

Public eye on police

Concern has been growing over the increase in complaints about police behaviour in some areas of Liverpool.

This year about 300 official complaints have been made — so many that some senior officers are now permanently engaged in investigating them.

Much criticism has been made over the handling of these complaints:

The police are their own judge and jury.

They don't give detailed reasons why many complaints are rejected before the inquiry stage.

Until recently, there was no outlet for these grievances, instead, they added to the deteriorating public/police relations.

Recently, however, a group calling itself Watchdog has been formed.

About a dozen people are involved from various sections of the community. Individuals follow up complaints about the police.

Advice

Legal advice is given with the help of solicitors. Court cases are attended and assistance is given in filing complaints.

Already, each member has at least one case to deal with, although Watchdog is not widely known about. (The Liverpool Echo, of course, are too busy writing love stories and planting 'treasure' on New Brighton beach).

Watchdog played a major part in getting the release of a man wrongly held in Risley Remand Centre.

He was arrested for failing to appear in court. Through their investigations Watchdog discovered that the telegram requesting his appearance in court had been delivered to the wrong address.

After consultation with solicitors and publicity in the national press, the man was released.

Watchdog stress that they are not an anti-police body, but feel there is an urgent need for the deteriorating public/police relations to be checked.

WATCHDOG: 51 Bryanston Road, Liverpool 17.

The dumpers

Several times a week ships leave two Liverpool docks with hundred of tons of waste containing dangerous chemicals.

They sail out to a wedge-shaped area about ten miles out in Liverpool Bay.

There the ships dump their load of industrial waste, sometimes poll-



The Kinder

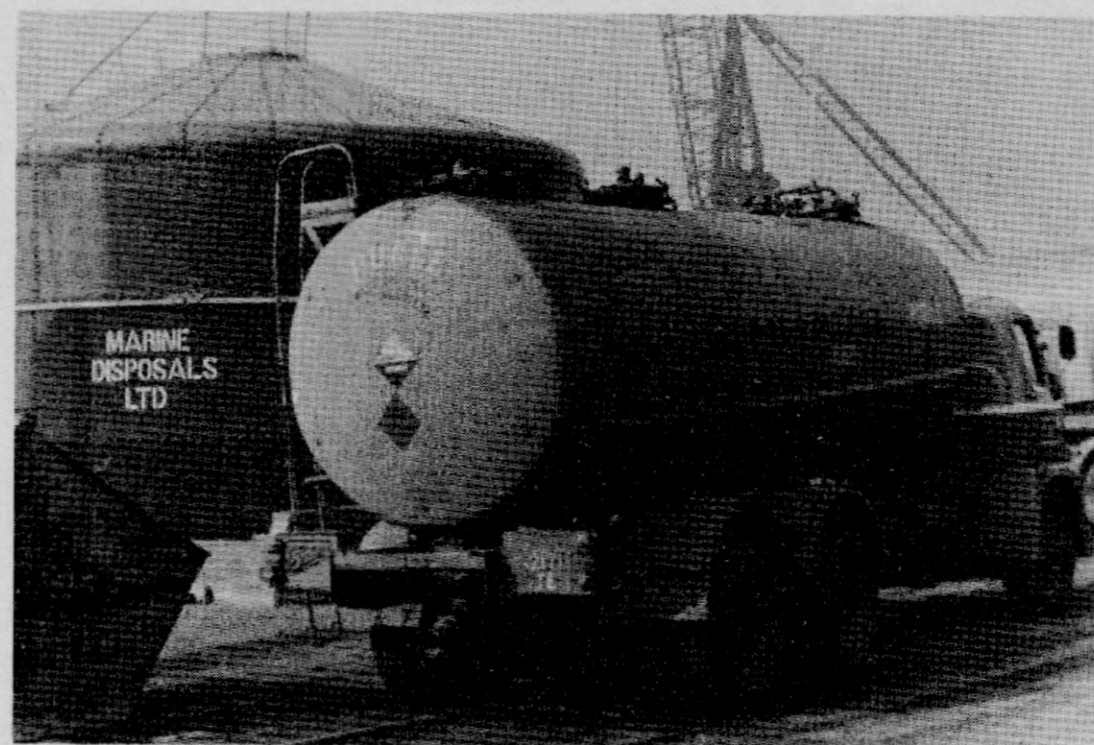
uted with toxic chemicals and acids, into 15 fathoms of water.

The two main companies operating from Liverpool are Effluent Services and Marine Disposal (whose parent company, Purle, has recently announced half-yearly profits up 12% to £381,000).

The chemicals which are being poured into the sea may have a lasting effect on life cycles within the sea.

One industrial chemical...PCB... is believed to have been the main cause of the death of 10,000 sea birds in the Irish Sea two years ago.

PCB may well be among the chemicals which are being dumped by boats such as the Kinder, which



belongs to Effluent Services and uses Herculaneum Dock.

Control on dumping is haphazard. Outside the three-mile limit there is no law — except over oil dumping.

And Mr John Croft, managing director of Marine Disposal, which uses Garston Dock, said:

"We try to test 10% of our cargoes.

But the results can take fourteen days to come back from analysis and the load has gone by then.

"If we do find the effluent is different from what the company told us, all we can do is to attack the company. It's a little frail. We're very much at the mercies of the companies bringing the stuff to us."

Student-flat scheme evades Rent Act

Realdeal Investments are unashamedly using a loophole in the 1965 Rent Act to make money out of students.

They are charging groups of four students almost £500 per year to live in one of their one-bedroom furnished flats in Princes Road.

Altogether Realdeal, who are agents for Hibernian Property Company, own sixty flats in Princes Road. And they could make £30,000 per year from rents if their plan succeeds.

But students forced to pay these extortionate prices will almost certainly be unable to go to the rent tribunal to have their rents reduced.

For Realdeal are cleverly using a loophole in the Rent Act which was recognised by the Government's Francis Committee.

The committee pointed out that under the Act a fair rent could only be fixed if occupants held an exclusive tenancy.

Quite legally, Realdeal do not give students a tenancy. Instead, they sign a personal agreement with each student's parents for "use of" the flat.

Each parent has to agree to pay £41 at the start of each term for their son/daughter. So from a group of four students, Realdeal will get £492 per year.

Realdeal do this under the pretence that the student will be more responsible if he knows his father has signed the agreement.

This is not the only reason. More important, it is to evade the Rent Act.

Realdeal own twelve out of a

block of 17 houses in Princes Rd and they are eager to buy up the remainder.

And they are keen to persuade the sitting tenants to leave.

Dr Cyril Taylor, Councillor for Princes Park said: "By taking advantage of a recognised loophole in the Rent Act and charging 'per capita' rents, Realdeal are able to extract double or treble the rents on their flats and deprive the tenants of the protection of the Rent Officer machinery."

Miss Anne Mitchell, who works for Realdeal, told a Free Press reporter that "We want to empty

all the tenants from the houses.

"You would be surprised how stubborn some of the older ones are. They have been there for donkeys years and refuse to move out."

Realdeal are putting students in because they know students will only stay a year or two while they persuade the other tenants to leave.

When the houses are empty they plan to apply to the corporation for one of the new 75% grants to gut and reconvert them into luxury flats, said Miss Mitchell.

Floors go down — and up!

The floors of 100 council houses in Bootle are sinking... because they have been built on sand.

Soon after moving in, tenants in houses facing the Leeds—Liverpool canal in Harrops Croft, Sefton, noticed strange things happening.

Floors became separated from skirting boards. Gaps wide enough to put one's fingers through appeared.

Soon after this, tiles and floorboards started breaking up.

Several tenants have now had new floors laid. But even though this disrupted the tenants' lives for two days, and concrete and dust flew everywhere, Bootle council have refused to pay compensation.

There are two theories why the floors are sinking. Bootle corporation believe it was

shoddy workmanship — which is hardly unknown in corporation dwellings.

But the Sefton and Netherton Tenants Association say these houses are built on unfirm ground.

For just behind the houses, which look onto the canal, is a patch of land which the corporation are making into an open space.

The corporation took borings on this space and found there was a breach of the canal, which made the sand wet and unfit for building.

So the association quite sensibly reasoned that a channel from the canal to the open space may run under the houses.

If it does, the sand under the foundations will be washed away.

Said Mike McGurgan, president of S.A.N.T.A: "You can build on sand provided it is dry and packed.

If you build on damp sand the houses sink.

"We believe the corporation didn't see the implications of building just on this spot. This view is strengthened by the fact that they are putting a play area just behind the houses."

NOTE: Bootle seems to be plagued with costly problems over floors.

Already they have spent over £110,000, just from the housing revenue account, putting new floors in houses on the older estate of Netherton, which is just across the way from Harrops Croft.

Here the floors, instead of sinking, actually rose.

For the builders used quarry shale for the foundations (This shale contained a high gas content, which resulted in the shale bunching and pushing the floors up in the middle).



RAW DEAL

A great deal of publicity has been given to the recent 20% increase in pensions.

But almost none has been given to the Government's meanest trick regarding pensions.

They said pensions had gone up by £1 for single pensioners and £1.50 for married couples.

But this disguised the fact that all pensioners receiving supplementary benefit have had their benefits cut by about one third.

So the single pensioner only gets a total increase of 60p and a married couple 95p... hardly the great rise we have been told about.

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