

# Move to oust Eric Heffer

THE MILLIONAIRE founder of the anti-union Campaign for a More Prosperous Britain is behind attempts to persuade Labour voters in Walton to ditch their MP, Eric Heffer.

So far the campaign against Heffer has only amounted to leafletting some housing estates in Fazakerley. The 'Walton Times' wisely turned down an advertisement wrongly labelling Eric Heffer a "Communist".

The campaign is being organised locally by a group of small businessmen. They include Jim Butterfield, a Breck Road newsagent involved in various ratepayers and small business groups.

The man putting up the money is Tom Keen, a millionaire property owner from Oldham.

Keen first hit the headlines when he was fined £5 for damaging walls, doors and windows by sticking up posters at TUC headquarters in January 1974.

His fanatical opposition to Left tendencies in the Labour Party has led him to support the Liberals, the National Front and Scottish and Welsh Nationalists.

During the first 1974 election, for instance, he gave £8,000 to the Liberals and £300 to the National Front candidate in Blackburn.

And he was in Liverpool recently, offering a large salary to Liberal City Councillor Trevor Jones to lead a national campaign for electoral reform. Keen thinks proportional representation would condemn the

Labour Party to permanent opposition.

But it would perhaps be unwise to dismiss Tom Keen as a harmless looney.

Money talks — and he has plenty of it.

Some of the things he says are hysterically unpleasant. A Campaign for a More Prosperous Britain leaflet last year denounced trade union leaders Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon and

Lawrence Daly as "traitors" and "gang bosses who rule by fear and threat".

"Jack Jones," it said, "is a ruthless, cunning and evil murderer of Catholics... hated and feared by all men. He runs his union as a Mafia protection racket."

"He has to fight no elections... so other means must be found to vomit this demagog."

## Keen on smuggling

TOM KEEN claims to have made his second million last year.

He started in the property business in 1946 when he bought the Anglo-American industrial estate at Reading for £3,000 — and sold it for £570,000 in 1970.

At least some of the money for the initial investment came from smuggling silk stockings and cigarettes into the country during the war.

Other land deals followed in Liverpool and London and he continued his pre-war business as a chicken farmer.

Soon after the war he was fined £2,180 for smuggling eggs into Britain from America.

That wasn't Keen's only brush with the law. In 1973 he was fined £50 for illegally evicting tenants from

his Reading estate.

Keen and his men had broken into a house while the tenants were out, smashed the bath, sink, kitchen and toilet units, and ripped out carpets and curtains.

Keen himself has at least three homes — in Oldham, Highgate (London) and Cornwall.

His property firm, Units to Let Ltd is now run from Manchester and he is also a director of a number of other companies. He is currently said to be building holiday cruisers at a shipyard on Tyneside.

But Keen has taken the precaution of placing most of his wealth in trust — which no doubt evades tax and the possibility of losing some of it in libel actions over those ridiculous leaflets.

AN ARTICLE in last month's Free Press showed the large profits being made by the men behind Associated Liver Launderettes.

The company have over 80 launderettes in the city. In 1972 they made £57,983 and last year were able to invest nearly £100,000 in other companies.

Here we look at how they make their money...

## LAUNDERETTE WAGES ARE A WASH-OUT



THE DIRECTORS of Liver Launderettes usually have a hard-luck tale to tell if their staff ask for more money.

They say the company are doing so badly they can only afford paltry wages. And that's hard luck for the staff.

One woman employee says: "When we get a pay rise it is the princely sum of another 2½p an hour... laughable, isn't it?"

The directors may laugh. The staff don't.

The women are paid just 35p an hour. Even the manageresses who have the responsibility of hiring staff receive this hourly rate.

On top of this manageresses get £2 for administrative work, 50p towards their own wash, and a ridiculous 13p for making tea for the engineers. A grand total of £2.63 extra a week.

Manageresses have to see that the shops are cleaned and supervised from 8-8.30 a.m., from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., 3-5 p.m. and 8-10 p.m.

Most choose to work about 29 hours a week, that is for six days and one night. This, with their meagre extras, gives them about £12.70 a week.

There is no inconvenience money for working broken shifts, when they start the day at 8 a.m. and finish at 10 p.m.; no money for being pestered by customers during their off-duty periods; and no overtime rate for working on Saturdays and Sundays.

Worse, most manageresses live in the flat above the shop. This is not a free perk as some customers imagine

They have to pay £4-£5 a week rent. So at the end of the week the manageresses are lucky to end up with £8 a week.

Not satisfied with this, the Liver men are now trying to squeeze more money out of their launderettes. They have opened a dry cleaning business. The clothes are collected from the launderettes. The directors don't employ anyone extra, but instead pay the launderette staff a mere 5p an hour more.

"Various people have tried to start a union for the shop girls, but there is absolutely no way," said one of the Liver staff.

"If the firm finds out that someone is trying to start a union they will check up on that person, making sure she works her correct hours. No doubt they will find some reason to sack her."

"I could probably compile a list as long as your arm of the exploitation by the bosses of this firm."

The manageresses who live in flats above the shops have no rent books and no security. If they are sacked they lose their homes.

This is why most are unwilling to press for better wages and conditions.

One manageress told us: "It was only the housing shortage which forced me to take this job."

And another said: "Please don't print my name. If you did I would probably be out of a job and left with nowhere to live... see what I mean, they have you tied hand and foot."

## Kirkby houses probe

A KIRKBY councillor has asked for a full inquiry into the allocation of council houses to Knowsley Council officials.

Councillor Tony Beyga is particularly interested in how three officials from the Community, Recreation and Leisure Department jumped the queue and got the best council houses in Kirkby.

● Case 1: In May 1974 Mr and Mrs L J Brown moved into 40 Park Road, a two-bedroom house. Mr and Mrs Brown have no children. But Mrs Linda Brown is Community Develop-

ment Officer for Huyton.

● Case 2: July 1974, Mr and Mrs J Scott move into 17 Pitsmead Road, a three-bedroom house. This house is one of two originally bought by Kirkby Council for staff in 1958 and now valued at £11,000 each.

Councillors thought they had since been added to the general housing stock. Mr Scott is manager of the Huyton Leisure Centre. He has two children.

● Case 3: October 1974, the other £11,000 house, 21 Pitsmead Road, goes to Mr and Mrs F Simpson, who have four children. Mr Simpson works in the Community, Recreation, and Leisure Department in Huyton.

A lot of Kirkby families waiting for years to escape from barracks into a decent home will no doubt be even more interested than Councillor Beyga in the outcome of this investigation.

## Electricity bills shock for woman

MANWEB are threatening to disconnect electricity from a Kirkby woman who lives on Social Security and who was not sent a bill for almost three years.

The electricity board also wrongly accused divorcee Mrs Diana Palmer, of Redbrow House, Tower Hill, of illegally reconnecting her electricity supply — when it had not been cut off in the first place.

What's more, the Social Security have been deducting £2 a week from Mrs Palmer's weekly payments to cover gas and electricity bills. So it came as a shock to Mrs Palmer to find the electricity had not been paid.

The confusion began in 1972 when Mrs Palmer, who is bringing up her daughter alone, did get into arrears with both her fuel bills and the rent.

The Social Security prevented her electricity being disconnected and began to deduct both her rent and £2 a week for the gas and electricity.

Gas bills arrived normally and Mrs Palmer took them to the Social Security, who issued a Giro to cover them.

But Mrs Palmer heard nothing from Manweb, so she assumed her electricity bills were being paid directly by Social Security.

Then, in June this year, she was sent a bill for £174. She could only pay £78 from her Social Security savings, and has since been sent a final reminder for the rest.

Manweb also sent a letter saying that, according to their records, Mrs Palmer had been disconnected so she must have been "reconnected without the Board's authority".

Their records — and this highly defamatory statement — are wrong.

Manweb have now given 47-year-old Mrs Palmer an ultimatum to start paying off her arrears.

At a meeting with Mr G Shoemsmith, Manweb's District Adminis-



Mrs Palmer — accused of illegally reconnecting her electricity supply.

trative Officer, and a Mr D Pittman, she offered to pay £1 a week. "They said: 'We can't possibly do that, it would take years. We need £3.'"

Unlike Mr Shoemsmith or Mr Pittman, or any of those Social Security bureaucrats who share responsibility for this mess, Mrs Palmer has just £15 to keep herself and her 12-year-old daughter.

Maybe Mr Shoemsmith would like to explain what extravagance mother and daughter could cut out to give him his £3.

## Cyril pays up

NICE to see Cyril Parkinson filling in so well for Knowsley Council's suspended architect, Eric 'Spender' Stevenson.

Mr Parkinson recently took on the arduous task of attending the North West Builders' Federation annual dinner and dance at the Adelphi hotel.

After giving a good account of himself at the table, a beaming Mr Parkinson retired with a half-bottle of Scotch to sample the delights of room 211.

The following morning, glad to say, Parkinson broke with the habits of his suspended superior by paying his £13.39 bill himself.

## Jobless teachers

ONLY 20 out of 110 students leaving Ethel Wormald teacher-training college this month have so far got chances of a job.

Usually November is the month when jobs roll in. This year it didn't happen — one small result of the Labour government's £500 million cuts in spending on education over the past year.

## OCTOPUS CLUB

9 Dec Folk evening with local singers  
16 Dec Play for Christmas  
23 Dec Christmas Wassail (seasonal hilarity)

MEETINGS: Brook House Hotel, Smithdown Road, 8.30.

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NOW IN STOCK

Jim Allen DAYS OF HOPE 75p; Leon Trotsky STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM IN GERMANY £1.50; Hinton and Hyman, TRADE UNIONS AND REVOLUTION: The industrial Politics of the Early British Communist Party, 90p. Pluto Press 1976 BIG RED DIARY — an illustrated political diary, this year recording women in history, £1.

BACK IN PRINT: Paolo Freire, PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED 60p; Doris Lessing THE GRASS IS SINGING 60p; Richard Hyman, MARXISM AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF TRADE UNIONS 60p.

Also available — complete list of (over 300) pamphlets in stock and list of publications for trade unionists and industrial militants (send s.a.e.)

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