

Cleaning firm risk man's life

JOHN HITCHMOUGH will never forget a job he had for only three weeks — working with asbestos. During that time he was exposed to a serious health risk and made to use a phoney union card. The firm he was working for was Addley and Sons, contract cleaners, based at 325 Smithdown Road, Liverpool.

John, who lives in Dignum Mead, Netherley, was taken on for a four-week trial period. It was his first job in 12 months and all seemed to go well until he was sent with another man to the Dunlop footwear factory in Walton.

There was a problem. The Dunlop workers insist that any contractors coming on to the site employ union labour. Neither John Hitchmough nor the other man were paid-up union members.

But Addley's supervisor, Mr D. Worthington, found a solution. He

gave the men GMWU cards belonging to other workers, and told them to produce them is questioned by the Dunlop stewards.

John was not happy with this. But after being out of work for so long he felt he had to go along with it.

He was even less happy when he saw what the job was. Dunlop had agreed with the unions that asbestos lagging on pipes inside the factory was a possible health risk. And Addleys were employed to clean it off.

Asbestos dust is now known to be extremely dangerous. But the only protection the men were given was masks which only covered the mouth and nose.

At the end of the day, John Hitchmough says, his moustache, hair and clothing were covered in

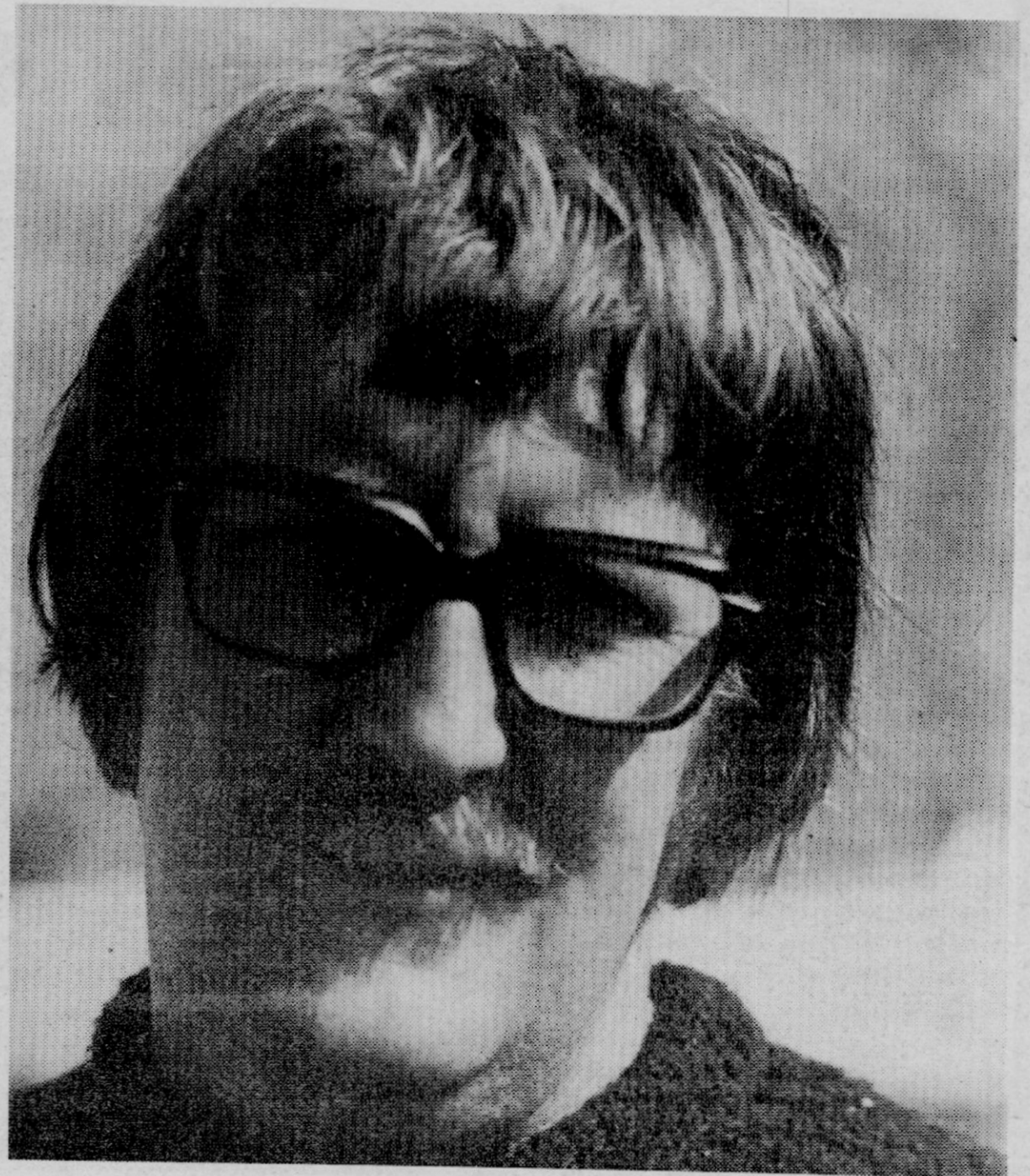
the dust.

By then he had also found out that they were not even being paid the full union rate. But when he asked Addleys for more money and proper equipment he was sacked on the spot.

It was the end of the line for Addleys as well. When the Dunlop stewards found out about the phoney union cards, the firm were kicked off the site.

John Hitchmough is now back on the dole. But he has more to worry about than simply finding another job. His doctor has told him it could be 30 years before he knows whether the asbestos has had any effect on him.

● The directors of Addley and Sons are John Addley of 156 Alder Road, Liverpool 12, John Addley (junior) of 167 Wroxham Road, Great Sankey, and Kenneth Robinson of 2 Thetford Road, Great Sankey.



John Hitchmough

Allegations put an end to perks

ALL THOSE paunches in Liverpool City Architect's Department should be disappearing before long.

Officials have now been forbidden to accept free meals or gifts from would-be contractors.

Previously such things were left to the "common sense" of the staff. But — as administrative officer J H Harrison points out in his memo announcing the ban — "Even the most innocent actions can be misconstrued and, if brought to light, are very embarrassing to explain."

He gives some recent examples: "Only last week the Chief Executive was requested, by a member of the City Council, to carry out an invest-

igation into allegations that on two recent occasions members of this department accepted hospitality from two large contractors, the inference being that the acceptance of such hospitality had a direct effect on the allocation of tenders. The City Architect was able to satisfy the Chief Executive that the allegations were totally unfounded.

"During the last nine months the City Architect and I, on two occasions have been interviewed by the Fraud Squad concerning allegations made by anonymous persons about officers of the department. Again the City Architect was able to satisfy the police that the allegations made were not true."

Sir Harold's Lady makes legal boob

LAST FEBRUARY we told how a Kirkby man had reported a Social Security manager to the police.

The manager lied when he said "We can't make cash payments to students."

And the claimant knew that under

section 29b of the Social Security Act it's an offence to make false statements "for the purpose of avoiding or reducing any liability under this Act".

A Free Press reader wrote to his MP, Harold Wilson, asking if this is correct. Back came a reply, signed by Marcia Williams, suggesting that the claimant had got it all wrong.

That part of the Act, says the letter, is about people trying to get out of paying maintenance to a husband, wife or child. "Criminal proceedings could not be brought against officials of the Department."

So we asked a Liverpool solicitor what he thought about this letter. "Balls!" he said.

He saw no reason why this part of the Act shouldn't apply to officials who lied in order to reduce or stop a claimant's benefit. It would be well worth someone having a go, as a test case.

The cream cakes, the cuts and a sherry

A SUBDUED Area Health Authority met in Liverpool this month to discuss how to curb its overspending.

Fortified by cream cakes, the Authority began its gloomy deliberations. Eventually members referred the problem to the management tier below, who make these difficult items more palatable by sipping sherry before their meetings.

And it appears bureaucrats can only take decisions about cuts in the Health Service in conspicuously pleasant surroundings. The already well-decorated headquarters in Rodney Street were recently treated to yet another coat of paint and carpeted throughout.

Extravagances like these may seem unimportant when you consider the Authority's £50 million budget. But in the next few years its members are going to face dramatic cuts in resources.

Perhaps we should subject our Health Service managers to a little more public scrutiny now to ensure they don't equate savings only with cuts in staffing.

Of course, we are entitled to go to meetings of the Area Health Authority. That is, if we can find out where they are held.

Since it was established in 1974, the Authority has chosen to meet (at 4 p.m. on the first Friday of the month) in the rarefied atmosphere of the Senate Room in the Senate House, isolated in Abercromby Square. Unsurprisingly, so far this year not one member of the public has attended.

Thanks . . .

THE Free Press Group would like to express their sincere thanks to all who answered our Appeal with donations and offers of help.

We are continuing the Appeal this month. But we should publish as usual in July.

FREE PRESS

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Man held under Terrorism Act

MR JAMES RUTLEDGE was arrested while returning from Belfast and held for 48 hours under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

His wife, Marie, was told by a policeman that they would have arrested her if she hadn't been pregnant.

Mr Rutledge is a Liverpool screen printer and former SOGAT shop steward. Among the 'evidence' suggesting to police that he was a terrorist was a framed photograph of the Celtic football team.

Mr Rutledge is a member of Clann na hEireann, which is the Irish emigrants organisation supporting the Official Sinn Fein. They are opposed to terrorism and the Provisional IRA. It was clear that Mr Rutledge was not a terrorist to everyone but the police. Jerry Harte, chairman of the local Clann na hEireann contacted the NCCL, solicitors, MPs, SOGAT and the Trades Council.

Bob Parry MP wrote to the Home

Office and received a reply from Lord Harris saying he would "look into the points you raise".

A demonstration was planned outside Cheapside police station but Mr Rutledge was then released. There was a great deal of trade union activity on his behalf, and without it he would probably not have been released so promptly.

Mr Rutledge was not allowed to make a phone call nor did he have a solicitor present while he was being interrogated. According to the NCCL this is normal in cases of this kind.

1,154 people were arrested for questioning during the first four months' operation of this Act. Of these, only 51 people were charged with anything connected with terrorism. Three people were charged with wasting police time.

The police are 'fishing' — the more people you detain, the more chance you have of catching a criminal.

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"Liverpool is the pool of Life"
Carl Gustav Jung, 1927

This is the dream I mentioned earlier: I found myself in a dirty, sooty city. It was night, and winter, and dark, and raining. I was in Liverpool. With a number of Swiss—say, half a dozen—I walked through the dark streets. I had the feeling that there we were coming from the harbour, and that the real city was actually up above, on the cliffs.

"They tried to tell us we're too Jung"
Liverpool School of Language Music Dream and Pun, 18 Mathew Street, Liverpool 2.



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