

# City festival ups and downs

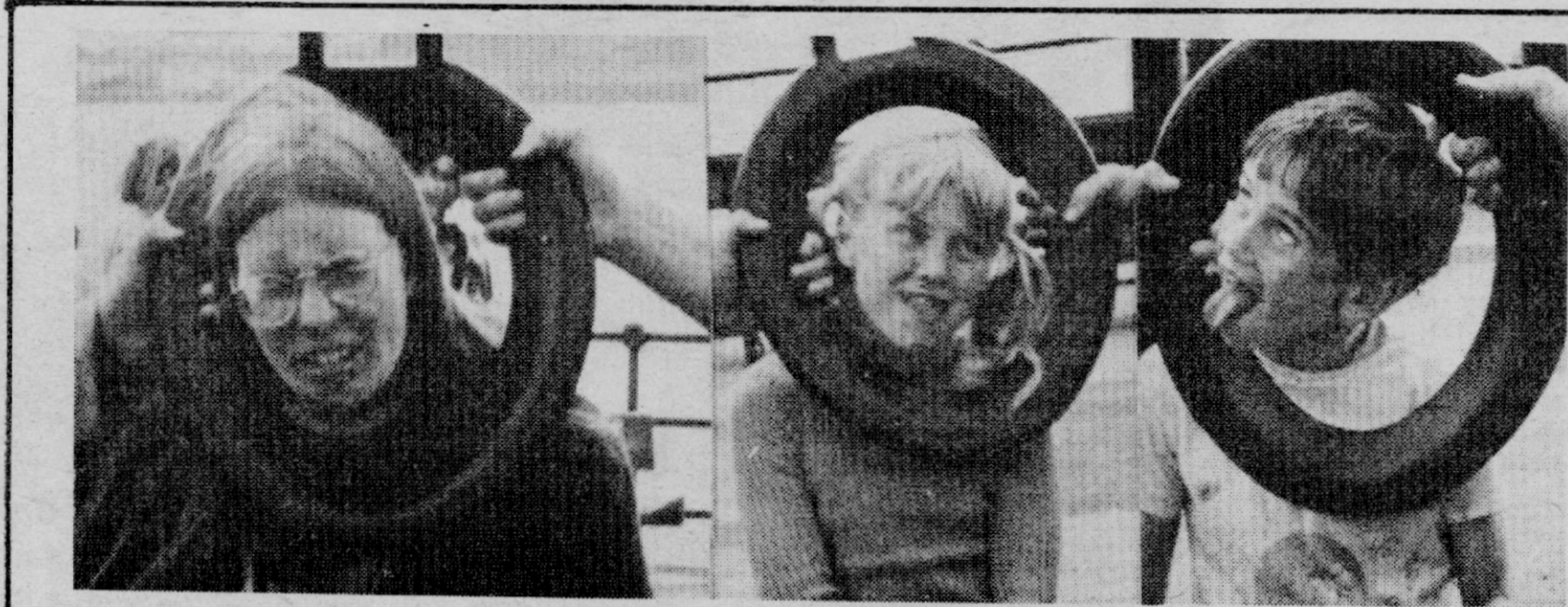
BETWEEN June 12 and 19 there was a festival in Liverpool called Summer in the City. It was an ambitious attempt to forge links between groups and individuals working for change in one way or another, and the fact that some of it went well and some of it didn't, was to be expected.

What we didn't expect was a peculiar run of bad luck, some spectacular cock-ups of our own making and a lack of support from a few important organisations.

For a start there was the weather. Writing now, during a heatwave, it is difficult to recall that the whole of that week was cold and wet. Only on three of the eight days was there patchy sunshine and the festival was brought to a glorious end by a five-hour downpour on the last Saturday, with a few hundred people huddled under various shelters at the end of the afternoon watching the bands.

This was particularly ironic since the original atmosphere and organisation (lateness apart) were excellent before the rain came down - probably one of the best festivals I've been to, and certainly the best I've helped organise.

The rain during the week put a



An ugly start to Summer in the City

stop to three or four outdoor events and contributed to some of the cock-ups, the best being the fireworks display on the Friday night. We still have £40-£50 worth of fireworks left and we're open to suggestions as to what we should do with them.

The major disappointments caused us by other organisations were that Merseyside Arts Association didn't give us a grant (we asked

for about £450) and that the Play Action Council arranged 'Yellow Fever' at the Pier Head for the same day as our final fair, despite telling us when we were fixing our dates that they wouldn't be doing anything on that day.

One predictable result of all our small and large disasters was that we lost money - probably about £300. The festival as a whole will have spent about £900 when these debts

are settled so we don't feel that we did too badly. Naturally readers are invited to send money to "Summer in the City", c/o Open Mind, 39-41 Manestys Lane, Liverpool 1.

So what went well? Various events at various centres were well attended. The films Winstanley and Campamento drew good audiences more often than not.

Professor Crump went down well of course - in fact the music and

theatre were good all week.

And although many were pissed off at its lack of direction, the Radical Liverpool meeting was quite crowded, with many groups represented.

The main ideas thrown up before and during the festival were, I think, as follows:

1. That a central resource centre to supply information, help and advice to groups is needed.
2. That a permanent meeting place is badly needed, with Liberty Hall perhaps as a once-weekly prototype.
3. That Liverpool needs a group doing community arts work and/or political theatre. This would save money on bringing in outside groups and greatly assist long-term projects.

Much of the Radical Liverpool meeting was taken up with an argument about the Free Press, perhaps because one of the staff was chairing (not that he said much). I can't remember the conclusions, but on the whole it was felt to be a Good Thing. And on that suitably vague note I shall finish. Anyone interested in pursuing any of the ideas above please get in touch.

- RICK WALKER

## Women activists still await end to leaflets ban

THE WOMEN'S movement on Merseyside - a loosely-based collection of groups involved in women's politics - may have to resort to using the cumbersome new Sex Discrimination Act against the Liverpool City Council.

The movement has been driven to these lengths in order to gain a basic right - to stand in the pedestrian areas of the city centre and hand out literature on the new legislation recently introduced to help women, the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts, and the attempts to restrict the 1967 Abortion Act.

Six times the women have applied and petitioned for permission and five times they've been refused. The debates on the women's application were amongst the most shameful displays of ignorance and prejudice seen even at Liverpool City Council.

Councillors overlooked the broad nature of the application and concentrated on the abortion issue. They asked the women for samples of literature which, when sent, were never distributed.

The oracle in these debates, which never reached the intellectual standard of the Beano, was Councillor Mrs Doreen Jones. She used the opportunity to demonstrate her incisive grasp of politics - the women's attempts to stimulate discussion were "filthy" and "degrading".

The women maintain their discussions are well-informed and their literature factual. They say if women in any number are to know their rights under the new laws discussion must start in the shopping centres of towns and cities, as most women are cut off from other forms of political discussion.

Last month the Highways Committee considered the women's latest application. By the casting vote of the chairman the committee agreed to give the women permission. This

now has to be confirmed by the City Council - and Councillor Mrs Jones is opposing the decision, so the whole matter will be debated again.

Doreen Jones says she believes, with the Women's Movement, that abortion should be a woman's choice. Equally the women are sympathetic to her and other female councillors who have to endure endless paternalistic banter and backchat from their colleagues.

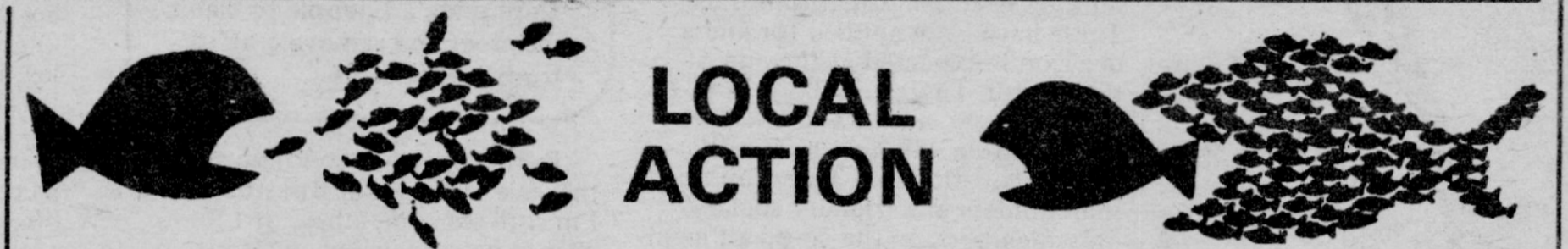
The Women's Movement sees abortion as a public matter, which cannot be divorced from all the other issues which affect the lives of women. Mrs Jones views it as a private matter, and that women are degraded by free and open discussion of the subject.

Privileged women have always been able to buy abortions in secrecy and safety. But for most women in Liverpool, abortion has been, and often is a gruelling and humiliating procedure - and a subject for gossip and rumour in the street. And it's in the street that the Women's Movement wants to inject some facts and information. On this and all issues affecting women.

● THE LIVERPOOL ECHO have finally accepted an advert for the British Pregnancy Advisory Service after long refusing to do so. What the Echo don't like about the BPAS is that they sometimes help people to have abortions.

This difficulty has been overcome through not allowing BPAS to mention abortion in their adverts.

But this can only confuse readers. The Echo carries an advert from an organisation called 'Life', who also advise on pregnancy. But Life is supported by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, the anti-abortion lobby.



## Tower Hill road blocks campaign hits a snag

THE WELL-PUBLICISED road blocks campaign at Tower Hill, Kirkby, raised important problems with this form of direct action.

The campaign for metal safety barriers round the estate began after the death of a 4-year-old on one of the surrounding main roads.

Mothers in the immediate vicinity blocked one road and during the following week the protest spread. Several hundred people became involved and blocked all four roads round the estate.

Now the problems appeared. Many people on Tower Hill with cars were affected more than other motorists. For them, there was no alternative route, and they quickly lost patience.

Buses, too, ended their journeys before Tower Hill, adding to the inconvenience for people living there.

Then, towards the end of the week, came a serious blow for those unemployed on the estate. The Post Office either could not or would not deliver mail, including Social Security Giro.

Earlier, demonstrators had been surprised at the reaction of the police who co-operated by turning traffic back for them. But this seems to have been a clever way of regaining control of a difficult situation.

Direct confrontation with so many determined people would have been dangerous. Instead, the police waited for - and probably actively worked for - a drop in support for the campaign.

By the end of the week the police were insisting on total road blocks or nothing - ending the protestors' reasonable policy of letting through essential traffic like doctors, midwives, and social workers. This naturally cut support for the campaign still further.

The campaigners then recognised the need to switch tactics. A march on a council meeting was followed by demonstrations outside embarrased councillors' homes.

Knowsley Council have responded by passing the problem to the even more remote Merseyside County Council.



## Grass seed demo for corporation

AS PART of the Summer in the City festivities, Friends of the Earth, the Hope Street Residents' Association and kids from Arundel Comprehensive School dug up a cleared site in Egerton Street and planted grass.

They cleared the site of bricks and other debris and then scattered a special grass seed developed by Professor Bradshaw of the Botany Department at Liverpool University.

The advantage of this seed is that it does not need any topsoil to grow in. Liverpool Corporation have always claimed that their reluctance to grass over cleared sites is due to the cost.

The main expense is buying topsoil. It's hoped the Egerton Street grass patch will show them this is unnecessary.

PEOPLE living in Garrick Street, off Smithdown Road, Wavertree, have been blocking their street each evening to stop through traffic.

They are worried about the safety of their children, especially with the school holidays coming up.


There have been a number of accidents in the narrow, one-way street which is used as a short-cut. Residents say vans from the nearby gas board depot and taxis are among the worst offenders.

The man in the suit surrounded by furious residents is a police superintendent who, in his hurry to sort things out, had stopped his car less than an inch from the barricade.

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