



COUNCILLOR HEFFERON— off to collect some more rents.

HEFFERON — STILL NO INQUIRY

LIBERAL councillor and slum landlord Michael Hefferon is proving more difficult to get rid of than President Richard Nixon.

He refuses to resign and claims his unsavoury property empire is "a service to the community". Meanwhile the Liberal party's long-promised inquiry shows no signs of taking place.

Last October the Free Press revealed that Councillor Hefferon was due to receive £250,000 in public money (through improvement grants) to increase the value of his properties. Councillor Hefferon's abuse of these grants is in defiance of his own party's official policy.

We also revealed that he had used a loophole in the Rent Act to overcharge his tenants. And that he had received numerous orders from the corporation to do repairs, and had been fined for flouting fire regulations.

Our story was then repeated by The Guardian, the News of the World, Granada Television and the BBC — and totally ignored by the 'public spirited' Liverpool Daily Post and Echo.

In November Cyril Carr, leader of the Liverpool Liberals, said that Jeremy Thorpe would appoint "someone unchallenged in integrity to inquire into the allegations."

Councillor Hefferon has threatened to issue writs for libel. This is now being used as an excuse for not holding an inquiry.

Councillor Carr has been telling party colleagues that no inquiry can be held while Hefferon is considering legal action and the matter is *sub judice*.

But it is clearly not *sub judice* as no writs have been issued and Hefferon is still only 'considering' action — not actually taking it.

Legally he is entitled to go on 'considering' whether to sue for up to six years (after that no action can be taken). So the party's inquiry could be delayed for a very long time.

Also it will be a long time before voters get the chance to throw Hefferon off the council. Because he came top of the poll in his ward last May he does not have to face another election until 1978. And worse still, his property business is likely to continue for many years after that.

Fire-bomb threat to family — police refuse protection

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN of the Merseyside Police Committee, is complaining to the Chief Constable that police ignored her pleas to help a young black family who were taunted, attacked and finally driven out of their home by white youths.

Councillor Mrs Margaret Simey — who is also a magistrate — says in her statement that she told a police officer the family's home had been smashed up, windows shattered and that youths had threatened to return with fire-bombs.

But a policeman at Lark Lane police station replied that the police knew all about it, and knew the windows had been smashed.

Then he calmly added: "THEY DESERVE EVERYTHING THEY'VE GOT".

Mrs Simey says in her statement: "I was so surprised at this comment that I asked him to repeat it.

"This he did, slowly and deliberately, as if to make sure that I heard it clearly, adding the further remark: 'You can take that whichever way you like.'

"He spontaneously repeated this last phrase. I regret my reaction was such that I put the phone down without asking the officer's name and number." Councillor Simey made this phone call to Lark Lane at 12.30 a.m. on March 29.

A few hours earlier the family, Linton aged 22, his wife Pauline, aged nineteen, with their two young children, abandoned their home in Upper Warwick Street, Toxteth, in despair.

They were exhausted and frightened by the series of attacks made on their

home by the gangs of white youths, and concerned at the lack of protection they received from the police.

The husband, Linton, has made a complaint about the police attitude. On March 26, he says, he told the driver of a police jeep (registration number XKD 751J) of the fire bomb threats, and the driver replied: "Get back into your hovel before we throw petrol bombs at you."

The McKay family were unlucky enough to live in a street which for nearly a year has been the battleground for gangs.

One of the main reasons for these clashes is that the area between Park Road and Windsor Street is a 'no-man's land' and both sides have been fighting to gain control of this territory.

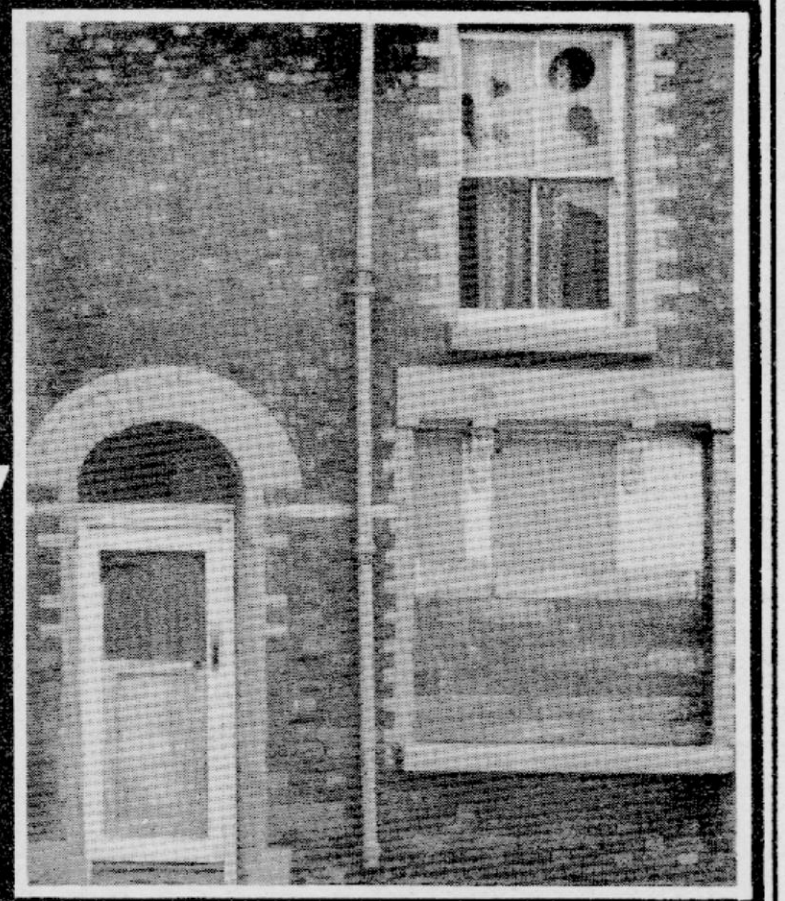
But this 'territorial battle' has been made more bitter by the element of racialism which, sadly, has been fostered by some adults in the district.

Linton's statement to the Chief Constable records the incidents which forced the family to flee from their home, and the police's reluctance to help.

By March 15, raids on their house by youths aged 16 to 20 took place nightly, and their windows were frequently smashed by bricks and bottles. Linton says on five occasions he reported these to the Essex Street police station and was told "nothing could be done without names."

The statement adds: "On Friday,

'They deserve everything they've got' P.C. tells councillor



ABOVE: The wrecked house

March 22, Candy McKay (my sister) who was also staying at my house as my wife Pauline was feeling the strain, opened the door as another attack began... at the time I was asleep.

"Six or seven young men began to strike her. Candy's screams woke me and I ran out of the house and chased the men down Warwick Street. Pauline and Candy immediately went to Essex Street police station and reported the incident to a uniformed officer who advised Candy to go to the hospital and get a doctor's report."

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Very Important Prisoner...

"The way they were carrying on... you'd have thought THE QUEEN was in jail!" a man just released from Walton told us.

But no — it wasn't the Queen who was getting the red carpet treatment. It was George Pottinger, the corrupt friend of architect John Poulson, who is now taking a well-earned rest behind bars. And Pottinger has been spending some of it here in Liverpool.

The arrival of this Very Important Prisoner was first noticed by other prisoners when unusually appetising, individually cooked meals were seen going along the corridor.

Pottinger was then given a few light duties in the prison hospital — which soon had the other prisoners up in arms. For hospital work is THE plum job in the prison and it carries the top rate of pay — 64p a week.

It's almost unheard of for a new prisoner to be given such a job. Normally it's a job you get 'promoted' to after years sewing mailbags for about 30p a week.

Something Ventured ...something gained

BEFORE THEIR DEMISE the Labour controlled City Council made an act of startling generosity.

They agreed to give a loan of £457,424 to a non-charitable housing group, the Venture Housing Association Limited.

This was to enable Venture to build 54 flats, 18 lock-up garages and 42 car parking spaces, near Lodge Lane, Toxteth.

And what's more, when the owner of the land refused to sell, the council decided to compulsorily purchase the large, valuable site in Grove Park to allow the association to develop it.

On the committee of Venture are two well-known Labour politicians... Colonel Dick Crawshaw, Labour MP for Toxteth, and Sir Harry Livermore, the former Lord Mayor (and, until April 1, a city councillor). Surprisingly, one of their associates on the committee is an arch-Tory, Councillor Anthony McVeigh.

Although perfectly legal, this use of CPO powers to aid a housing association is extraordinary.

The Cohen Committee, set up by the Government to look into housing associations reported: "This power has been used only in exceptional circumstances." And it said since 1966 "few authorities have expressed any willingness to use their powers in this way."

The council's decision to acquire the site for Venture has meant a public inquiry will be held (on May 14 in

the Municipal Annexe) because the owner objects.

Many people are puzzled by this desire to help a housing association. Why, they rightly argue, should the corporation provide the finance and spend time and effort obtaining the site for an association when they could build council houses?

Also, a Free Press investigation has shown Venture sometimes acts

MAN BEHIND VENTURE
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with all the ruthlessness of a profit-making property company.

On at least three occasions they have put in planning applications although they do not own the land, and do not have the consent of the owners. A practice which makes even hardened property speculators think twice.

And yet despite this, Venture have already received £337,000 in loans from the council and the Government (£79,000 to develop another site in Grove Park and £258,000 for a site in Livingstone Drive). Now, besides this new £450,000 loan they have at least two more in the pipeline.

Since 1972 — the year Labour came to power in Liverpool — there has been a rapid growth in the number and activities of housing associations, but few have moved as fast as Venture.

Venture emerged from a near-dormant association called the Liverpool and

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Lewis's — more shocks

LEWIS'S, Liverpool's largest department store, will have to spend several hundred thousand pounds on improving fire precautions... as a result of a Free Press article.

And they will not be given a fire safety certificate until the work is done.

Last October we reported that Mr Denis Greensmith, Lewis's managing director, was reluctant to bring the fire precautions up to standard — and had threatened to close the store rather than spend the necessary money.

The council called for an investigation and the city's Chief Fire Officer, Mr Frank Taylor, inspected the building.

Mr Taylor was extremely worried by what he saw. And yet great efforts were made by the local press, Bill Sefton (then leader of the council) and Lewis's themselves to persuade people there was nothing to worry about.

Mr Taylor was particularly concerned about the distance some shoppers would have to walk to reach a staircase in emergency. Lewis's have now given a written promise to build a new staircase "as a matter of urgency."

Mr Taylor's report has not been published, and very few councillors have seen it. A copy is, however, in the hands of the Free Press. It reveals that Lewis's fire precautions have been in an appalling state for some time...

- Defects were found in the sprinkler system. These are now being put right.
- The tannoy system, which would warn shoppers to evacuate the building could hardly be heard in parts of the building. Lewis's are now getting an estimate for the cost of extending it.
- The fire alarm system was inadequate. A new system is now being installed to cover all exit routes.
- Although fire drills were held, the staff were untrained in fire prevention and use of the store's fire-fighting equipment. Liverpool Fire Brigade have now started training the staff.
- No-one in the store had overall responsibility for supervision and enforcement of the fire precautions. A store fire officer has now been appointed.

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SPECIAL PRIORITY

THERE'S uproar in the Labour party over retiring Labour councillor Mrs Christine O'Rourke being given a three-bedroomed council house in Delamain Road in select Clubmoor.

Now Mrs O'Rourke and her husband who live alone, did leave a house three years ago for a tower block in Croxteth. She has been ill and suffers from asthma. And she did have special medical priority for ground floor accommodation.

But some Labour supporters are

asking why she wasn't given a ground floor flat. After all, it is believed the Clubmoor housing manager originally wouldn't provide a house.

Mrs O'Rourke, it seems, felt central heating in a flat would affect her asthma. But many overcrowded families in ground floor tenements would be willing to vacate their non-centrally heated flats for a house.

We don't begrudge anyone a nice house, but shouldn't something now be done for the 7,000 other special priority cases in Liverpool?