

Hotel workers' union official gets hooked on the high life



The Atlantic Tower hotel.

Union official Ray Lawlor and his family stayed in a £27-a-night suite free of charge.

THE ATLANTIC TOWER is the only city hotel with staff organised by the General and Municipal Workers' Union — but many of them are wondering who gets most out of it.

The union official responsible for the workers at the Atlantic Tower is Ray Lawlor. So naturally Mr Lawlor spends quite a bit of time at the hotel.

The trouble is he seems to spend most of it living it up with the hotel manager, Mr Noel O'Neill. Staff say Lawlor is often seen having lunch or late-night drinks with the manager.

And they were particularly concerned to learn that Mr Lawlor and his family have been non-paying guests at the hotel.

As one waiter put it: "We don't want a union man who sits and has cigars and brandies with the manager. We want someone who throws bricks at the manager."

"If I had any trouble," said a woman worker, "I feel, to be honest, I don't think I'd have enough faith in the man to sort my bother out. We should come first. We're the ones keeping him in a job."

There are plenty of issues for the GMWU to take up, apart from the notoriously low wages in the catering industry.

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, who own the Atlantic Tower, have cut staff drastically by not filling vacancies. Two years ago, for instance, there were 16 day cleaners and five night cleaners at the hotel.

Now there are two full-time and two part-time day cleaners and no night cleaners at all.

Most departments are short-staffed and workers object to being switched from one job to another to cover.

Yet, according to union official Ray Lawlor: "At the moment there's no staffing level position. There's no negotiations as far as this goes. It's an on-going subject."

Staff are not happy about many of their facilities. And they think management are trying to stop workers 'living in' altogether.

But, according to shop steward Hugh McEvoy, the manager's reply to complaints is often: "I'll see Ray Lawlor."

There is a general feeling that the union is not doing enough. As a result, says McEvoy, union membership has dropped considerably. "It's got that way that they're not interested."

So we asked Ray Lawlor, the GMWU regional official responsible for catering, about his relationship with the management of the Atlantic Tower hotel.

Had he stayed at the hotel? Yes. Had he paid? No.

But Lawlor had an explanation. And he was supported by the union's Regional Secretary, a very nervous Walter Alldritt.

Lawlor said he had stayed two nights at the hotel — on January 9 and on June 23. On both occasions

the owners had let him stay there free because he was organising union functions.

He said this was "a normal commercial arrangement when you arrange functions at any hotel anywhere."

Walter Alldritt explained that January 9 was the annual staff dinner and dance. And in June a delegation of glass blowers from America was visiting the city.

He confirmed that he and Lawlor had made the arrangements for these functions together. But, he added, "I wasn't staying there."

He might have enjoyed it. On the first occasion Ray Lawlor, his wife and baby only had a double room on the fourth floor (usual cost: about £16 a night). But in June the Lawlor family were lucky enough to stay in one of the hotel's twelve suites.

Complete with lounge, bathroom and colour TV, the cost to paying guests is £27 a night.



RUSHING into the ring for the start of a featherweight bout at the World Sporting Club in London, Alan Richardson threw off his robe and waved as the 5,000 fans cheered.

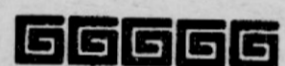
Then he realised he had left his shorts in the dressing room.



A DRUGS SQUAD raid on a house in Deiniolen, North Wales, was interrupted by a little girl who told the police: "You are meanies... pinching all mummy's dope and all the dope plants."



'CHINA WEEKLY' reports: "A five month drought in the eastern grain planting provinces has meant that the Soviets are unlikely to have a good crop this year."



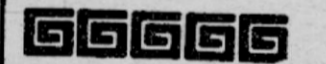
ARRIVING in court two hours late, Judge Stanley Kirk of Houston, Texas, apologised and charged himself with contempt. He pleaded guilty and fined himself \$49. Then he said: "I am bound to take into consideration the defendant's impeccable record and good character and therefore suspend the fine."



GREAT moments in crime, No. 94... The arrest of Albert Pluckley in Brazil for fraudulently obtaining £1.43 Social Security money.



A DRIVING SCHOOL in Eastbourne is offering "crash courses" for those who want to learn to drive very quickly.



A TEACHER tells us she asked her class where God is. "In the sky," said one. "In heaven," said another. Then one said: "In the toilet." When she asked why, the boy said: "Cos in the morning me dad bangs on the door and says 'God, are you still in there?'"



SCOOP of the century award goes to the Bletchley Gazette: "Riding his bicycle down Church Hill, Bow Brickhill, on Sunday, Nigel Edwin Hawkins, 18, of 46 Stacey Avenue, Wolverton, lost control and fell off."



OVERHEARD at the Youth Employment: "I told 'em I want to be a lollipop man, 'cos you don't have to start work till you're 65."

It's that man again

A RECENT advertiser on Radio City is Lancastrian Insurance Brokers, who have opened an office at 362 Marsh Lane, Bootle.

What the adverts don't mention is that the firm is run by the obnoxious Caplin family from Southport.

Abram Maxwell Caplin is chairman of the Oak Co-operative Building Society, and his family run numerous property companies from their headquarters at 6 Post Office Avenue, Southport. [See "The Unacceptable Face of Caplinism", Free Press issues 22,23 and 24].

In January we revealed that borrowers from the Oak Co-operative Building Society had been forced to insure their houses with an insurance company run illegally from the Bahamas by Maxwell Caplin.



Maxwell Caplin, MBE

His son, the equally unpleasant Tony Caplin, has other interests. As chairman of the charity 'Contact Merseyside' he was not so long ago telling Radio City listeners how important it was to get old people out of their houses.

This is something he is well qualified to talk about. As a landlord of the worst type, Tony Caplin knows all about harassing elderly people out of their homes when it suits him.

A medical problem for Bootle's MP

A BOOTLE man has had an extremely odd interview with his MP, Simon Mahon.

It happened only two months after Mr Bernard Whiteside, of Brackley Court, Bootle, first asked Mahon for help. (He is an elderly man who suffers from chronic bronchitis and has a dispute with Sefton Council over what he's entitled to.)

Having tried to get help from Simon Mahon in the past, Mr Whiteside first wrote to Jack Ashley, an active MP. He passed on Mr Whiteside's letter to Mahon in early July. Mr Whiteside heard nothing more.

A letter to Simon Mahon direct on August 6 also produced no response.

But an appeal to Sir Harold Wilson's office eventually did the trick.

On August 28 Simon Mahon wrote to grant Mr Whiteside an audience. He even laid on a taxi to take him to the Mahon residence.

But the actual meeting with the Great Man proved rather disappointing. When Mr Whiteside arrived, the MP was apparently already busy with another problem in an adjoining room.

"I could hear him rambling away," he recalls, "I thought he was interviewing someone."

So Mr Whiteside was surprised to learn "there was nobody there, He was talking to himself."

Anyway Mr Mahon could not face the reality of Mr Whiteside's problem. He offered a drink, declined to read any of his documents; and Mr Whiteside left with the feeling he will never see Mr Mahon again.

Incidentally, Mahon's ramblings recently ran to an assurance in the Bootle Times that his ex-directory number can be obtained by giving your name to directory enquiries. This is completely untrue. (His number is 525 2050).

One of the few things that have interested Mahon during his long parliamentary career has been abusive phone calls. Some years ago he suggested abolishing telephone directories. The Postmaster General informed him that unfortunately this was not possible as the entire telephone system depended on them.

A doctor writes: These symptoms, together with the laws of libel, mean I can only describe this condition as "Mahon's Disease".

Police crimes cover-up

SOME REMARKABLE statistics about prosecutions of Merseyside policemen have been ignored by the Liverpool Daily Post and Echo.

The statistics were presented to Merseyside Police Committee by Chief Constable Ken Oxford and were part of a general survey of complaints against the police by the public.

The Post and Echo's traditional reluctance to mention such matters meant no mention of either the complaints or the prosecutions.

Instead the Post and Echo sifted through Oxford's report, played down the fact that crime had actually increased compared with 1975, and

selected just two month's figures to support a headline that crime is on the way down.

The papers avoided mentioning the dramatic increase in police crime.

Oxford's report showed that the number of complaints against the police so far this year are well up on last year. In the first seven months 595 complaints had been received, compared with 911 for the whole of 1975 — an increase of ten complaints a month.

It appears that the show trial of Rita Lindsay and Tommy Satchell for 'wasting police time' with official

complaints (Free Press 26) has not discouraged others from complaining.

Sixty-seven complaints were upheld in 1975, compared with 28 so far this year. Despite this fall, more police have been prosecuted as a result of complaints (the number of prosecutions has more than doubled in only seven months this year).

In 1975 two complaints of assault and damage were substantiated. By July this year five cases had led to prosecution — four of those were sexual offences (two involving unlawful intercourse and two indecent assault). The remaining case was an assault by a police officer.