

PHEW! What a scorcher

AS THE NUMBER of people who read the Liverpool Echo steadily dwindles we feel it's our duty to point out what you are likely to miss if you stop buying it...even if it's only for one night.

The following important items of hot news all appeared in the same issue of the Echo:

Chair blaze

An armchair in a joiner's shop in Walton Lane, Anfield, Liverpool, was damaged by fire.

Light blaze

Liverpool firemen dealt with a small fire which damaged a fluorescent light fitting in the Park Road, The Hospital, Liverpool.

Bedding fire

Liverpool firemen were called to a house in Garth Avenue, Allerton, today, when bedding caught fire. One person was hurt.

Gorse fire

Bebington firemen dealt with a blaze involving gorse and undergrowth at Eastham last night.

House blaze

Fire damaged a first floor rear room of a house in Lumley Street, Woodvale, Liverpool.

Works blaze

A compressor was damaged in a fire at the Monsanto Chemical Works at Acrefair, near Wrexham at the weekend.

Theatre fire

Southport firemen tackled a blaze in a store room at the Little Theatre, Houghton Street, Southport yesterday. Only slight damage was caused.

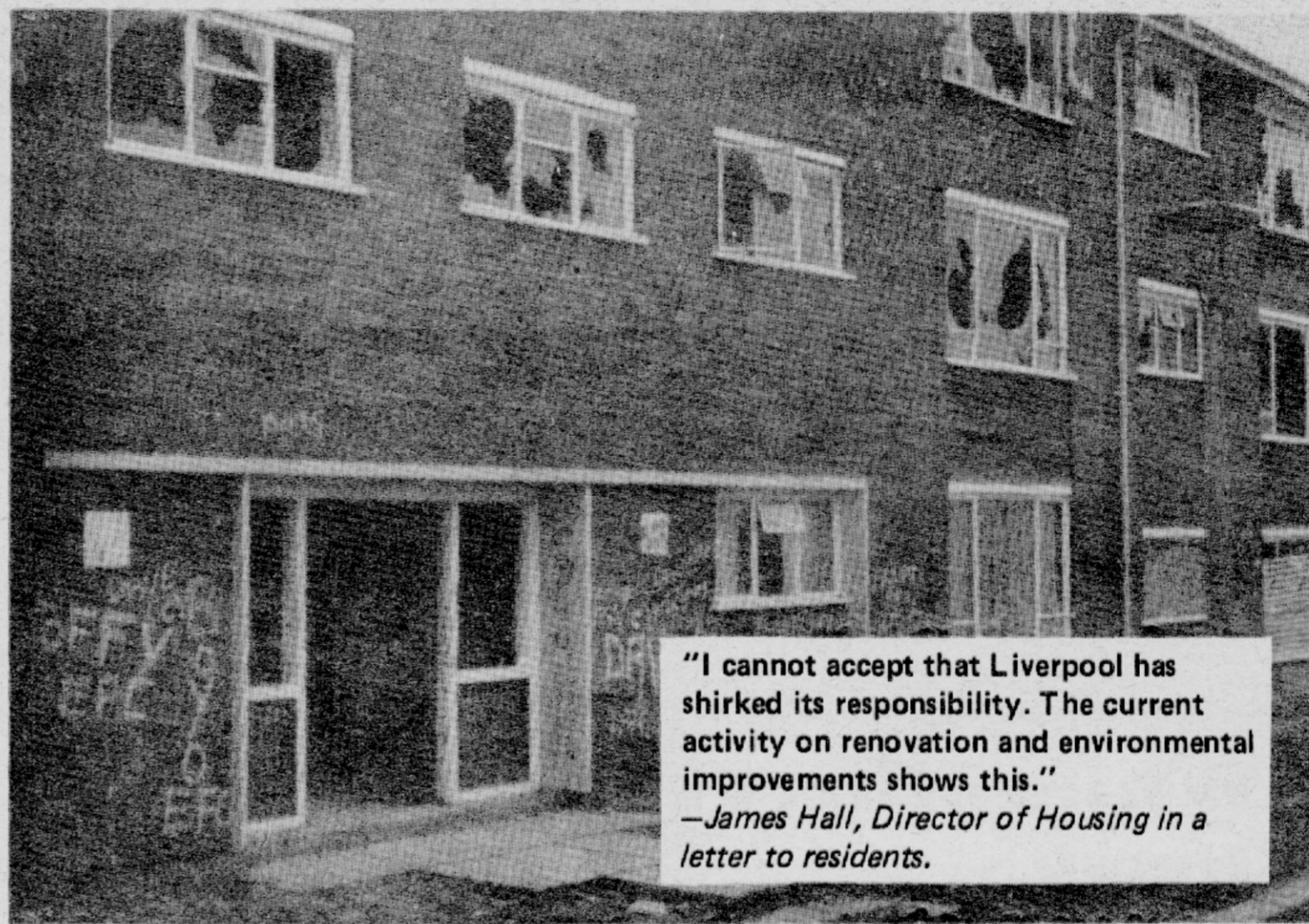
Oil blaze at Shell plant

Firemen from Cheshire County and the Shell fire service fought a fire in No.2 Auxiliary Pumping Station at the Shell Mex Ellesmere Port plant last night.

A small quantity of kerosene and fuel oil was



"I would consider in the main your original aims have been very reasonably met."—James Hall, Director of Housing in a letter to residents.



"I cannot accept that Liverpool has shirked its responsibility. The current activity on renovation and environmental improvements shows this."—James Hall, Director of Housing in a letter to residents.

THIS IS Northwood

CONTRARY to popular belief among Liverpool tenants, Alderman Joe Morgan, the retiring housing chairman did have one success during his uneventful reign.

Throughout his two years in office he succeeded in ignoring the continuous protests of the Northwood Flat Dwellers, who want something done about the drainage and environmental problems in their part of Kirkby.

Now, because of the changes in Local government, the problem is in the hands of Knowsley District Council, who have wasted no time in asking the tenants for six months' grace until the changeover is complete.

But the Northwood tenants have little patience left, after appealing to a succession of councillors, religious leaders and MPs.

Their latest attempt is to ask Shelter's public health adviser to carry out a survey similar to one done on Coventry council estates — and a fighting fund has been set up to pay expenses.

In Coventry, Shelter found that some recently built council estates were already slums, and that many conditions on the estates would be actionable under public health and housing laws if they had occurred in rented private property.

The Shelter report also said tenants were entitled to courtesy, and that complaints should be answered in writing and visits arranged.

It is true that Northwood tenants have had some letters from the corporation... most of them rude. "All the evidence indicates that the residents themselves must be held responsible for a considerable portion of the nuisance," said one from the Town Clerk.

In their report on Coventry, Shelter said the authorities were the major vandals for not carrying out basic repairs, neglecting to provide much-needed facilities, letting homes become sub-standard, perpetuating a poor environment.

Words which the Northwood tenants would echo about their own situation.

The number of three-storey flats left empty to be vandalised in Northwood runs into hundreds. The conditions are now so bad that nobody wants to take them. Tenants complain of lack of privacy, foul drains and damp, and the only solution they see is to demolish the flats.

Most would willingly move into a house if they could, but the corporation seem unable to organise a simple changeover. Houses in the same area remain empty and become vandalised, while people nearby live in slums.

Some tenants are now talking of a rent strike, and even more militant action.

SUPERMAN in a tantrum...

WEE WILLY Sefton, leader of the Labour party was annoyed that his fellow Labour councillor Chris Perry intended to speak at the council meeting on behalf of the Northwood Flat Dwellers, in defiance of the whips.

To try and avoid embarrassment to himself and the party, Sefton asked to see Chris Walsh, chairman of the flat dwellers, privately while the council was in progress.

With his usual understanding and sympathy he demanded to know why he had not been informed of the problem.

"Never mind the housing department, Joe Morgan or anybody else," he shouted, "Wee Willy will make a personal visit to Kirkby to sort it out."

(Reports that at this point he ripped open his shirt to reveal a scarlet vest with 'WW' on his chest have been denied).

There was one condition to Sefton's offer: The flat dwellers had to agree to drop Councillor Perry from the case.

Chris Walsh, who had not spoken for some time, managed to say no to the offer before Wee Willy finally exploded and stormed out of the room.

It was the first time Mr Walsh had met Wee Willy. He was not impressed.



"The officer has reported that the drains are in sound repair and good working order."—Stanley Holmes, Town Clerk, to Northwood Flat Dwellers' Association.

FLOODED PATHWAY at Northwood caused by blocked drains.

Union deserts Kirkby workers

TWO YEARS AGO the Anglia Paper Company, part of the massive Du Pont corporation of America, opened a new plant in Kirkby with the aid of a £500,000 government grant. At the time they said they expected to employ 500 workers.

In March this year the closure of the factory was announced. The owners claimed it was no longer viable, and 100 workers (the most the firm had employed) joined the dole queue... or tried to.

For about fifty workers living in Kirkby have so far been refused unemployment benefit. "There seems to be some doubt about whether the people have actually lost their jobs," said the Department of Employment. The fact that every one of them has a letter from the company saying the factory has closed because it is no longer viable seems to make little difference.

This particular little plot was probably hatched at a meeting in the factory between a Mr Cassidy from the D.O.E. and Mr Shingfield, the manager of Anglia Paper.

But the dole are not the only ones refusing to pay out. The workers' own union, SOGAT, has stopped all bene-

fits to members at Anglia Paper until further notice.

The workers regard this as the final stab in the back from a union whose attitude throughout the dispute has left its members wondering which side the union was on.

The first threat of closure, announced on March 4, was rescinded within a week, after talks between SOGAT national executive and Anglia management in London and Manchester. The settlement, however, was subject to agreement on production levels with the shop floor committee.

At this stage Mr Robert Kilroy-Silk, the Labour MP for the area, attempted to catch some favourable publicity for himself, though none of the workers had seen or heard from him until then.

Mr Silk then discovered he had jumped on the bandwagon too early, for the 'settlement' fell through.

The management adopted a take-it-or-leave-it attitude when supposedly negotiating new production levels. They wanted an enormous 25% increase in output from each machine with no increase in pay... or else they would close down.

The workers had for some time been waiting for a decision from the Pay

Board on the introduction of a bonus scheme, and although they agreed to an overall increase in production, they refused to increase the output of individual machines until the Pay Board approved their bonus.

The management refused to compromise and announced once again that the plant would close... this time on March 29.

SOGAT then resumed talks with the management. Only union officials were present — nobody from the factory committee took part.

The result was a four-point package deal which Reg Anderson, the local SOGAT official tried to get the shop floor to accept. The crunch clause was "to maintain agreed production levels." These "agreed" levels were those the workers had already rejected.

These terms were to be accepted or the plant would close. When the proposals were put before a shop floor meeting, Anderson, in his effort to get the deal through, said he could guarantee that the Pay Board's bonus would be back-dated. Even Shingfield, the plant manager, denied this was so.

The meeting rejected the deal and Anderson stormed out, saying he washed his hands of the whole busi-

ness. He left the plant an hour later with Shingfield (they seemed to get on well together).

Why Anglia Paper wanted to close the plant is a mystery, because their order books were full right up to the time of closure, and only a few months ago a huge order from Kelloggs was turned down.

Also, although no financial returns have yet been published, the firm have not done too badly from the government. In addition to the £½m grant they received £16.50 a week from the government towards the miserable £19 they paid trainees during the first six months (and they started with only about 12 experienced men).

Anglia Paper and its immediate parent company, Ulster Paper Products, have refused to comment. Anderson, the local SOGAT man claims to be "in the hot seat over this one." The union's decision not to pay the workers any benefit was taken at national level, he says, and all enquiries have to be dealt with by London headquarters.

It's thought Anglia may try to re-open with a different workforce — a threat the union ought to be able to control — or will they?

RED



BOOKS

REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE

Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Eastern Europe, Third World, Ireland, Women's Liberation.

RED BOOKS, 81a Renshaw Street Liverpool. Open Tuesday to Friday, 12.30-3.00 p.m. (Sat 11 a.m.-3 p.m.)