



Lord Mayor and garage: Two floors still have no glass in the windows.

Spare a pound for the Mayor

THE LORD MAYOR of Liverpool, Alderman Robert Meadows, hopes his family firm will receive up to £3 million from the corporation. The corporation want to demolish a building owned by his firm, Lime Street Garages Ltd, and the money would be compensation.

Last June — as Lord Mayor — Ald Meadows signed a compulsory purchase order on the building. And on March 21 — as a director of his firm — he may object to the order at a public inquiry.

The property, which is in Redcross Street, off Derby Square, includes a garage, car showroom and stores — and is not yet fully built.

Construction has gone on in fits and starts over the best part of a decade, but has now been halted. Two of the four floors appear complete. The top two still have no glass in the windows. It became known in 1965 that the building could be affected by redevelopment, and some people

used to wonder who would finish the job first: the builders or the demolition men?

Ald Meadows has described the business as "profitable." But it is no gold-mine. Profits are small, the overdraft is large and turnover has been falling steadily since 1968.

Negotiations to purchase the property began last October, and the Lord Mayor's estate agent almost reached agreement with the corporation: £200,000 for the building (which is on freehold land) plus disturbance compensation to be settled later.

Ald Meadows disagreed. He speaks of the hardship compulsory purchase would cause his firm. He estimates that to set up a similar business on freehold land would cost between £800,000 and £750,000.

This figure is equivalent to about £1 from every man, woman and child in Liverpool.

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The cloth-cap Tories

NOW THE TORIES' advertised image of 'the party with the human face' is well and truly shattered. Liverpool Conservatives are dredging deep for local government candidates. Much to their distaste they are having to choose working class candidates.

First to appear from the murky depths — head and shoulders above the rest — was dreadful Don Coleman, the Ford drivers' friend. Coleman (well over 6 ft tall) was chosen by the Tories in spite of his shock of bright red hair. Tory top brass considered his assets — a deafening voice and an intimate knowledge of the working class — far outweighed Nature's cruel trick.

Coleman last hit the headlines as the one Silcock and Collins driver to work during the protest at the gaoling of the London dockers. Fellow workers were not concerned about his 'non-political' protest, but objected to his aggressiveness. Coleman was dismissed, only to receive £1,000 compensation under

the Tories' Industrial Relations Act.

After the colourful Coleman, the second Tory candidate for Speke hardly rates a mention. Harry Philips rose from obscurity as a car park attendant to lead the old Speke Tenants' Association down the drain.

Over in Wavertree, 'wild' Dick Wilde hopes to recycle some of that red-hot militancy he generated when his home was threatened by the M62 motorway plan.

The Conservatives somehow hope that this collection of 'yesterday's men' will appeal to the working class voter. When it's all over, no doubt they'll all disappear again — this time well and truly sunk.

FREE BUSES SOON?

FREE or cheap public transport for Merseyside is at last being taken more seriously — thanks to a report by Liverpool's planning department. Details: Page 6.

NOW PICKETS FACE CONSPIRACY TRIAL

TRADE UNIONISTS throughout the country, including Merseyside, are being asked to support 24 building workers in North Wales, who have been charged with conspiracy.

The building workers, who acted as pickets during the 12-week strike last year, have been charged under a 98-year-old Act... the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875.

And they are calling for a 24-hour stoppage on March 15 — the day their case comes before Shrewsbury magistrates' court.

The case of these pickets, who have been arrested, interrogated for several hours, threatened with ten year sentences, and been forced to have their fingerprints and photographs taken, has been played down by the national press.

But in reality it will be one of the most important trials involving trade unionists for many years.

One of Britain's leading experts on trade union law told the Free Press: "Prosecutions for conspiracy under the 1875 Act are very rare. There have been no big cases in the past few decades."

And neither a top Civil Rights lawyer in Manchester, nor an authority at the T.U.C. could remember a similar conspiracy case involving trade unionists.

But now one of the accused, Des Warren, aged 35, of Meliden Road, Prestatyn faces 29 charges — including 14 of conspiracy.

The pickets are also being charged with assault, causing an

What is conspiracy?

A CONSPIRACY is an agreement between two or more people to do something illegal... or even something legal by illegal means.

A Manchester solicitor specialising in Civil Rights cases told the Free Press: "There is an increasing tendency to use the blanket charge of conspiracy in 'political' cases, as the dice are heavily loaded in favour of the prosecution.

"The Stoke Newington Eight, the Oz people and Peter Hain were all charged under conspiracy laws. This is because in conspiracy trials the prosecution are allowed to bend — almost over backwards — the normally very stringent rules of evidence.

"Hearsay evidence is allowed, and evidence against one of the accused is evidence against them all. All the prosecution has to do is to show the state of mind of the accused, not prove they committed an illegal act."

affray, damaging property and demanding money with menaces. But conspiracy is the most serious.

They are supposed to have "conspired together with others to intimidate workers on building sites in Shropshire and elsewhere, with a view to compelling them to abstain from their lawful work."

It is difficult to overestimate the significance of this attack on trade unionists, as it comes at a time when people throughout the country are preparing to fight the Government's freeze.

Certainly the Government is aware of the issues involved, as it was the Director of Public Prosecutions who gave the go-ahead for the trial.

Already more than 800 witnesses have been interviewed by an inquiry team consisting of detectives from

both the North Wales and West Mercia police forces.

Many of the accused were key men on the action committee which was set up by rank and file members and union officials to run last year's strike in North Wales.

When the strike started, the committee faced a daunting prospect, because trade union organisation among the building workers in North Wales was almost non-existent.

About 90% of the workers were on the lump (self-employed) and the employers — who are making huge profits as a result — were determined to keep it this way.

Whereas on Merseyside 68,000 men soon came out, the pickets in Wales had to start work at 7.30

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How Britain's race law keeps a family apart

MRS DOROTHY THOMAS, of Cairns Street, Toxteth, doesn't know when — or even if — she will be allowed to see her husband again.

For after living here for four-and-a-half years, her husband Jide returned to his own country, Nigeria, because his father was seriously ill. And so far he has not been allowed to return. He left on January 5

He has been classified as an illegal immigrant, although he has a wife, a baby son and a steady job waiting for him in Liverpool.

Mrs Thomas's position is becoming desperate. Debts are piling up, leaving just £3 a week to buy food. And her baby son Justin is beginning to forget all about his father.

She has written to the Home Office three times and phoned them every day for the past four weeks. But until the officials were contacted by the Free Press, they merely said her husband was an illegal immigrant and had 'as much chance as a snowflake in hell of getting back.'

Now Mrs Thomas is to be interviewed by the Home Office before they decide whether or not her hus-

band can return.

"It's a horrifying situation," said Mrs Thomas, who is white and was born in England.

"At first Justin used to fret because he missed his father. Now when I show him a photo of his dad he just looks at it vacantly. I don't think he remembers him... it's terrible.

NOT MUCH TO LIVE ON

"Luckily I have a good job and bring home just over £18 a week. But I have to pay £5 mortgage on this house, £5 towards paying back a personal loan, and £5 to a nanny as we couldn't get Justin into a nursery. So we have just over £3 a week to live on."

Mrs Thomas added: "I always wanted to go to Africa for a holiday but I don't see why I should be forced to leave this country to live in Nigeria, where we haven't a home or a job.

"My husband has worked as a telecommunications engineer for Plessey's for three years. They have

been very good and kept his job open for him."

Her husband, Jide, came to this country in October 1968 with a legal permit to study. But later he gave up his course and three years ago came to Liverpool, where he married in March 1971 and bought his house.

The reason he has not been allowed to return yet is that he is considered an illegal immigrant, as he has never legalised his position. When he came, there was less publicity and less hysteria about immigrants than today. If Jide hadn't been forced to return to Nigeria he could have applied to become a naturalised Englishman in October as he would have lived here five years by then.

● Ironically, because of sex discrimination against women, female immigrants who come into this country illegally can stay if they marry. Under an archaic law, women always take on the nationality of their husband. But a male immigrant cannot take on the nationality of his wife.