

# Magnet that attracted debts

THE UNLAMENTED death of the throw-away advertising sheet 'Mersey Magnet' has left its owners - the Liverpool Echo - feeling very sore.

Despite claims to advertisers that the Magnet had incredible pulling power, the paper failed to pull in the profits.

In its first full year of publication the Magnet cost the Echo a hefty £38,594. More than a third of this loss was due to people who put adverts in the paper and then 'forgot' or refused to pay for them.

The loss would have been even higher - £65,000 say the directors - if the government had not been so generous with their tax relief.

The Post and Echo set up the Magnet two years ago to try and preserve their near-monopoly of local advertising.

In Birmingham a little-known firm had just made a killing by starting a successful give-away paper and then selling out at a profit. The Echo were determined not to let the same thing happen in Liverpool.

But they were out-manoeuvred when the rival firm started the Wirral Globe, just outside the Magnet's circulation area but right inside the territory of the Daily Post, Echo and several of the Echo's weekly papers.

An extraordinary general meeting on August 8 failed to save the Magnet and a fortnight later Jim Chapman, the paper's advertising boss, resigned from the board.

Chapman, it will be remembered, was at the centre of the Fake Adverts Affair reported in Free Press 12.

To fill a gap in the paper he asked two girl employees to concoct 'Lonely Hearts' adverts. The replies from shy young men caused great amusement when they were passed round the office.

# Bootle jobs vanish

WHEN 17 electricians from the St John's House site in Bootle were on strike Simon Mahon, the town's MP, spoke of the 3,500 new jobs being held up.

However, now the men have gone back to work the number of jobs involved has mysteriously dropped.

Last month Sefton District Council were informed that St John's House had been redesignated as a computerised Inland Revenue Accounts Office, and that 1,200 jobs would now be provided.

# Dead man

(Continued from page one)

When the policeman fell off Kenny stopped, tried to run away, and was arrested. He was taken to the land-rover and Mrs Williams told what happened next:

"As he went to sit on the bench they said 'On the floor' and they started punching him and kicking him. And they had like a telephone - a steel thing - and they hit him with that."

Kenny said he was beaten up again at the Bridewell. Later, a police doctor put six to eight stitches in cuts on his head.

The following morning two detectives told Mrs Williams her husband had been charged with Attempted Murder (though the policeman was apparently not badly hurt). Kenny appeared before Liverpool magistrates the same day and was remanded to Risley.

Mrs Williams went to see him. "I could see they'd beaten him up. He showed me his head and said he wasn't feeling too good. All his face was all up and his eyes were all blue."

"He complained all week about his stomach. He said the cell was in a terrible mess with vomiting all the time."

Kenny asked for treatment from the start. But he was told no doctors were

Cracks slurred with polyfilla, applied with a finger... strained and distorted window frames... open joints on windows which let in rain... damn walls... half-inch gaps between floors and skirting board... drains not connected to main sewers... appalling addled plaster... kitchen units butchered... joints which appear to have been formed by the use of a hatchet... -these are some of the 400 building faults found in a new £850,000 Corporation housing scheme.

# Off with his head!

## Top officials make 63-year-old man scapegoat for £850,000 disaster

AN ENQUIRY has been ordered into the running of Liverpool City Architect's Department.

This follows an attempt by top officials to blame the disastrous failure of a £850,000 housing scheme on a 63-year-old man earning less than £40 a week.

Councillors discovered at the private disciplinary meeting that this scheme, and even multi-million pound contracts, had been accepted by the department on the word of one man... a clerk of works.

At the meeting Mr W.A.Horne, City Architect (who earns about £10,000 a year) recommended that Mr J.T.Damer, a senior clerk of works, should be downgraded and deprived of his senior status. This would have hit his wage and then his pension in just over a year's time.

Mr Horne made him the "fall guy" for all the appalling workmanship in 234 dwellings at Rudyard Rd, Knotty Ash.

Over 400 faults, many extremely serious, have been counted in just three cluster blocks of 42 flats and maisonettes. The blocks are between one and two years old.

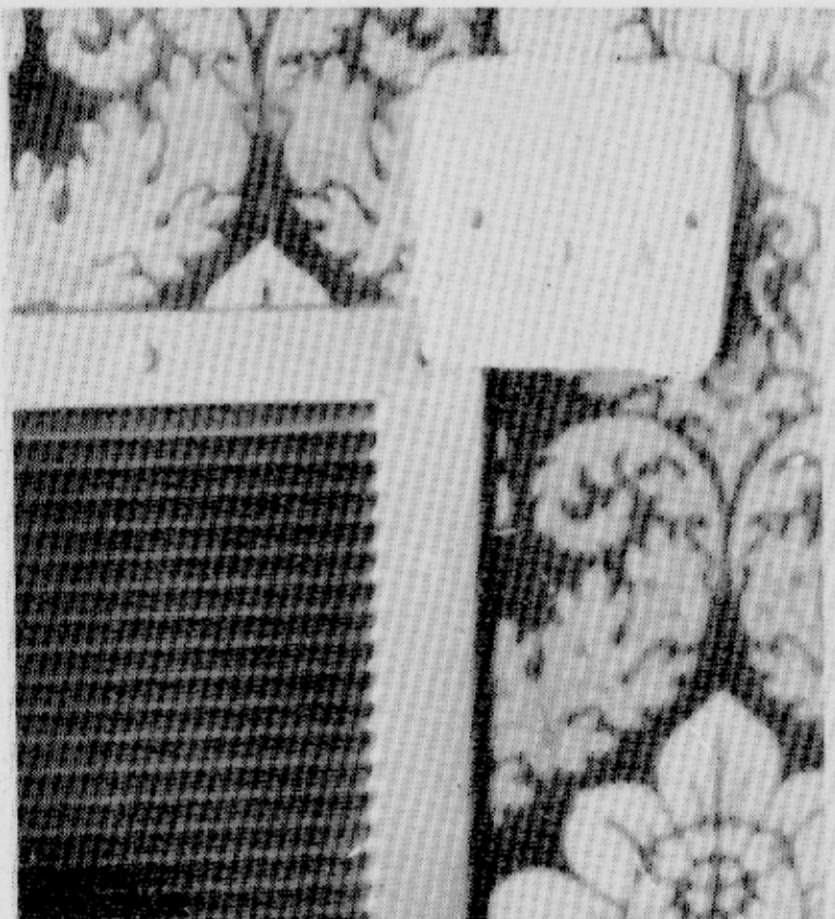
It will cost up to £34,000 to make them habitable. But they are so badly built that at least one councillor believes they are "new slums" and should be knocked down.

Councillors on the General Services Committee were astounded when they heard the Architects Department blame everything on Mr Damer.

They unanimously rejected this and instead ordered an enquiry into the Architect's Dept. and its supervision and control of projects.

For this case revealed that on projects designed and supposedly supervised by the Architects Dept, the clerk of works still frequently signs the completion certificate... the architects don't bother. This happened on the Rudyard Road site.

The corporation can't force the builder to correct the numerous faults at Rudyard Road because six months



Some fine examples of 'craftsmanship' on the Rudyard Road estate.



after the certificates have been signed the firm is no longer liable.

If Mr Horne had succeeded in downgrading Mr Damer he would have made the Architect's department almost immune from criticism and set a precedent with vast implications.

For every time a local government building scheme went wrong, the top officials would merely have to offer up a low-paid clerk of works to appease councillors.

Naturally NALGO were prepared to fight this case through every court in the country.

Certainly Liverpool's senior clerk of works would have walked out. After all, why should men earning £40 a week be responsible for multi-million pound schemes, while professional men aren't?

The attempt to make Mr Damer a scapegoat is even more astounding when you consider that:

- Rudyard Road was a problem site from the start. This was the fault of the private building contractors. Drury North Western Ltd, the first contractor, used lump (non-union, usually unskilled) labour... which is forbidden on Corpor-

ation contracts. The practice continued when Francis Parker Contracts took over the firm and the project. Also, there were 17 management changes at the site.

- Mr Damer wasn't appointed to the site until April 1970 - just five months before the work should have been completed. But it was way behind schedule and was finished in February 1973, two years and five months late.

- Mr Damer was selected because the site was troublesome, and his work in the past had been highly praised. He was very experienced, having supervised the building of multi-storey blocks in the city.

- A manager from Francis Parker burned all Mr Damer's weekly notes which he showed the city's project architects. For the firm had found that the senior clerk of works was not entitled to accommodation on the site under the terms of the contract. So they turfed him out of the hut which they had provided, cleared out his files and set them alight.

- Senior clerks of works with the Corporation have no power to issue instructions for work to be carried out or even altered.

- Mr Damer had three other sites to supervise.

- The top officials and the Architect's Department knew the faults because tenants had complained constantly. And yet the department let Mr Damer sign the completion certificate.

- Mr Horne said Mr Damer should have brought the shocking workmanship to the attention of the city's three project architects who worked on the scheme at different times. He did, at weekly meetings with them. In any case Mr Horne's argument is ridiculous. A child could see the faults.

One city architect who produced a report to batter Mr Damer spoke of: cracks being slurred with polyfilla applied with a finger; of strained and distorted window frames; of open joints on windows which let in rain. Of damp walls; of half-inch gaps between floors and skirting boards; of drains not connected to main sewers. Of kitchen units being butchered; of appalling addled plaster; and of joints which appear to have been formed by using a hatchet.

No wonder the officials were worried... no wonder they searched for a scapegoat.

## CIVIC CENTRE

ALTHOUGH it's now more than a year since the government put a stop to the ridiculous £17 million Civic Centre project, Liverpool City Council are still buying up land and buildings in the area where it was to have been built.

Last month they added another £26,000-worth of property to their collection.

available at the weekend. "They said you're just trying to pull the wool over our eyes," he told his wife.

Eventually they did something for him. "They put him in the hospital part and all they gave him was white medicine for wind and some pink stuff."

By the following Saturday Kenny was too ill to see his wife. A prison officer told her there was a bug going round.

On Monday, July 29, Kenny appeared again at Liverpool magistrates court. Now the charge was reduced to Grievous Bodily Harm and he was released on £100 bail.

"When he came out he was just soaking wet. He was going from one side of the street to the other. He said get me home. When he come home he broke down crying."

Mrs Williams said the family doctor diagnosed jaundice. He also asked about the bruising on her husband's stomach. Within 24 hours an ambulance rushed Kenny to Walton Hospital.

Doctors operated almost immediately. But at 2am that night police paid a second visit to the Williams' home. This time it was so doctors could tell Mrs Williams there was little chance of her husband living.

The doctors said he had a burst pancreas. And on August 14 Kenny Williams died.

Before his arrest he had never been in trouble with the law. Before his arrest he had not seen a doctor in years. He was 27 years old.

## FREE PRESS

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## Dispensing with chemists

IF YOU FALL ILL at night you might be lucky enough to see a doctor and get a prescription. But you won't find a chemist open.

There is not a single 24-hour chemist in the whole of Liverpool. A few stay open until 7 p.m. on weekdays and from 12 until 1 p.m. on Sundays. But that's your lot.

It's surprising that this disgraceful state of affairs has been allowed to continue. Especially when one Liverpool MP is so close to the chemists.

Eric Ogden, Labour MP for West Derby performs a valuable service as the parliamentary advisor to the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society.

Of course, living in Manchester, Ogden may not be aware of the problem. And he'll know even less about Liverpool's problems when he moves to London very shortly.

That should be far enough away to stop him catching anything from his constituents.

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## Magicoal bosses stop the work-in

WORKERS at Berry Magicoal, Huyton, think they could run their factory better than the management - so they tried to prove it.

The management thought that might prove embarrassing. So, after only two and a half hours of the work-in, they put a stop to it.

With 170 workers on presses and assembly work the electricity was cut off, plunging the factory into darkness. "It was a very dangerous thing to do," commented steward Len Short.

The workers think they were well on the way to their 400 fires a day production target. But after the switch-off all they could do was occupy the factory.

The action started after Berry Magicoal (part of United Gas Industries like Robinson Willey) laid off 83 people on October 11.

The workers fear this was the first step towards a complete close-down and want some office and production staff reinstated.

They say the factory has been badly run ever since it opened three years ago. Since then they have had two Works Managers, two Production Directors and three Supervisors.

So far the unions involved - TASS and the AUEW - have left the workers out in the cold. No one is getting strike pay yet.

The AUEW, of course, have management problems of their own. TASS are still making up their minds. Latest news is that the decision is before some sub-committee or other.

● CONTACT: The factory on 489 4107. Donations to: Lance Robinson (Chmn of the staff committee), 465 Woolton Rd Liverpool 25.

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