

Sergeant Paltrey

by Frank



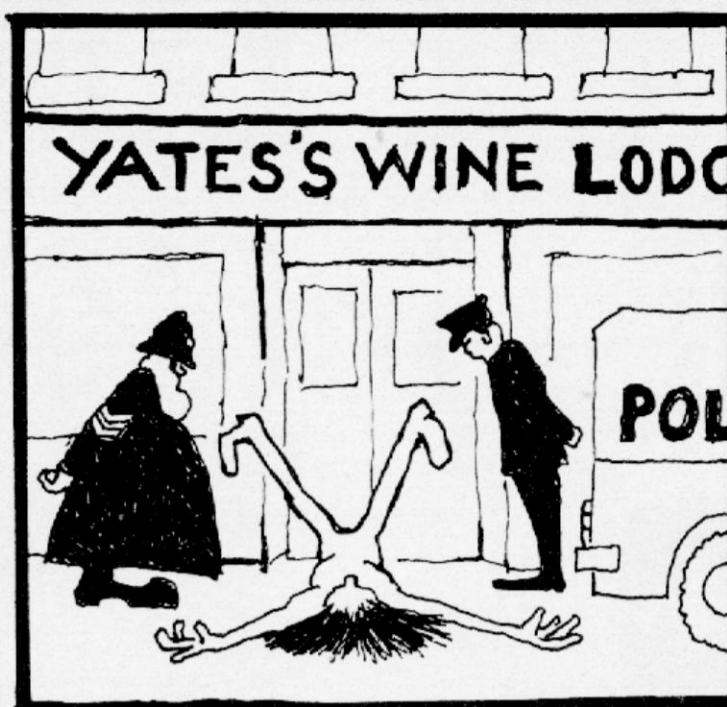
"His flashing eyes, his floating hair!"



"Weave a circle round him thrice, and close your eyes"



"With holy dread; For he on honey-dew bath fed,"



"And drunk the milk of paradise"

[Samuel Coleridge - Kubla Khan]

Manesty workers' three month strike

OVERSHADOWED by the recent docks and building workers' disputes, 200 engineering workers of Manesty Machines in Speke have been on official strike for the last three months.

During this time engineering firms throughout the country have settled their disputes after factory occupations in the Manchester area and at Wingrove & Rodgers in Kirkby.

Even members of the same group as Manesty's (the Reynolds chain group) have now negotiated an agreement.

Talks began at a national level in April for an all-round wage increase, reduction in hours, average earnings for holidays, and extra holidays.

The employers' federation offered an increase of £1.50 per week and an extra day's holiday. The offer was rejected and negotiations referred to a local level.

Having received no improvement on this offer, employees at Manesty Machines went on strike on June 23.

They are claiming an extra £8 a week for all grades, because overtime - previously a reliable boost to earnings - has been stopped.

Rejected

After further negotiations at a national level agreements on holidays and minimum earnings levels have been reached.

However these do not affect two important points of the Manesty claim - an overall wage increase and average earnings for holidays.

Profits at Manesty increased from £154,000 in 1970 to £213,000 in 1971. This was high in relation to the firm's capital - 43.7% of capital employed in 1970 and 50% in 1971.

After ten weeks the company made their first offer - a new bonus scheme, but one that they admit could not benefit all employees. The men rejected this offer, claiming that it would take away what control they had gained in their work and conditions in the past.

Because the offer does not satisfy these points the official dispute is continuing with full backing from the AUEW executive council, district committee and local officials.

Back from a city safari...

A FREE PRESS READER is just back from safari... through Liverpool's Municipal Building. All he wanted was the minutes of the 'Fair Rents' council meeting.

On the first day, making an early start, he arrived at the information desk where they sent him to the General Office where they sent him to the Housing Committee Office where they told him to go back to the General Office after lunch.

"The minutes should be ready very soon," said the General Office late that afternoon. "Would you care to wait?" Our reader did. For half an hour. Then: "Can you call back on Monday?"

GENERAL OFFICE, MONDAY: "It's the Registration Office you want." At the Registration Office our reader's name and address were checked in the electoral register by two officials. Next they produced a form to fill in - "For permission to view the minutes" and demanded a 'viewing fee' of 5p.

Our reader replied that a 'view' was not enough - he wanted to study the minutes in some detail. What about all the printed copies? Couldn't he have one to take away? "No", said the official, "We don't sell those".

● This ridiculous piece of bureaucracy seems designed to hamper the public in keeping an eye on their councillors. The Free Press will supply a phot-copy of City Council minutes to anyone who wants one. No, we won't sell them either - we'll give them free. Just send a stamped, addressed envelope to us at 24 Wapping, Liverpool 1 and give the date of the meeting you want.

Innocent man's arrest cost a week's work

SINCE he was arrested in April and charged with being equipped for theft, Mr Alan Hirst has lost a week's work visiting courts and he and his wife have had to put up with numerous calls from detectives and probation officers to their home.

On September 8 at Liverpool Crown Court Mr Hirst was found not guilty - under the judge's direction - because of insufficient police evidence.

One of the arresting officers did not give evidence. The court was told he had left the force.

About midnight on the night of his arrest, Mr Hirst was walking through a garage forecourt, curious to see a factory he once worked in, which had been burnt out a week before.

While he was in the forecourt, a police car pulled in and he automatically ducked behind the nearest car. As the car was turning round the police spotted Mr Hirst.

Two officers jumped out of the car, grabbed him, and after searching the area, took him down to Lawrence Road police station.

It was at the station that the 'evidence' was suddenly produced: a single length of electric cable (the police claimed this was a 'jumper' lead) and two ignition keys.

Mr Hirst was then searched, told he looked like a typical thief and put in the cells. Later he was questioned by a detective and returned to the cells.

Fingerprints

During this time one of the officers visited Mrs Hirst to inform her that her husband was in custody but would be released later that night.

After his fingerprints had been taken and he was formally charged, Mr Hirst was allowed home.

Two days later a detective visited Mrs Hirst to enquire about their financial position in the event of Mr Hirst being fined.

A few days later, on solicitor's advice, he pleaded not guilty at the Magistrates' Court. Next he appeared in a committal court and was committed to the Crown Court.

The first Crown Court hearing was adjourned and it was not until two months later that the case was heard.

During this time Mr Hirst had to make two visits to a probation officer, who then called on Mrs Hirst to find out if she was a good wife, or why her husband might resort to crime. It was later decided that Mr Hirst would not be in need of

probation.

When the case was finally called to court again, the jury were sworn in, the charge was read and the prosecution began to deliver its case.

The judge then stopped the case and asked the jury to leave. The police, he said, had no case at all and had simply assumed that Mr Hirst was attempting to steal.

The two police officers involved were called for. One was said to have left the force. The other spoke to the prosecution counsel, who then told the court they did not wish to continue the case.

The judge instructed the jury to find Mr Hirst not guilty.

BLACK ACTION

LIVERPOOL'S FIRST black community action group has been started by some young people in the Granby area.

Surprisingly, they have already found a centre - in the basement of the District Social Services Office in Grove Street.

The group are planning to run a workshop and free library at the centre, as well as various courses.

But all this costs money. Most of the people who are setting it up are broke, because, like so many in the district, they are unemployed.

Besides money they need wood for shelves, furniture, and political and sociological books. Their address is: LBCAG, Social Services District Office, Grove Street, Liverpool 8.

DON'T MENTION IT!

GEORGE CREGEEN, editor of the Echo, whose wise thoughts have been recorded in the Free Press from time to time, has come up with another one: Unfavourable references to the packaging industry shall not henceforth appear in

his paper.

The cause of this strange order from The Bunker (as Cregeen's personal office is known) is writer Moya Jones. While out shopping she discovered some odd things about the price of paper and plastic carrier bags in Liverpool stores [see page 2] and wrote an article about it.

The article was rejected on the grounds that the Echo has financial interests in packaging. (The Echo owns Greenmount, Holcombe and Trinity paper mills).

This is not the first article Mrs Jones has had suppressed. She has also discovered harmful ingredients in bubble bath liquids and once, with colleague John Perkins, tried to expose a phoney price reduction on tins of Ajax.

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THINGS
WE BUY OR EXCHANGE
YOUR USED RECORDS.
BEST PRICES PAID

Radical Jim on his way up

THE MAN who has been in charge of planning Liverpool for the last five years may soon be planning a move to London.

Mr Francis ("call me Jim") Amos has been tipped as the most likely successor to Mr David Eversley who is leaving his job as chief strategic planner of the Greater London Council.

According to the magazine New Society, Amos has "a radical, liberal image that some of the city's community groups would wish to dispute". The liberal image has been reinforced by his Social Malaise Study (a survey of poverty and suffering in the inner city areas) and his efforts to get community centres built at the same time as new estates instead of years later.

But he has also made the city more attractive to private developers by ensuring that those who want to build shops don't have to wait for those who want to build offices and vice versa.

And he recently argued in the Financial Times that the city needed more offices, and urged financial incentives for property developers.