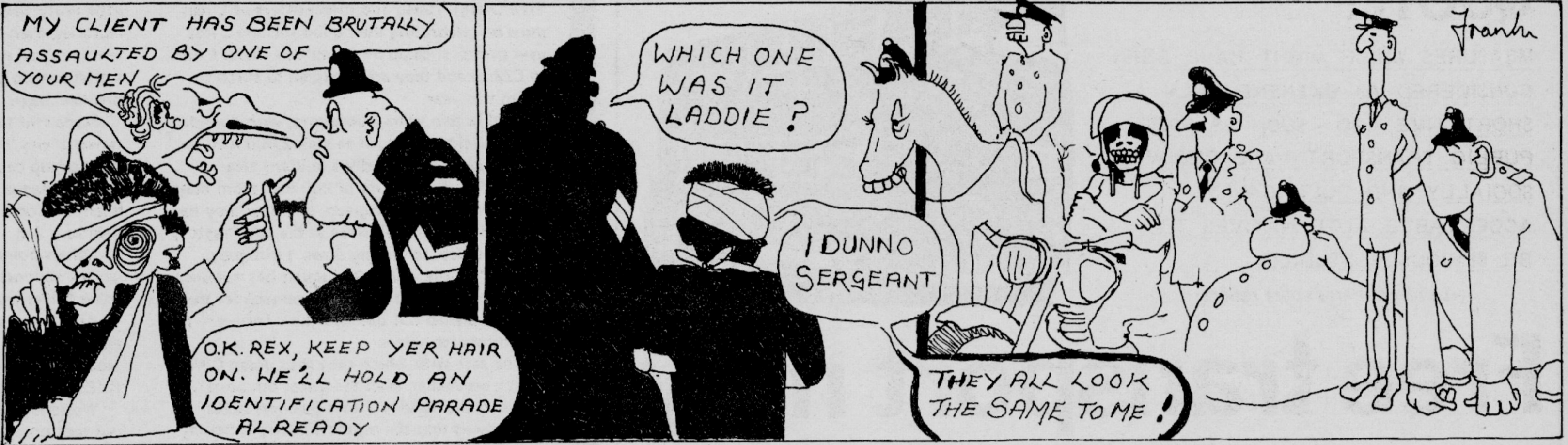


SERGEANT PALTREY



If you can't wait— just plead guilty

BROUGHT before Bootle magistrates early in January, Ronald Holmes of Tower Hill, Kirkby, pleaded guilty to charges of attempting to steal a car and having ignition keys for use in theft. Like most defendants in the court, he was not represented.

The police said Holmes was with another man who had already been dealt with. When arrested, Holmes was sitting beside the car and the other man was inside with the keys. The police accepted that the keys belonged to the other man, but said that this amounted to possession by both men.

Holmes told the court he had been drinking with the other man and, when they missed the last bus, they decided to sleep in a car. Asked if he had anything further to say, Holmes said he had no intention of stealing the vehicle.

There was a silence. If what he said was true he could not be guilty. The clerk to the magistrates, Frank Preston, asked why he had pleaded guilty. Holmes replied that he wanted to get the matter over with, and went on: "The police told me that if..."

"The magistrates aren't interested



in what you've been told,' the clerk butted in.

The clerk then asked if the defendant would like to change his plea. He did not advise him to do so, and did not explain that he could not have committed the offences if he was telling the truth.

Ronald Holmes was undecided but the clerk helped him to make up his mind: 'Of course, if you do change your plea then we might not be able to get it over with today,' he said.

Ronald Holmes then decided not to change his plea and was fined £15.

Civic Centre project heads for scrap-heap

LIVERPOOL'S controversial and costly Civic Centre project — which would have cost the city £40m over the next forty years — is to be postponed for a year, and is now a strong candidate for the scrap heap.

The increasing financial crisis has forced the Labour-controlled council to begin a quiet about turn on the civic centre

Since 1967, when Ald William Sefton described the building as "the greatest experiment in democracy any city has attempted", the Labour party have backed the project to the hilt.

With both Labour and Conservative parties supporting the scheme since the early sixties, more than £3 million has already been spent on the architect's and engineers' fees. Consultation with the public would probably have killed the scheme at birth and saved a lot of this expense.

Sefton's change of heart began in January when he wrote to the Echo and said: "If the Labour council had to decide to spend money on the airport, civic centre and M 62 or housing, social services and education, then the latter take

priority."

The alderman had sensed the changing mood of his own councillors. A month before, one of the possible heirs to Sefton's throne, Councillor Stan Thorne launched an attack on the civic centre and airport expenditure.

It is widely believed in the corporation that when the local government reorganisation goes through on April Fool's Day, 1974, the civic centre plans will be quietly mislaid.

● The result of the government's public inquiry into the civic centre is still to be announced.

Bookie not wanted — but he still moves in

A BOOKMAKER will be allowed to open a betting shop because a planning inspector decided that the need for such a shop — and the social effects of it — were irrelevant to planning.

William Forbes Ltd recently won their appeal for a shop on the new Pendle Drive Estate in Litherland.

On the social questions, the inspector said in his report: 'I do not regard these as planning issues with which I can deal.'

The Forbes shop will be the last of nine units in a shopping precinct which serves 2,060 people on the estate, as well as people from the neighbouring Gorse Lane Estate. Local people felt the shop could

be put to better use. Although there is another betting shop 350 yards away, there is no chemist in the precinct. The nearest is almost two miles away. Every week queues of pensioners form outside the small post office/shop on the Gorse Lane Estate, which serves the whole area.

In 1970 residents successfully opposed an application for a betting licence by Bill Taylor of Huyton on the ground that the area was already sufficiently catered for. They are still annoyed that they all failed to see the notice of application which William Forbes had to display on the premises by law. The licence was granted in January 1971 without opposition.

OUR PHONE NUMBER IS 051-709 0264

Deadlock

THE DISPUTE involving sixteen electricians at the Inland Revenue Office site in Bootle has now entered its third year. Despite two returns to work, the Joint Industry Board has still not resolved the claim for parity with other workers on the site, and construction work has stopped.

Meanwhile, because of inflation, the £5½ million IRO white elephant is now said to be an £8 million white elephant.

Collections

A NUMBER of rent collectors may start work again in Liverpool shortly. They will collect rents only from elderly and infirm council tenants.

The trade unions involved are opposing a housing committee motion calling for the re-introduction of all rent collectors because they are worried about the personal safety of the collectors.

So the committee are considering improving the Giro system of paying rents through a post office.

Hard travellin'

POOR Charles Howard, head of Liverpool's housing programme, will have to use more modest means of transport in future.

As we revealed in Free Press 11, 'Prince' Charles Howard had been using the housing department's chauffeur-driven limousine for private as well as official business.

Following an investigation, Ald Joe Morgan, housing chairman said: "There have been occasions when the car has been used to take an officer from a public engagement to a private one and these have been occasions of pressure when time was limited or an officer has been engaged on public business outside normal working hours.

"It has been made plain that the use of the car in this way must be discontinued as being unjustified, despite the mitigating circumstances, and likely to evoke public criticism.

"The transport arrangements in the Housing Department are likely to be put on a completely different basis."

Perhaps roller skates would be useful.

Dockers hold out for 35 hour week

MERSEYSIDE dockers have stepped up their pressure on the Mersey dock company by refusing to work the new packaged timber berths at Seaforth until the 35 hour week agreed early last year is brought into operation.

The dockers have also stopped all negotiations on the Seaforth grain terminal manning dispute. And the condition for re-opening negotiations is the same — the 35 hour week must be introduced.

Timber boats are still being handled in the Gladstone Dock but the west side timber berths in the £50m Sea-

forth dock will stay idle until the dockers are working the 35 hour week.

Desperate to see Seaforth's grain and timber facilities fully working, the dock company have begun approaches through the port modernisation committee which will be discussing a new wage deal for the dockers.

The port shop stewards' committee is to examine and re-negotiate all cargo handling agreements that involve new techniques.

The £12m grain terminal has now been idle for seven months at a cost to the dock company of £40,000 a month.

Planning by the people

BOOTLE Council's plan to knock down even more houses has run into a little local opposition. Helped by a former resident, Brian Anson — now a lecturer in architecture — the people in Pope Street have formed the Pope Street Association to defend their homes.

The council plan to knock down numbers 17 to 35 on one side of the street. These houses adjoin a bomb site but are as good as those which will be left standing on the other side.

Bootle's Chief Public Health Inspector has admitted that the houses are not unfit. But the council want to have a regular shaped open space when they pull down neighbouring Collins Street. This would be grassed

before redevelopment.

After meetings and a survey of what people want, alternative proposals have been drawn up. The main demand is that there should be no demolition. But there are also plans to landscape the bomb site and provide a play area, close the street to through traffic, and improve the houses themselves.

Bootle Council have so far tried to ignore the association, but they are undoubtedly worried by this kind of development. Other street committees are springing up, and at a meeting with Brian Anson the borough Planning Officer (Jack McElroy) refused to comment on them because they were 'political'.

Some people look forward to a network of street committees linked by a liaison committee. Already nearby Boswell Street has formed one to seek General Improvement Area status or, alternatively, force the landlord to do repairs. Before this, tenants in the street did not even know the phone number of Calvert, their landlord. (He runs Trevlac Ltd, private phone 733 5294).

The Norton Street Association has been active for some time and there will probably be a committee in Dryden Street very soon.

● CONTACT—
Pope St Assoc (Reg Parker) 922 5313
Boswell St (Jean & Bob Evans): 922 2759.

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