

INQUIRY OVER CITY GRANTS TO LANDLORD

APPROVAL of Liverpool Corporation's accounts is being held up by an investigation into nearly £50,000-worth of improvement grants paid to property man Frederick James Turner.

The auditors are investigating after several people who bought houses from Turner complained that the work had not been done properly.

Numerous buyers have found damp walls, leaking roofs and dangerous wiring — faults which should have been put right under the grants.

The investigation covers the year 1974-5 only, when Turner received £48,138 from the Corporation, though he also had grants in previous years.

Turner himself lives in a delightfully improved cottage in Woolton where an answering machine listens patiently to complaints. He drives a Jaguar with personalised 'FJT 31' number plates.

He specialises in buying small — sometimes almost derelict — houses, getting improvement grants, and re-selling them.

He has also had grants to convert larger houses into flats. He lets these mainly to students under an unusual scheme which avoids the use of rent books. He is thought to be landlord of at least 40 properties.

Most of the houses Turner has sold are terraced houses. Several of them he bought for around £1,000.

His grant applications were handled by Iyanda and Sons, of Herondale Road, Mossley Hill, who describe themselves as "building consultants". Iyanda is a flamboyant character who tried to spread goodwill in the Corporation's Planning Department by sending bottles of whisky at Christmas. The Planning Department sent them back.

The improvements were done by

Turner's own firm, Brusna Construction, helped by sub-contractors.

Turner cashed in by spending less on the work than the grant applications showed.

For instance, in his estimates to the Corporation, he allowed £15 for removing and bricking up a fireplace. According to one man who worked for Turner, the job actually cost him only £3.50.

Turner estimated 75p a roll for wallpaper, but once boasted he could get "seconds" from a store near Knutsford for 10p a roll.

A look at some of the houses Turner sold gives a clear picture of the standard of Turner's "improvements" and the thoroughness of the Corporation's inspection:

9 Cornice Road, Liverpool 13:
Grant: £1,500. Roof in bad state, slates missing. Extensive damp. Needed complete rewiring. All window frames rotten.

20 Walton Village
Grant: £1,500. Holes in roof. Damp in bedroom. Wiring dangerous and insulation rotten. Windows nailed up. Reject wallpaper.

5 Cramond Avenue, Liverpool 18:
Grant: £1,500. Loose slates and leaks in roof. Damp front and back rooms. Rotting joists in hall. Back bedroom wall replastered after plaster fell off.

128 Town Row, Liverpool 12
Grant: £1,500. Owner paid £115 to have roof refelted and reslated. Extensive damp every wall on ground floor. Wiring not earthed, no Manweb certificate. Downstairs bathroom in old outhouse. No floor under bath, it rests on earth.

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Evicted at 70...



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Squatting at 74



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Knowsley stop aid for handicapped

KNOWSLEY councillors have decided not to spend any money on vital equipment for invalid people this year, although they know this is against the law.

Last year the council helped about 300 blind, infirm and handicapped people by providing aids or adaptations to their homes.

This year the Social Services department had planned to spend about the same amount on this service — £15,000 on adaptations and £7,000 on aids.

But the Labour-controlled Finance Committee refused to allow even this meagre amount to be spent. In fact not even one penny can be spent.

Now no infirm people can be helped, however desperate their need, unless the Social Services can find some equipment in stock.

When they took this decision, the councillors knew the council would be breaking the law. The Director of Social Services warned that his department had a duty to provide this service under the 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

A memo has now gone out to heads of Social Services district offices telling them not to buy any equipment for infirm people and not to pass on adaptation work to the Architect's Department.

This drastic action will have both absurd and tragic results.

It will mean doors can't be widened for wheelchairs, railings can't be put on stairs, hoists or grips can't be placed above toilets or baths for the handicapped, or flashing lights installed instead of doorbells for the deaf.

NEXT ISSUE

THE NEXT issue of the Free Press will be published on June 1. There will be no May edition.

We need the extra time to work on a number of difficult projects.

Bear Brand boss who backed a winner

MANAGING DIRECTORS are supposed to be disappointed when their company runs up huge debts and has to call in a receiver.

But the former managing director of Bear Brand, Mr Mervyn E. Smith, can't have been too upset when this happened.

For the Free Press has discovered that Mr Smith had 2,000 shares in the Wirral-based Tranwood/Benson group which has now bought Bear Brand from the receiver.

If Tranwood prosper because they have taken over the 'profitable' part of Bear Brand, so will Mr Smith.

In our last issue we showed the secret dealings which went on between Bear Brand and Tranwood.

For 18 months Tranwood have owned 27% of Bear Brand shares. And for the past six months they have persuaded Bear Brand to make far more tights, but to keep their prices down.

Tranwood then eagerly bought vast quantities to re-sell.

One way Tranwood influenced Bear Brand's policies was by helping to select the two new directors, Mr Mervyn Smith and Mr Ken Medlock, last October.

Mr Smith has always publicly said he had no connections with Tranwood. His 2,000 shares in that group make his protestations look rather absurd to say the least.

Tranwood realised that Bear Brand could be a valuable asset. But they never took the company over completely because they didn't want

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Councillor vandalises his house



THIS IS number 6 Bulford Road, Sparrow Hall. Council workmen have been there for over a month, making it fit to live in again.

The last tenant was Labour councillor John Finnegan, a member of Liverpool's housing committee.

And very splendid it looked... while Councillor Finnegan lived there. He'd paved the drive and put up ranch-style fencing with a gate at the front. Inside were doors with glass panels, strip lighting, and wall-boards around the fireplace.

But then Councillor Finnegan bought his own house. And when he moved out, so did the doors, gate, paving stones, sink unit, gas fire, wall-boards and light fittings.

And in came a succession of corporation plumbers, joiners, electricians and decorators.

Councillor Finnegan of course knows the housing department's rules. After all, he helped to make them. One rule is that council ten-

ants who remove their own fittings should make good any alterations.

Or perhaps that rule doesn't apply to councillors. Still, Councillor Finnegan did replace his own sink unit with an enamel one on wooden legs.

And he did get an old front door to replace the one he took away (the council have since fitted a new one).

In the past, Councillor Finnegan has been concerned at the number of empty council houses. One explanation officials give for empty houses is that tenants often leave without giving notice. This causes a delay in boarding up, vandals get in and the house becomes uninhabitable.

Councillor Finnegan's own department took the housing department by surprise. He suddenly handed in his keys and went.

Though in his case, boarding up the house would have made little difference. What could vandals do that Councillor Finnegan hadn't done before them?