

NEW TRESPASS LAW WOULD MAKE SIT-INS A CRIME

TRESPASSERS will be prosecuted! That has been a hollow threat for centuries. Trespassers simply can't be prosecuted... at present. All a property owner can do is sue you—a long and expensive business.

But that may soon be changed. The Law Commission has proposed that trespass should be made a crime (for the first time since 1694).

If Parliament agrees — and that seems likely unless there's a massive campaign against it — many forms of peaceful direct action will become a crime overnight.

Trespass means being on property

when the owner doesn't want you there. A few examples show how a "criminal trespass" law could mean the biggest restriction of civil liberties for years...

Factory workers and students would be liable to arrest and six months in jail if they refused to end a sit-in when asked to do so.

The same would apply to demonstrators or pickets on private or state property — such as council or Social Security offices.

It would be a crime to be homeless: Vagrancy is already a crime and the alternative — squatting — would count as trespass.

Owners would also be able to restrict movement about their property. A shop steward, for example, could be prevented from moving about a factory.

Even shoppers could be jailed if they refused to leave a shop after being short-changed or sold shoddy goods.

You may think a Labour government would never let it happen. But remember this: Out of the 58 previous proposals made by the Law Commission, 57 have become law. It will need more than wishful thinking to make this the second exception.

● Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law, 119 Railton Road, London SE24.



TEMPEST LET DOWN

THE SIXTEEN-YEAR reign of Dave Tempest, First Pharaoh of Kirkby, looks to be drawing to a close.

Tempest has to face his second election in a year this May. But the problem is where?

The voters of his own Park Ward let him down badly in last year's Knowsley Council elections, when he only just scraped home.

The unpopular Tempest is loath to trust them again. Facing tough competition from a ratepayers' group, he turned down the Labour nomination for Park Ward.

But then followed a humiliating tour round distant wards. Halewood and Longview both sent him quickly on his way.

Undaunted, Dave the First returned to Kirkby's Cherryfield Ward where he collected three out of 17 (yes 17!) votes.

Support has also been lacking for Tempest's trousers recently. They fell down while he was being filmed for Granada TV. It is understood the offending part will be cut short for broadcasting... to avoid giving Kirkby a bad name.

Latest word is that Tempest will crawl back to Park Ward to face almost certain defeat in the May elections.

But Tempest could still cling on to political power by less democratic means. The Labour controlled council have put off choosing a new Mayor until after the elections.

So if Tempest fails to win a seat in May he could sneak back as Mayor (since the Mayor need not be a councillor).

This is exactly how the Pharaoh got round a defeat at the polls a few years ago — by becoming Chairman of Kirkby Council.

No doubt he is already lining up his yes-men to counter any irresponsibility on the part of the voters.

Advertisement

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

Bootle tenants are kept in the dark

MR MERVYN HASHIM recently got the go-ahead for a multi-million pound holiday village in the Isle of Man.

He thinks his project will encourage tourism by adding to the natural beauty of the island where he is lucky enough to live. For some, it's all right.

But Mr Hashim doesn't "earn" all the money for his expensive projects on the Isle of Man. He owns property — on the island, in London, and in Liverpool.

He's also an agent for other property firms. And that's why he collects the rent from five houses in Bedford Road, Bootle.

He's not very efficient. He did manage to up the rents during the rents freeze. But he's not very good at actually collecting.

The tenants were not given rent books and they are never sure who the rent-man is (there have been three in the last few months).

Some weeks the rent-man came and some weeks he didn't. Some of the tenants got behind. And some of the money got lost between Bootle and the Isle of Man.

Mr Hashim decided he wasn't getting enough. So when his bills arrived he refused to pay. The bills were his because gas and electricity (£96 owed)

are included in the rent.

The gas and electricity in three of the houses was cut off.

Frank and Marie Carberry were without electricity for weeks. They live with their three young children in a one-bedroom flat. They owed nothing.

Miss Gorman, a 73-year-old pensioner, was left with candles and a calor gas cooker supplied by Bootle Social Services department. She owed nothing.

None of this worried Mr Hashim. But he does worry about his holiday village. "The economic conditions in England," he told a Manx local paper, "do cause certain setbacks. But I am optimistic that conditions will improve within the next year or so."

They certainly will do when we get rid of leeches like him.

● Hashim and his wife run four property firms: Niagra Investments; La Manche Property Consultants (Isle of Man); Industrial Commercial Investments; and La Dordogne Investments. We'd be interested to hear from any more of his tenants. In Bootle, Hashim acts for Rose Hall Investments, a mysterious bunch of characters based in that other tax haven, Guernsey.

HAS THE BIG SPENDER GONE FAR ENOUGH?

HOW MUCH LONGER can Knowsley ratepayers afford the services of their council's Architect, Mr Eric Spencer Stevenson?

The interesting Mr Stevenson is both highly paid — around £10,000 a year — and extremely liberal with public money.

Latest in a long line of expensive slip-ups was his decision to rent, rather than buy, extra vehicles for his department.

Big Spender Stevenson paid over £50,000 to the lucky firm, Prescott Van Hire. There were no tenders from competitors and no contract.

The £50,000 is slightly more than the £500 Stevenson is entitled to spend without the approval of councillors.

It is also considerably more than the cost of actually buying the vehicles required.

But ratepayers will be pleased to know the vehicles are fully used — on private, as well as on council business. So much so that the Engineer & Surveyor, Mr G Smith, recently sent a memo to the Transport Manager.

He complained that councillors had seen hired vans outside the area for the third time. On one occasion, a van had been spotted carrying furniture in Liverpool.

This, Smith warned, was "a sin against which the elected representatives will have no sympathy."

Mr Spender Stevenson is himself a keen motorist. His car is of the low-down, quick getaway type.

News not so hot

WIDE publicity was given to the Post and Echo's scheme for heating their new offices using the warmth of employees' bodies.

No publicity has been given to the fact that it failed.

The unusual "heating" system at the firm's £3 million space-age building in Old Hall Street was featured on BBC television's Tomorrow's World — and was hailed as a great achievement.

"People's body heat, plus the heat from light fittings, will provide more than enough energy to keep us warm," the Echo's publicity boys boasted before the building opened.

"We won't have a heating system at all, but rather a cooling one."

This proved so effective that during last year's exceptionally mild winter many of the staff froze.

The frantic efforts of engineers to overcome the problem are thought to have generated enough heat to keep the building warm for this winter.



Cramped conditions at the official caravan site in Oil Street.

COUNCIL PLANS TO TEACH TRAVELLERS A LESSON...

TRAVELLING FAMILIES on Merseyside will be glad to hear that Liverpool City Council has been re-considering their living conditions since the Free Press article on the official caravan site at Oil Street — Liverpool's answer to Long Kesh.

The council is not, however, improving the sanitary conditions, providing a public telephone or building a zebra crossing to stop the kids getting run over on the main road nearby.

The Highways and Environment Committee has decided that what is needed is "a suitably qualified person to visit regularly... in an effort to assist the occupants of the site to use the facilities offered to them to their best advantage."

Presumably this person will be qualified to teach the residents how to wash in a bath designed for midgets and how to catch the rats which frequently appear from the docks. Perhaps he will teach them how to find the nearest public telephone in working order. Maybe he'll give the kids athletics lessons so they can dodge the traffic.

The residents of Oil Street do not want to be taught how to live in bad conditions — they want the conditions improved.

The money would be far better spent on providing more amenities or in paying for a full time warden who would be suitably qualified by being a traveller himself and sharing their way of life by not having a diploma in social work. The residents would welcome such a warden, who could act as an intermediary in their dealings with the council. They do not want a visiting 'expert' to tell them how to live.

Travellers on an unofficial caravan site in the area have also received the attentions of the council. The council would prefer they did not exist, as they are interfering with plans to become a 'designated area' under the Caravan Site Act.

To become a designated area the local authority is supposed to provide adequate site facilities for all travellers resident in the area. When designation has been granted by the government, all caravans not on official

sites can be evicted automatically and the occupants arrested and fined.

In the council's words, "the situation in the Fountains Road area is a corollary of the inability of the Merseyside County Council to comply with the statutory requirements relating to the provision of sites."

In plain English, the fact that there are travellers living on derelict land shows that not enough caravan sites have been provided.

The council's answer is simple.

They are trying to harass the travellers out of Liverpool before applying for designation. If they don't manage to drive them out, they will apply for designation anyway, though it's not clear how they can argue they've complied with their statutory obligations.

The council's got plenty of lawyers though. They're sure to come up with something.

The situation on the Fountains Road site is far worse than that on the Oil Street site. The official site provides at least rudimentary amenities. The unofficial site has no facilities at all and conditions are consequently insanitary.

Local residents have made many complaints and two local councillors, Gardner and Lafferty, raised the matter with the Highways and Environment Committee. They requested that a meeting be called of all those involved, i.e. "local residents, representatives of the Highways and Environment Committee, the Chief Constable, the appropriate officers, the Melrose/Westminster ward councillors, representatives of Merseyside County Council and the MP for Kirkdale."

Isn't somebody missing? The main subjects of the argument — the travellers themselves — are apparently not important enough to be invited.

Asked about the omission, Councillor Lafferty said: "I never thought about asking them — that's an idea."

He then remembered the council had already decided who would be invited, so the travellers could not attend.

Doubts over head man

BOOTLE'S Labour councillors are aghast at the antics of the man they helped get Sefton Council's top job.

The council's Chief Executive Officer, Mr J.P. McElroy, was previously Bootle's planning officer. But since his promotion he has turned out to be even more conserv-

ative than the Tories from Crosby and Southport who control the new council.

Cigar-smoking "Papa Mac" has taken to advising door-men to invest in South African Kruger Rands.

More important for the non-investing people of Bootle, he is not at all keen on the Labour govern-

ment's urban aid scheme. He sees the much-needed government grants as a back-door way of inducing councils to provide services they are not forced to provide.

And to cap it all, he refuses to advertise for staff in 'The Guardian'. He says he does not want to subsidise a "left-wing" paper.