq ft of offices on the site is taking place at the present time," say the Planning Department. Let's hope they televise the final!
- LIME STREET CHAMBERS (150,000)**
The old black building at the front of Lime Street Station will be pulled down. British Rail are keen to see it redeveloped. They got outline permission for 150,000 sq ft in 1968.
- EXCHANGE STREET EAST (98,000)**
Metropolitan Estates Co Ltd have outline planning permission for corner offices on corner with Dale Street.
- NORWICH UNION BUILDING (90,000)**
Water Street. Work starting this year. Some space will be for Norwich Union, but there'll be plenty to spare.
- SAILORS' HOME (37,000)**
Sold to a developer. Interesting building sadly awaiting demolition. Outline permission for 37,000 sq ft of offices granted last year.
- GREAT CROSSHALL STREET (39,000)**
To be built by 1974. Five floors plus basement. Strong smells from brewery may not encourage tenants.
- CENTRE HOTEL (60,000)**
Behind Lime Street Station. Company have permission for 60,000 sq ft of offices as well as the hotel they're building there at present.
- ROYAL INSURANCE BUILDING (Unspecified)**
Old Hall Street. First phase under construction. Planning permission for second phase involving an unspecified amount of office space.
- CORPORATION BUILDINGS (49 buildings)**
If the Civic Centre is built 49 office buildings will be empty. Some are too-archaic for future use, but others are modern — such as Wilberforce House (Planning Department) and Canning Place Development (Housing Department).

If you want to build an office in Liverpool the corporation will help you find a site and buy up everything that's on it. They'll build you a car park next to it, a walkway leading up to it... and when it's finished they'll even try and find a tenant to fill it. In this special inquiry we look at the office speculators, what they are doing to the city, what they are costing us, and whether we should help them.

HOW WE HELP SPECULATORS

"BILL SEFTON & Co, Estate Agents." No, that sign hasn't gone up outside the Town Hall just yet, but the leader of the Labour council has taken on the job of finding tenants for Liverpool's empty offices.

It is the ironic climax to a long series of incentives designed to attract speculators to the city centre.

First, there's the persuasion. While Bill Sefton was scratching his head over the unwanted offices already built, the city's glossy newsletter, 'Liverpool Industry 72' was cheerfully announcing: "Another 5,000,000 sq ft of offices planned." This amount — to be built in the next ten years — is 2½ times that built in the last decade.

"The plan is designed," the publicity men went on, "to cater for expansion by reserving sites for British and overseas developers."

Not only are sites earmarked — the corporation uses compulsory purchase orders to help clear them for developers. Developers are expected to make some effort to buy up small property which stands in their way, but if any owner proves troublesome the corporation steps in and bundles him

LARGE/SMALL MODERNISED OFFICE SUITES AVAILABLE TO BE LET

This happened on the Royal Insurance/Post & Echo site where one firm, G.E. Knowles, refused to sell. The corporation made a compulsory purchase.

The justification was that public interest was at stake (the public interest taking the shape of the corporation car park which was included in the building).

Members of the legal profession in the city were disquieted, and their disquiet was shared by Coun. Trevor Jones:

"I maintain the compulsory purchase of the firm was beyond the powers the corporation had been given," he said.

"G.E. Knowles were given a raw deal. They were compulsorily purchased under the Corporation Motorway Bill, even though the land was not being taken for the motorway."

"It was immoral. I had been given

assurances that land not required for the motorway would be offered back to the former owners."

Compulsory purchase powers may be used again soon on the 300,000 sq ft St Paul's Square development where several small owners on the site could turn awkward.

Where the corporation owns a site developers find the going even easier. Several have leased land from the corporation at ridiculously low ground rents — including Prudential Insurance and Holiday Inns of America.

The Holiday Inn in Paradise Street is paying a rent well below £10,000 a year — not a realistic amount for such a valuable site. The Holiday Inn is ostensibly a hotel but has three floors of offices containing nearly as much space as the whole of Concourse House.

YET MORE

All this might be enough to excite any developer but there's more to come... If you want a car park handy the corporation can oblige.

On the site where the Royal Insurance Company and Post & Echo are building new offices the corporation has built a car park costing the city £1,300,000 (it was cut into solid rock). A further £100,000 has been lavished on a road system for the buildings and £300,000 on walkways.

No extravagance has been too great for this site. One of its amenities will be a bridge over Old Hall Street. A public house was found to stand just where the corporation had hoped to put a pillar for the bridge... so they bought the pub — for £30,000.

The Holiday Inn and its 42,000 sq ft of offices have also been very fortunate. The corporation is to pay out £9,000 over the next five years on a walkway in the building. And a multi-storey car park is going up next door.

It's not surprising that with incentives like these the speculators have been building offices at a rate of 200,000 sq ft a year. And what's worrying Bill Sefton now is that hardly anybody wants to rent them.

No major office organisation has come to Liverpool since the war, and others have moved away. 300

Left: Royal Insurance building.



office jobs went with Cunard. MANWEB's move to Chester cost the city 450 jobs. Silcock and Lever merged (450 office jobs lost). And when British Rail move their offices to Manchester 800 jobs go.

More and more organisations are centralising their North-West activities in Manchester. The North West Planning Council, North West Gas Board, BBC, British Road Services, the Post Office, Central Electricity Generating Board and the AA all run their Merseyside business from Manchester. British Rail's move is likely to be just one of a growing number.

Between 1951 and 1961 clerical jobs on Merseyside had a slower growth rate than any other development area or region of Britain (11.7% compared with 31.7% for the North Region). In the five years from 1961 to 1966 it was even slower (1.6% compared with the North's 10.8%). In an administrative and managerial jobs the situation is similar.

THOUSANDS

Alderman Sefton hopes the government will help fill the offices by sending thousands of civil servants.

Possibly the Ministry of Aviation Supply Headquarters will be persuaded to move here between 1973 and 1976, bringing 5,000 civil servants and extra jobs for 2,000 to 3,000 local people. They would want 1,000,000 sq ft of offices.

Such a move would do no more than keep up appearances, making it less obvious that Liverpool is building more offices than it needs. But it would not solve the problem. With the corporation acting as their estate agent even more speculators would rush in to build — and the whole empty offices spiral would begin again.

THE CHAINS OF OFFICES

It's often said that if the empty offices were let, Liverpool would get more money from rates. This is misleading. Because rates do not provide as much money as Liverpool needs, the central government helps with a Rate Support Grant. Any increase in income from rates is automatically cancelled out by a decrease in this grant.

So Liverpool gets no direct benefit from letting the offices — in fact it loses. The offices add to the corporation's costs by putting an extra burden on sewage and refuse disposal, and increasing traffic congestion.

In addition there's the enormous cost of new roads, car parks, walkways and bridges built to entice developers to the city in the first place.

There would be indirect benefits from bringing civil servants to Liverpool — if they lived in the city. But no-one knows how many would prefer the fashionable areas of Wirral or the Lancashire coast.

The real cost is what speculation does to the city and the people in it. For the people, it's a disaster. Buildings which add diversity or provide a service at low cost, just don't count.

But if the need for them isn't there, what you really build is debts. And what follows is bankruptcy.

The Stadium — unique in Liverpool — must go. It isn't smart, doesn't fit in. It will be missed, but not replaced.

The old Sailors' Home could still be used, as a much-needed hostel perhaps. But no-one would buy it for that. You can't make £1 a square foot from tramps.

The cheap hotels in Mount Pleasant are making way for a car park. Thousands of hard-up newcomers looking for work or permanent lodgings have spent a night there. The new hotel — St George's — costs £6,25 a night (without breakfast).

The smallest traders (who made the least money and survived by catering for needs) are squeezed out of town or out of business. New shops are built, their only tenants the big moneyspinners.

Consecutive councils, Labour and Conservative, have given this their blessing. Their reason is prestige. They believe that if you make the trappings of a great city greatness will follow. That if you build the signs of prosperity — shopping precincts, motorways, hotels, offices — prosperity will follow.

But if the need for them isn't there, what you really build is debts. And what follows is bankruptcy.