

Architect may have to pay for ski slope

WILL Knowsley council's departed architect, Eric "Spender" Stevenson, end up spending some of his own money for a change?

The District Auditor's department, who check local authority accounts, are patiently waiting for the police to finish so that they can get on with their own enquiries.

High on the list of money-wasting schemes they will want to examine is the famous Kirkby ski-slope.

Among the auditors' powers is that of surcharge — the right to recover public money from councillors and officials who threw it away. The ski-slope of course wasted around £150,000.

What has to be proved to get money back depends on whether it was spent before or after the local government changes in April 1974.

Before that date, the test was whether a person was "negligent" or guilty of "misconduct".

But since April 1974 "wilful misconduct" is what matters. This means, according to the district auditor's department, that a councillor or official "set out with mischievous intent or was reckless."

One page eight, we reveal architect Stevenson's version of the ski-slope disaster. Readers can make up their own minds whether there is any hint of mischievousness or recklessness.



Architect Stevenson

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The oil Sheikhs of Liverpool



A REMARKABLE petrol station has appeared right at the end of the M 62 motorway in Broadgreen.

The garage is certain to be a big money-spinner for the Total petrol company.

And it is an interesting reminder of Liverpool's oil sheikh era in the Sixties when the Labour controlled City Council presided over the great petrol station bonanza.

Oil companies were engaged in a desperate rush for plum sites. The value of land soared overnight if planning permission for a petrol station could somehow be obtained.

And permission was somehow obtained for many unlikely pieces of land.

The M 62 Total garage site at 32 Bowring Park Road is one of them.

In 1965, the Planning and Building sub-committee defied the hazard warnings of the City Engineer, ignored the detailed disapproval of the City Planning Officer, and gave planning permission to a woman who did not exist.

Earlier applications — long before the M 62 was planned — in 1955, 1961, 1963, and in 1964 (that time for a house a flats) had been turned down.

But in 1965 the mysterious and apparently persuasive Mrs Ada Evans appeared on the scene. "Mrs Evans" applied to erect a petrol station, a house and a betting office on the site.

'Motorway' garage and the woman who didn't exist

On August 18, the Planning and Building sub-committee considered the application. They were told by corporation officers that there was another petrol station only 250 yards and that leaving the site would be dangerous because a nearby parapet wall on a bridge hindered visibility.

The City Planning Officer put forward a comprehensive case against the application: the area was residential, the petrol station would be a "visual intrusion", there was no over-riding need for additional petrol facilities, and there was a shortage of housing land.

The committee was also told about the previous refusals. And they decided to defer a decision. But on October 6, 1965, the persuasive "Mrs Evans" was granted planning per-

mission. In fact, "Mrs Evans" was a false name, and she was not staying at the address given.

A woman using that name had approached the owner of the site and, for a period, held an option to buy it. Her visit to the owner was followed by a visit by a man wearing a black patch over one eye who said he was working with Mrs Evans.

The mysterious pirate was, in fact, Sam Davis, a former Old Swan Communist and long-standing friend of several senior Labour councillors.

Mr Davis has since left the country to live in Canada.

And although "Mrs Evans" won the planning permission for the site, it was Total Oil who eventually stepped in and bought it.

Going to court over £22 rent

A COUNCIL tenant who owes only £22 rent has been issued with a summons for repossession of his house.

Mr John Birkenhead, of Windfield Road, Garston has a wife and two children, and is unemployed.

He is particularly annoyed because he thinks the Corporation have not sufficient grounds for taking this action.

The family have lived in the house for ten years and for most of the time they have not been behind with the rent.

But since Mr Birkenhead was made redundant three years ago, a small amount of arrears has built up.

On September 1 he was given notice to quit, which he ignored. At this time he was not aware of the extent of his arrears because the Corporation had not filled in his rent card for several months.

(The Corporation are no longer willing to pay staff overtime to fill in these cards.)

On October 27 he went to the rent office in Speke, where he learned that he owed £50.27. He offered to pay by increasing his weekly payments by one, and sometimes two pounds. This he has done, and the amount he now owes is £22.

Completely unaffected by this, the Corporation issued a summons. Mr Birkenhead is at a loss to understand why.

Especially disturbing are the costs of the case — £5 in court charges and £8.25 in solicitors' fees. This is a total of £13.25, which, by the time the case comes to court, is likely to be more than the arrears.

More buses go as men split

MERSEYSIDE Passenger Transport Executive now plan to take 210 buses off the road by the end of the year.

This means the bus service in some areas will go from bad to appalling.

And the MPTE are confident they can force this plan through because they have just won a victory against the busmen who were resisting cuts.

Six Liverpool depots have agreed to sit down with the management to negotiate the loss of 60 buses.

They decided to do this when the MPTE agreed to withdraw the Ribble L22/23, which they had recently allowed to start. This had angered the MPTE busmen who were being told to accept cuts, at the same time that Ribble were being

given new services.

Only two MPTE depots, Speke and Garston, have stood firm.

Jimmy Murphy, a Speke steward said: "The traffic superintendent regularly comes down to ask us to start negotiating the cuts. We say the answer is No... and he goes away. So far they haven't started pushing us."

These two depots feel particularly strongly about the ludicrous growth in numbers of the administration since reorganisation. They say the cuts — if any — should start at the top.

All these cuts are a result of the government telling councils to reduce their subsidy of bus and ferry service by 50% over three years. The MPTE now have to save at least £5m.

Fare-box cost

IT'S UNBELIEVABLE. But there it is in black and white. Buried in Merseyside Passenger Transport's latest budget report.

Yes, the MPTE have money to fritter away. £1,173,900.

This is the amount they plan to blow in the next three years on fare collection equipment. Obviously for their latest toy — fare-box buses.

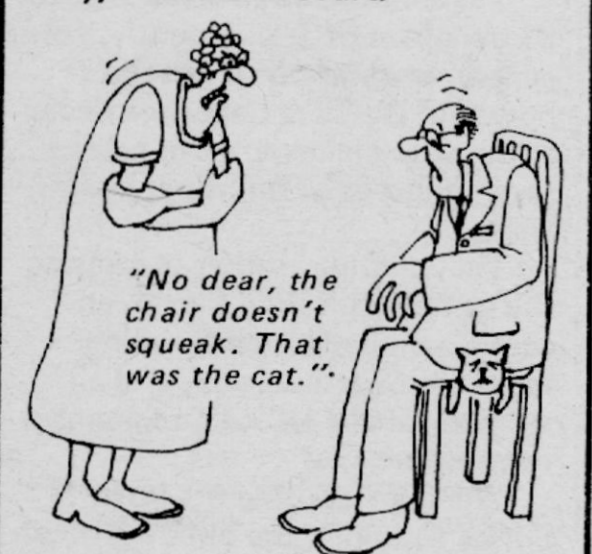
And this is after wasting thousands and thousands on the now abandoned bus economy ticket machines. They were introduced after they had already been tried and rejected in Manchester.

Should these men be left in charge any longer?

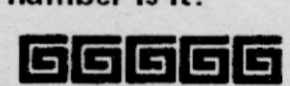


JOHN FORAN of Walton had an argument with his wife that made him so mad he later put his fist through a shop window.

"Then I saw a fellow laughing and I ran up to him. He put up his hand and I thought he was going to hit me, but the more I think of it he must have been going to put a chip in his mouth. I hit him. I'm sorry," he said in court.

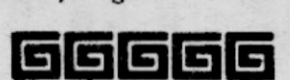


OVERHEARD on a bus. Driver (to passenger just boarding): "Does this bus go down Dale Street or Lord Street?" Passenger: "I don't know. What number is it?"



IN AN ATTEMPT to allow girls into his club free, and avoid the Sex Discrimination Act, manager David Grouns of the Adam and Eve Club in Rotherham, has erected a notice which reads: "Persons with knockers admitted free of charge"

"Men who try to use padding will have to pay. But to be fair, we might have some nights when persons with hairy legs will be allowed in free."



A MEMORABLE conversation for once on one of those tedious phone-in programmes on the radio... "I'm just on me way 'ome after a few bevvies with the lads at work. Now I'll have to face the wife. She never stops nagging me about it." Time... 2.30 in the morning.

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