

Detective article — the law hits back

THE DIRECTOR of Public Prosecutions is deciding whether the Free Press should be prosecuted over a story in our last edition.

The Commercial Branch of Merseyside Police were ordered to investigate the paper for possible Contempt of Court.

Such a charge is tried alone by an elderly member of the aristocracy, without the inconvenience of a jury. And there is the added advantage that there is no limit on the punishment.

The trouble arose over a story about Detective Constable Daniel Gidman of Merseyside Serious Crime Squad. At a trial before Liverpool Crown Court in July, it was revealed that a safe containing stolen property had been discovered cemented into the garage wall at Gidman's home, 35 Redwing Lane, Gateacre.

The prosecution alleged that the safe had been planted to discredit Gidman. But a jury cleared the defendant in the case of all 16 charges.

When our last edition was published, Gidman was involved in another case at the Crown Court. Four men were appearing on robbery charges and the Free Press reported that an approach had been made to the wife of one of the accused. She was told that for £2,000 the charges against her husband would be dropped.

The story apparently upset the trial judge, Sir Rudolph Lyons. He told the jury it could possibly prejudice the course of justice, and jurors were to tell him if they were given a copy of the paper.

The four men all received long jail sentences. And Judge Lyons went out of his way to praise the investigating police officers. Detective Gidman, in particular, was congratulated by Lyons on a recent award for bravery.

The police have since interviewed suspected members of the Free Press Group, and visited advertisers and distributors. They have also seen Liverpool solicitor Rex Makin, who was more than happy to further the course of justice.

Policewoman Susie Rock, stationed at Admiral Street, Toxteth, was also helpful. Ms Rock had been an off-duty guest in the home of solicitor Tony Ostrin when a friend of the Free Press Group called, just before the last edition was printed.

In conversation, the Gidman story was mentioned. As soon as the friend left, Ms Rock — temporarily forgetting her manners — produced a notebook and took down what had been said. She later filed a routine report to her Inspector and was surprised to be asked for a more detailed report soon afterwards.

Fortunately, Policewoman Rock has since been able to reassure the Ostrins that the contents of this report have not reflected badly on them.

On the wrong track

PASSENGERS require only three things from transport: A fast journey, frequent service and value-for-money fare. Liverpool used to have all these things, but then the MPTE started making mistakes.

Basically they're going wrong in choosing trains for our future transport needs. We haven't got the density of population in Liverpool that trains require to operate at anything near capacity.

- The unit size of a train is far too large for the population of Merseyside. We know without a study that the unit size of about 80 passengers (look at the history of Liverpool trams) is right.

- A large unit size means a less frequent service to carry the same number of people. Already we have Sunday services to Southport/Ormskirk of 45 minutes and West Kirby/New Brighton/Rock Ferry of 30 minutes. What will Garston and Kirkby be? Why spend millions for such a lousy service?

- Already the fifty trains used on local lines are each losing £2,000 a week (£5 million yearly). Most of the track maintenance costs are caused, not by the weight of the passengers (600 weigh 45 tonnes), but by the weight of the train (200 tonnes). In the off-peak you see twelve passengers (1 tonne) to a train (66 tonnes). This is why with trains you can't run a frequent off-peak service.

- Because all bus routes will connect

WORK is going ahead on a new railway line for Liverpool — the Outer Loop. When it's complete, people on the outskirts will have to use a train for at least part of their journey to town. George Easton, a transport enthusiast from Huyton, has been studying the plans, and here he talks to the Free Press about them.

with the train, these will be poor. You can't put an efficient connecting bus system to the Outer Rail Loop. So much time is wasted with buses waiting for trains, it's inefficient.

Every bus that crosses the Outer Loop is only going to go just beyond it. It's going to be like Waterloo — where buses from Crosby are turning back. This is what they're fighting about in Waterloo now. It's the first. The next one will be Kirkby, then Speke, and it follows on from that.

Why it would be better by busway

MY OWN idea is a busway — ripping the railway up and putting down a road. Like the Southport coast road — that's an old railway track.

Once it's put down it's literally maintenance-free, whereas with railways your biggest cost is track maintenance — it's the weight of the train. Buses weigh only about ten tons.

Going into the future there would be electricity on the busways, with buses picking up current. But once

Buses from Kirkby will turn back at the Kirkby 'Interchange' as they call it (that's Kirkby station as it is now). There'll be no buses going from Kirkby into Liverpool. You'll all have to get off and get on the train.

People don't want to go chopping and changing. They want to get on one vehicle to take them right where they want to go.

Take Netherley. You'll travel down to the Outer Rail Loop and there you'll exchange onto the train which will take you into town.

There'll be no bus passengers at all going from Netherley into town.

Your problems start when you get looking at timetables. You've got gaps where the bus is waiting for the next train coming in. Everything's got to fit in with the train.

All these Rapidride buses have got to go because the bus times are even better than what the train/bus times are going to be. Speke to town used to be 29 minutes with a conductor (today it's 40 minutes). By bus and train it will be about the same: Bus to Garston, 13 minutes; changeover, 5 minutes; train, 19 minutes — 37 minutes altogether, and this is on the direct part of the line, on the loop part times are even longer.

So they've got to get rid of the Rapidrides first and slow things down so they can seem to make things go quicker later on.

they came off the busways they'd be operating on batteries.

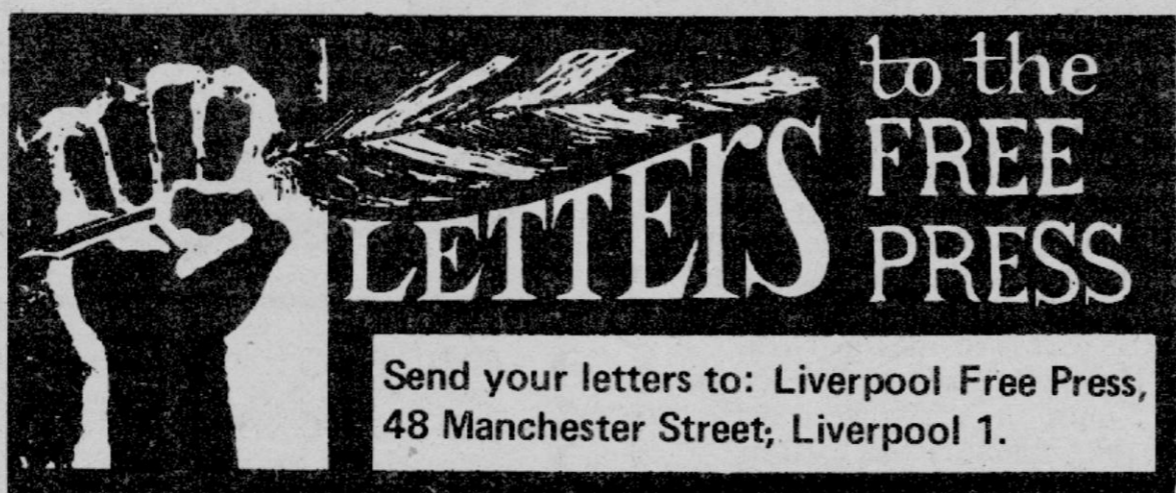
Runcorn has a new busway, specially built. The bus road just cuts through the centre. Nothing else goes on it.

When it first came out everybody was laughing at it because it was a new idea. But they've got 13 buses on it now — from four buses, which is a very big difference.

They've got a battery bus there, I believe, on trial, but it's a bit too

big for my mind. If they'd put up rods and pick up the current it would be better — it works out cheaper.

You can't really go on anything else but electricity. We've got the rail now but it'll be finished in the year 2000. The mode of transport has got to be electric in 2000. But the MPTE haven't looked beyond the train. They're doing now what London Transport was doing 100 years ago.



LETTERS to the FREE PRESS

Send your letters to: Liverpool Free Press, 48 Manchester Street, Liverpool 1.

Voice of Scotland Road

I WOULD like to thank you on behalf of the Scotland Road Writers' Workshop for noticing our magazine, 'Voices of Scotland Road and Nearby' in your September/October issue. It is nice to receive a pat on the back from people we respect.

May I mention, in fairness to the Merseyside Arts Association, that we received a small grant from them towards the costs of the magazine. Without it, 'Voices' would not have been possible. The point may be a small one but it is important. In a modest way 'Voices' shows what working class people can achieve

culturally with a bit of encouragement. With a lot of encouragement (by which I really mean money) they could do a lot more.

Incidentally, the Scotland Road Writers' Workshop is open to working class people from Scotland Road and the nearby inner city areas. It is a down-to-earth, relaxed group and we meet on Mondays at 7.30 p.m. in the canteen of the Vauxhall Community Services Centre, Silvester Street. Anyone interested could give me a ring (722 5471). Yours sincerely, —DAVID EVANS, Wyndcote Rd., Mossley Hill, Liverpool L18 2EB.

Race report welcomed

THE COMMUNIST Party welcomes the report on Race Relations and the warning about the situation on Merseyside. The opening words of the press release about people "who usually categorically refuse to acknowledge the extent of racial discrimination in the area" is amply borne out by the reaction from the Lord Mayor and Councillor Sefton.

His wild attack on those who compile statistics shows that he cannot have read the report which gives evidence of actual cases of discrimination, of human problems.

The fact that he refers to Merseyside suffering from an influx of immigrants helps to show how little he understands the problem, for it is the immigrants who have suffered, whatever their nationality or colour. They have had to take the worst jobs, live in the poorest conditions, and be treated as people apart from the rest of the population.

He also should know that the vast majority of our black people in Merseyside are second, third and fourth generation 'immigrants'.

However, Councillor Sefton agrees that we don't have racial harmony here but the Lord Mayor sees no problem at all. He should ponder on the fact that the leaders of the black community all acknowledge that bias exists and they are the ones who have the experience.

The Communist Party focuses its

attention on the need for action. The successful motion tabled by Councillor Dr. Taylor demanding non-discrimination in employment by Liverpool City Council is something we wholeheartedly welcome, and we will campaign for this principle to be extended to every place of employment.

We have played our part in turning the attention of the trade union movement to the importance of race relations and will continue to work within all the spheres of activity at our disposal for the development of race relations based on equality.

Over the years we have published a number of pamphlets and articles on the subject and this we will continue to do and at the same time, to devote much of our propaganda and educational activity to winning the best activists in the working class to pay even more attention to the subject. We want to see all those people who understand the depth of racial discrimination to work together, irrespective of their differences, to combat racism and in particular the use of racism in order to promote the development of fascism.

We will play our part in any such campaign and use all the facilities we can spare to make it a success. —COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, Merseyside Area Committee, 39 Shaw Street, Liverpool 6.

Unhealthy babble

LIVERPOOL'S Area Health Authority is cutting over £1 million from its budget over the next three years. So you might reasonably think that Health Authority members spend most of their monthly meetings discussing major cuts in services.

Not so. Proposed closures and cuts tend to slip through without much comment.

The two longest discussions at Authority meetings have been over Netherley Health Centre. Members spent nearly thirty minutes deciding if the centre should be called the

"Henry Duncan Health Centre" or the "William Henry Duncan Health Centre, Netherley". It eventually — and sensibly — opted for the "Netherley Health Centre".

At its last meeting the overspent Authority deliberated for twenty-five minutes over spending £100 on the opening of the new health centre. It came to no decision.

The Authority members then took thirty seconds to distribute £65,000 for medical equipment between the two health districts in Liverpool.

A woman's place

LIVERPOOL'S Women's Centre is facing the New Year with a number of serious problems. The centre, at 49 Seel Street, opened in 1974 after a long battle with the City Solicitor's office for the lease. Now, underused and with only one tenant, it needs cash and a small group of committed women to share the house and some of the organising of the centre.

The facilities are good; the centre has an office, two meeting rooms, kitchen, living room and four bedrooms. Two women's rights courses are run from the centre, which is also used for meetings. But a number of women involved with the house feel that a concerted attempt to organise and expand the centre is important for its survival. Their plans for its development include:

- Use of the house as a social centre for women and children —

there's room for a creche;

- Extension of the centre for meetings, study and information;
- Building up the library on women's issues;

One of the organisers of the centre, Jean Robb, said: "We need women to live there who will understand each other's philosophy. We need help to produce a regular newsletter, sort out the office and answer the telephone."

The centre could flourish and is desperately needed, but it will need more women and more work. The phone number is 709 4141. Jean Robb's is 632 4189.

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