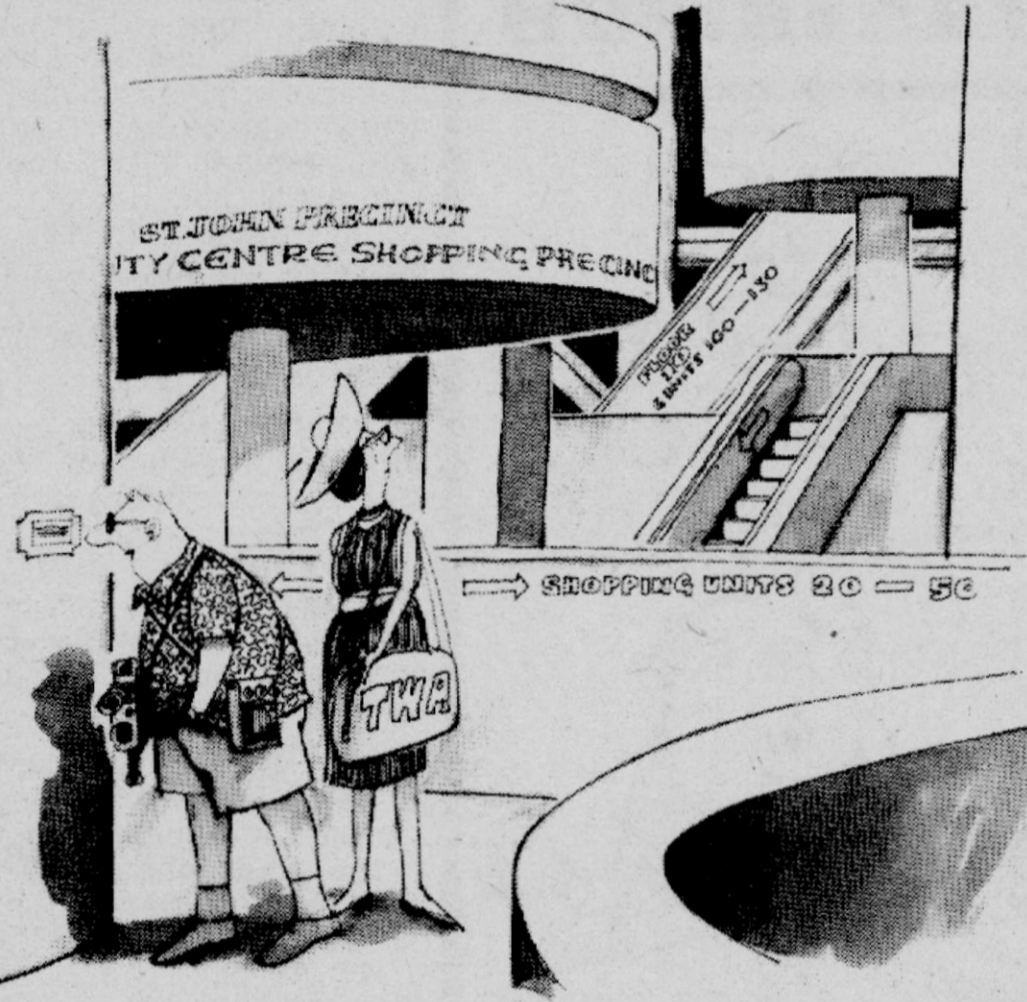


LIVERPOOL 1973

BY MIKE WILLIAMS



"It says: 'As taken from the original design by the Frenchman Andre Maginot'."

Echo's Civic Centre scoop

(see page 8)

THROUGHOUT the history of the Civic Centre scheme, Merseyside's biggest newspaper groups had a vast financial interest in the project going ahead.

They wanted to make a deal with the Corporation, and until the deal went through virtually no criticism of the Civic Centre appeared in their papers.

Of all the buildings bought up to make way for the Civic Centre, the largest was the Daily Post and Echo building. It cost the city £730,000 (plus £18,000 legal fees). But should we really have paid so much - and did we need to buy it at all?

In 1965 when the Civic Centre architect was appointed it looked as though the Post and Echo building would have to be demolished to make way for the Civic Centre.

If the Corporation forced the Echo to move they would have to pay compensation for disturbance. But the Echo made it clear they already wanted to move and were looking for a site for a new building.

Sir Alick Jeans, then chairman of the Echo company, told the corporation traffic jams in Victoria Street were a serious problem. "The traffic factor alone may make removal urgent," he said.

Then there was the state of the Echo building... old, badly planned, with soaring maintenance costs. As early as 1960 the Liverpool District Valuer had noted that the Echo's premises were "far from ideal for a printing works."

By 1970 the situation had got so bad that on wet days copies of the Echo had to be rushed up to the composing room on the top floor to soak up rain coming through the roof.

In 1971, on the orders of the government, the Civic Centre scheme was reduced in size. This meant that the Echo building was no longer needed (although Mr Francis Amos, the Planning Officer thought the Civic Centre would have a better setting if the Echo building were pulled down).

At the same time the Echo began to take a much tougher line. As one senior official in the Corporation remarked: "Eighteen months ago the Echo were saying they could find a use for the building if we didn't want it. But now they're saying 'Please buy!'" The Echo not only asked the Corporation to buy their old building (which wasn't particularly valuable) but also insisted on 'disturbance' money, claiming they were forced to move.

BUMPER PAYMENT

And despite protests from some officials they got it. A bumper 3/4 million payment for the building and disturbance.

The Echo were jubilant. In their 1972 annual report they announced that after paying tax on the deal they would still make a 'surplus' of £1/2m.

The deal itself is horrifying enough. But even more horrifying... generous deals of this kind are now so common in Liverpool that this one caused scarcely a stir. The Corporation is all too willing to dip into ordinary people's pockets for the sake of pampering large and wealthy companies.

Ex-Labour man to be Liberal housing chief

A COUNCILLOR who has received £250,000 worth of contracts from Liverpool's housing department has been chosen as the city's new housing boss.

This is one of the first - and strangest - decisions made by the Liberal Party which swept to power in the District Council elections.

Councillor Bill Smyth, who takes over in April as housing chairman, owns a building company which does work for the Corporation.

The company, the Prime Heating Company, is on the Corporation's selected list of builders who can submit tenders for council contracts. It has won the following contracts to do modernisation work on council homes:

1. Norris Green. 12 dwellings. Contract value £21,993.
2. Speke: 38 dwellings. Contract value £58,262.
3. Speke: another 38 dwellings. Contract value £69,009.
4. Larkhill Estate. 39 dwellings. Contract value £81,020.

But Smyth, who left the Labour Party to join the Liberals a few months before the elections, can't be accused of allowing a possible clash of interests to occur.

He has decided that from next April his company will stop doing work for the housing department. And he will probably survive - just - on the £10

a day payments councillors will be able to claim next year.

Councillors Smyth is a remarkable choice for the Liberals who promised to inject new ideas into the corridors of power.

For he is very much an example of "yesterday's men". He was groomed for power by that well known Labour figure Bessie Braddock. And he soon became a staunch right wing member of the Labour Party hierarchy in Liverpool.

He was Labour's own housing chairman from 1963 to 1965, but his reign proved so controversial that he was virtually sacked by the Labour group.

Ald Hugh Dalton was elected to take his place.

Smyth, more than anyone else, was architect of Liverpool's disastrous high-rise housing policy which has caused so much misery to so many families.

This was one of the major reasons for his unpopularity in the Labour Party. And he won few friends when he bought his posh council house, at 84 Childwall Road, from the Corporation.

His support for implementing the 'Fair' Rents Act and his continuing allegiance to the old staid right wing elements in the party caused a great deal of friction between himself and the rank-and-file people in his local

Labour ward.

It became clear he would not get the nomination for a seat on either the District or the Metropolitan councils.

Shortly after this he switched to the Liberal Party - although he had always supported projects like the absurd Civic Centre and the airport, which his new party opposed.

There has been strong criticism of the way companies (including Smyth's) have tackled the rehabilitation work. Some work has taken up to five months, causing tremendous disruption and worry for the tenants.

Alderman Morgan, the present housing chairman has had to deal with a number of problems concerning modernisation work. In the end he called a meeting of representatives from all the firms doing this type of work and warned them about shoddy workmanship and the consequences if any were found to be using lump labour.

Modernisation will still be continuing when Smyth is in power, and one of his jobs will be to keep an eye on other firms.

FOOTNOTE: Councillor Smyth has taken out a libel writ against Speke Labour councillor Ken Stewart and his agent Mr Kevin Morgan, following criticism of Smyth's modernisation work. Solicitor in the case is Cyril Carr, leader of the city's Liberal group.

and another Liberal choice...

Guess who?

YOU PROBABLY didn't bother to read the insignificant looking item in the Daily Post on September 12, headed "Football secretary fined for assault."

It described how 57-year-old Paul Orr, secretary of Ormskirk Football Club was fined £15 for assault causing actual bodily harm. He had pleaded not guilty.

The court heard that in the evening after a match with Marine F.C. (Crosby), Ormskirk supporters were asked to leave the club lounge by the Marine secretary.

A witness said that Orr asked him what he was staring at. "Nothing, why?" the witness replied. Later, it was said, Orr punched the witness twice in the face... and in the hallway outside butted him in the face.

There's just one thing the Daily Post forgot to mention. The Paul Orr in the case is a city councillor for Liverpool's Vauxhall ward.

Job agency Joe in charge of staff

THE LIBERAL party are likely to win few friends amongst trade unionists in the Corporation after announcing their selection of committee chairmen.

They have chosen Councillor Joe Wilmington as chairman of the Personnel Committee, which is responsible for the hiring and firing of Corporation staff.

For Councillor Wilmington is the businessman behind the Wilmington Employment Agency.....which is one of the fastest-growing in the North-West.

Now the Trades Union Congress have roundly condemned the employment practices of these agencies.

Temporary office staff, for instance, are usually paid by the agency rather than the firm they work for. (This happens with Wilmington's).

They can be shifted from one job to another with scarcely a moment's notice. Many have to sit at home waiting for a phone call telling them where to go for work.

In other words, the employment agencies are an employer's dream. They can sack the agency staff without giving them any warning.

Councillor Wilmington is cashing in on the popularity of these agencies. He started the company in 1966, with his wife, Mathilda, as the other director. In 1971 they received £6,000 in directors' fees and the company had a turnover of £139,491.

He also found in 1971 that he had enough profit to plough nearly £7,000 in the form of loans into two other companies he owns..... the Ideal School of Motoring, and Cam Records Ltd.

OCTOBER

BOOKS

99 MOUNT PLEASANT

FOR MARXIST CLASSICS
For books from China, Vietnam Albania and liberation movements throughout the world.
AND ABOVE ALL FOR BOOKS, PAMPHLETS AND PAPERS FROM THE C.P.B.M.L. ABOUT BRITAIN.

Mon-Fri: 12-6.30. Sat: 9.30-6.00

I enclose.....p for six/twelve issues of Liverpool Free Press



SUBSCRIBE

40p for six
80p for twelve
including postage

NAME.....
ADDRESS.....
.....
.....

Post this coupon to Liverpool Free Press, 83 Seel Street, Liverpool 1.

LEGAL COLOUR BAR

IN APRIL this year Mr. Benson Bawak qualified to become a solicitor. He had passed all his exams and completed his trainee period with a Liverpool firm.

But today, six months later, he's not being allowed to practice as a solicitor. He's still having to work as a trainee.

The reason is that Mr. Bawak, one of the few black trainee solicitors in the country, is not a British citizen.

And by law, non-British citizens are not allowed to become solicitors. They can be trainees, but not solicitors.

This racist piece of legislation applies to Mr. Bawak although he has lived in Liverpool for ten years, and has trained with a city firm since 1966.

Ironically, he was a British subject, as his parents lived in the former British Cameroons, in Africa. But when

his country won their independence they dropped out of the Commonwealth.....and so Mr. Bawak lost his citizenship.

During the last session of Parliament even the Tory Government realised this particular legislation was to say the least out-of-date. And they agreed to alter it.

However, their new measure was held up by the Labour Party who were concerned about another matter. They were trying to get lay members onto the disciplinary committee of the Law Society.

The result was that Mr. Bawak was likely to have to wait many more months, and possibly years.

NOTE: Qualified doctors don't have to be British subjects to work here, and even barristers only have to work as juniors for 6 months.

Solidarity with Chile

BECAUSE of the coup in Chile, a Merseyside committee for solidarity with Chile has been formed. The aim of the group is to support the Chilean people in their struggle for democracy.

A campaign is being organised amongst Liverpool trade unionists for action over local firms or organisations maintaining links with the military junta. The group also hope to persuade the city council to boycott Chilean goods. The amount of trade with Chile

done by Merseyside firms is not known, but Liverpool is Britain's major port for trade with South America.

A large public meeting is planned shortly. For more information contact either of the joint secretaries - Simon Fraser, c/o Trades Council, 33 Hatton Garden, Liverpool 2 (236 1778) or Colin Henfrey, 13 Marine Terrace, Wallasey (709 6022 Ext 669 during daytime).

Printed and published by Liverpool Free Press group, 83 Seel Street, Liverpool 1. Tel: 051-709 9460.

Approx. 200 titles in stock
Send s.a.e. for full list

PAMPHLETS & PAPERS

PAMPHLETS INCLUDE:

- How to fight for better housing conditions (Community Action) 9p.
- Women's Liberation and the New Politics (Sheila Rowbotham) 12p.
- Up Against the Law. 15p
- Britain, the Black Man and the Future. 20p.
- War Crimes in Vietnam (Jean-Paul Sartre) 7½p.

OTHER pamphlets on subjects covering industry, women's liberation education, the law, race, imperialism unemployment, science and the environment, political theory and history, etc etc.

POSTERS: At prices to suit most pockets. One on the right is 36 in by 16 in; four colours. Price: 60p

ON SALE AT LIVERPOOL FREE PRESS OFFICE

83 Seel Street, Liverpool 1. Mon-Sat 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
OR BY MAIL ORDER from: News From Nowhere, 9 Sefton Drive, Liverpool 8.

