

Hollow victory in canal fight

BOOTLE COUNCIL'S decision to urge the closure of their section of the Liverpool-Leeds Canal is seen as a victory for the Anti Canal Marina Action Committee.

But the Action Committee may be cheering too soon. Bootle Council has no power to close the canal, in spite of the Echo's front page headline on October 18 - 'Bootle plans to close canal'. Responsibility lies largely with the British Waterways Board, and other local authorities are involved. Litherland Council have already voted the other way.

The committee, formed by local people after a 5-year-old became the latest child drowning victim in April, has led a vigorous campaign for closure. A petition was signed by 22,000 people, the MP was lobbied, and four committee members were arrested for dumping rubbish from the canal on the Town Hall steps (but were later conditionally discharged).

Finally forced to make a decision, Bootle's Labour councillors delighted in supporting the closure proposal in front of an applauding public gallery. But the vote will do little more than ensure a quieter life for the councillors.

The opposition Canal Improvement Committee are confident the canal won't be closed within the next five years. And long before then, Bootle Council will merge into the much larger District 11a in the local government reorganisation.

Friends together

'Not ALL Vice Chancellors are card carrying members of the Fascist Party,' is the only well-known saying of Trevor Thomas, Vice Chancellor of Liverpool University.

This may be true, but some Vice Chancellors have fascist friends. It's not long since Trevor himself spent five weeks at the private residence of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, who is hardly known as the arch-defender of liberty.

Last year Mr Lee received an honorary degree in law at Liverpool University. And no doubt he was able to entertain Dr Thomas with tales of his judicial powers which he has used to imprison his critics without trial.

Both men were at Cambridge together.

I enclose for six/twelve issues of Liverpool Free Press

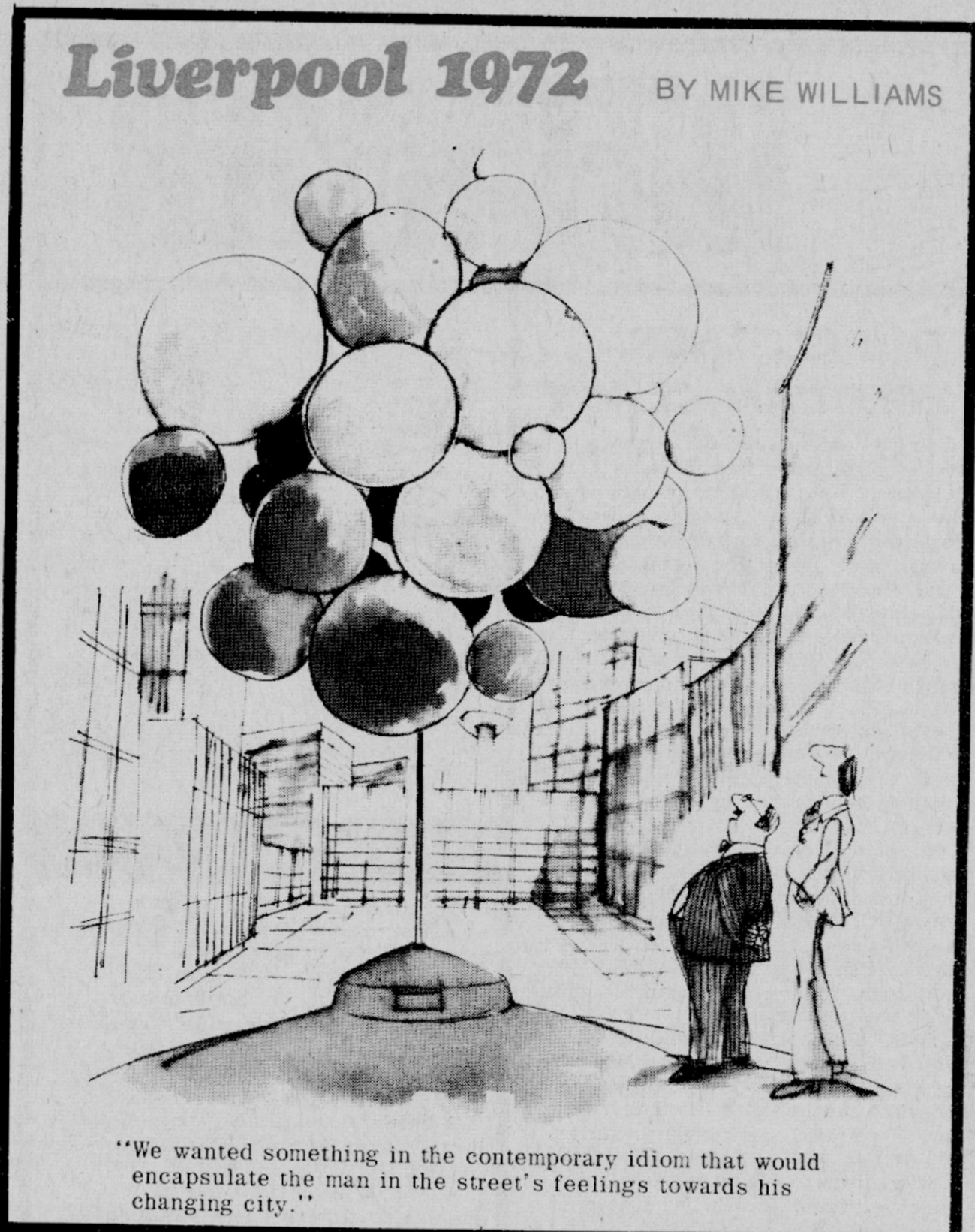


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"We wanted something in the contemporary idiom that would encapsulate the man in the street's feelings towards his changing city."

Tower flats still not strengthened

TWO Ronan Point type blocks of flats in Everton have still not been strengthened by Liverpool Corporation. This is despite a Government instruction to do the work nearly four years ago.

The same Government order called for gas supplies to be removed from these flats.

But it was not until two months ago that the corporation cut off the gas supply to Candia and Crete towers. Until then gas cookers were still being used by some people in the flats.

DECK OF CARDS

The flats are built on a prefabricated 'deck of cards' principle similar to the Ronan Point flats in London which partially collapsed, killing four people. A gas explosion blew a wall out of one flat and caused walls and floors of other flats to cascade down.

Inquiries at Liverpool's Housing Department revealed that the strengthening of Candia and Crete towers is not expected until "sometime after Christmas."

Liverpool first delayed strengthening deck of card blocks in the city for a year while it haggled with the government for an increased subsidy towards the cost of the work.

After that it strengthened most of the blocks, but haggled yet again when the tenants of Candia and Crete towers set out certain conditions before they would allow the work to be done.

The plan to develop Liverpool Airport to the sum of £10 has been warmly welcomed by the Air Transport Committee of the Merseyside Chamber of Commerce.

Liverpool Echo

These conditions were put forward at a meeting with the Corporation in December 1970. The points included: Move out all families with young children in line with council policy; re-house those with medical grounds; allow tenants to move into temporary accommodation while work was being done; ensure constant attendance of a clerk of works; compensation in various circumstances; and no rent to be paid while the work was being done.

Mr Jim Moran, an organiser of the Candia and Crete Tenants' Association at the time says now:

"The Corporation agreed with our conditions on the night and then changed their minds when they replied in writing."

Liverpool Corporation were content to quibble over compensation and leave the work undone. In reply, the tenants refused to allow contractors into their flats to do the strengthening.

Since then, the Corporation have

Where now Sir?

INVESTIGATIONS are taking place into the way a Liverpool Housing Department official has been using a Corporation limousine.

The car, complete with chauffeur, is used - for official duties - by Mr James Hall, Director of Housing.

But Mr Charles Howard, Head of Housing Programme has used it as well - and not always on business.

The car has been seen about the streets at some unlikely times. Once it was found parked in Dale Street about midnight with the chauffeur sitting inside... waiting for his passenger.

The car has also taken a woman passenger to visit a ladies' hairdresser.

Labour men buy council houses

THREE Labour councillors living on council estates have escaped rent increases under the Government's 'Fair' Rents Act.

For a Free Press investigation shows that councillors James Mottram, Tom Bailey and Bill Lafferty have bought their council homes.

A fourth member, Councillor Bill Smyth was in the Labour party when he bought his house but has since joined the Liberals.

Rightly, one of the first actions of the Liverpool Labour Party when they came to power in May was to stop the sale of council houses. And there was very little dissension when this policy was agreed at a Labour group meeting.

Councillor Lafferty only missed rent rises under the Act by a hair's breadth. The sale of his house, 17 Garsfield Road, Anfield, wasn't completed until July this year, whereas the other three councillors bought their homes in 1968.

Three of the councillors - Smyth, Mottram and Lafferty - failed for

various reasons to attend the critical council meeting when Liverpool agreed to implement the anti-tenant Act.

The one who did attend, Councillor 'Thrasher' Bailey (he supports corporal punishment in schools) voted with right-wing Labour colleagues for implementation.

Soon after the council decision on 'Fair' Rents, Bill Lafferty joined the 21 Labour members who are continuing the fight against the Act and refusing to attend any meetings called by the official Labour group.

END OF REBELLION

However this flurry of opposition didn't last long. He didn't attend meetings held by the 'rebels' and has now returned to the official Labour group.

Towards the end of last year five other Labour councillors sent in application forms to the corporation asking the price of their council homes.

They were Charles McDonald, David Mitchell, Albert Brown, James Gardner and Les Evans.

Four of these voted to implement the Act. Councillor Les Evans, who voted against, is a member of the 21-Group who are continuing the fight. He explained that he only filled in a friend's form because he wanted to find out how much prices had risen - since there were complaints of 'gazumping' by Netherley tenants.

● Footnote: Businessman Ald. Bill Sefton (Leader of the Labour Party) has no rent worries. He owns not one home... but two. One is at 88 Tramway Road, Aigburth, and the other is a desirable cottage in North Wales where he can retreat when Liverpool tenants get too militant.

BARON John Edmond Sandford, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Housing has been up to Liverpool to inspect our 'environmental improvements' (i.e. grass planted where people used to live).

The Baron was among a party of ten who ate a substantial meal at public expense in the Adelphi Hotel (£3 a head, drinks extra).

Well sated, they then toured the city's slum areas.

GREETINGS CARDS



FREE PRESS cartoonist Frank has designed three greetings cards specially for our readers. Card A is illustrated above. Card B shows a burglar at the police station. In his sack are three French hens, two turtle doves etc (as in the song). Card C shows nuns practising their carols. Sergeant Paltrey arrives to say 'We've had complaints about the noise.' Cards are 5p each post free. Send orders to 24 Wapping, Liverpool 1. Cheques payable to Free Press. Don't forget to say how many you want of each design.