

Degraded!

Spillers the millers have been getting hot under the collar recently over an attempt to degrade their flour grader symbol. Their advertising agent was instructed to stop a London secretarial agency from using the little man in a compromising situation. That's business. But it's a pity they didn't worry less about symbols and more about what they are churning out of the Birkenhead mills.

DO FLAT AGENCIES BREAK THE LAW?

Flat hunters in Liverpool are still facing stiff charges from flat agencies in spite of a court of appeal ruling last June stating that agents are not entitled to charge a commission for their services from prospective tenants.

All the agencies we investigated asked for at least one week's rent from the tenant. After the June case the Law Society's Gazette pointed out a possible loophole in the 1953 Accommodation Agencies Act: "If the agency did something more for the tenant than merely supplying particulars of houses or putting his name on a register, then perhaps the Act would permit them to make a charge for this."

This "something more" is what the agencies in Liverpool claim to provide.

The Merseyside Flat Agency in

Bold Street charge a £2 fee plus a week's rent if they find you accommodation. When we suggested this charge was illegal, the reply was "Oh yes, but not in Liverpool. Only in London and York."

The Mathew Brown Agency in Williamson Square quite openly asks for a £2 fee and a week's rent on finding a flat. Perhaps the book sitting prominently on their shelf entitled "Easy ways of making money" recommended this policy.

Promised

The Grosvenor Agency in North John Street promised to make an appointment to view a flat or send a representative for a week's rent if the application was successful.

At Lansley's Accommodation

Bureau in Bold Street, we were asked to sign an agreement to pay the equivalent of a week's rent, immediately after accepting any accommodation found by them. Also to pay £1 towards the "full charge" of their negotiations, plus 80p paperwork, the £1 being returnable if the account was settled within seven days after supplying a flat.

One flat agency we found which did not demand an immediate fee was the Express in Wood Street, who required a week's rent on finding accommodation.

It would appear that some of the agencies are operating legally using the loophole in the Act by providing "services".

The term "service" is at the moment suitably vague and there is a great deal of confusion as to what it actually means.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors advises its members that they are only safe legally if they do "substantially more than merely supply addresses. They should seek find and negotiate the rent on behalf of a client of a house or flat suiting the client's particular requirements."

Visit

It follows from this that the agency must visit the flat to determine whether it suits the client's "particular requirements." They can represent only the tenant and to avoid representing competing tenants, must send only one at a time.

Prospective tenants are in a weak position in the sellers' market and the cost of legal action is high.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is investigating implications of the court ruling made last June. No decision has yet been made.



According to a recent Washington Post article on J Edgar Hoover: "The FBI chief will not touch the delicacies he receives from unknown admirers; he fears someone might slip him some poisoned food. He donates these delectables to orphanages and other institutions."

Extract from Liverpool City Council's theatre regulations, Section 14 (Perilous Performances):—

"No person shall be fixed or hung from the flies in positions from which they cannot release themselves."



To cope with a shortage of usherettes in South African cinemas, coloured girls are being employed. The problem is that coloured people aren't allowed to see the films — so the girls have to walk up and down the aisles with their back permanently turned towards the screen.

Echoes of silence...

The Liverpool Echo management have again refused to appear on television to answer accusations about their distorted news coverage and vested interests.

Mr Ian Park, managing director and editorial chief of the Daily Post and Echo, refused to appear on BBC-2's Man Alive programme shown on December 1st.

Five times the BBC phoned Park to invite him to appear on the programmes and each time he told them via his secretary that no-one from the Echo would be available to appear.

In the end the BBC sent him a letter making it clear that serious charges would be levelled against the Echo in the programme, and asked if he would reply to them.

Park's reaction was to send a message via his secretary that if anything likely to defame the Echo

or bring it into disrepute was included in the programme, he would not hesitate to instruct his solicitors to sue.

The threat forced the BBC into silence. They cut the offending criticism of the Echo out of the programme. As Park well knows, the BBC have never been known to call anyone's legal bluff.

WARNED OFF

Just to make sure, the Echo's solicitors rang up the BBC and warned Man Alive to keep off.

Meanwhile, Park had been surreptitiously ferreting around Radio Merseyside and several Corporation departments for information about Mrs Chrissy Maher, a representative of the Tuebrook Bugle, who was going to appear on the programme.

Park sits on the Radio Merseyside Council and he rang the station up and asked to listen to radio tapes of interviews with Mrs Maher.

Further calls went out to Liverpool's housing department, the planning office and the Corporation Public relations department to find out about their dealings with Mrs Maher.

It is the third time this year that the Echo have cowered away from confronting their critics.

When Pak-o-Lies exposed the Echo's vested interest in campaigning to have the inner motorway built next to its new building, Granada TV twice asked the Echo to face their accusers. The Echo refused. No need to ask why.

* Copies of Pak-o-Lies can still be obtained from the Liverpool Free Communications Group, 32, Aigburth Drive, Liverpool 17.

Big boobs at the beauty contest

Miss Merseyrail 1971 — British Rail's 'kitchen sink' beauty competition — was won in extremely embarrassing circumstances last month by a Miss Hazel Swindells, aged 19, from Formby.

The competition was dreamed up by British Rail's Lime Street publicity department as part of a naive campaign to persuade the travelling public that the over-priced, over crowded, stuffy and uncomfortable trains on which they travel today are not exactly the same as the over-priced etc British Rail trains on which they have suffered in the past.

Miss Merseyrail was to be unlike any other competition. In a desperate bid to keep it as cheap as

possible, the contestants were selected by British Rail photographers who spent weeks picturing pretty commuters as they stepped off local trains.

They were judged by a panel of 'experts' consisting of trendy local fashion consultants and including the Daily Post's vivacious Diana Pulson. The compere was none other than Michael 'Miss World' Aspel.

And Miss Merseyrail was indeed unlike any other beauty competition.

Held on a miserable night at Birkenhead Town Hall, few people bothered to turn up except the contestants, a BBC team and a few dejected journalists.

A hesitant railway official opened the 'gala evening' in true Morecambe and Wise tradition. He introduced the finalists — but forgot all about the highly paid Aspel, who couldn't get a word in.

Before he had realised his blunder, the girls had already started on a lap of honour around the hall, and had to be pulled up half way and sent back to their dressing room while the organisers tried a second time to get it right.

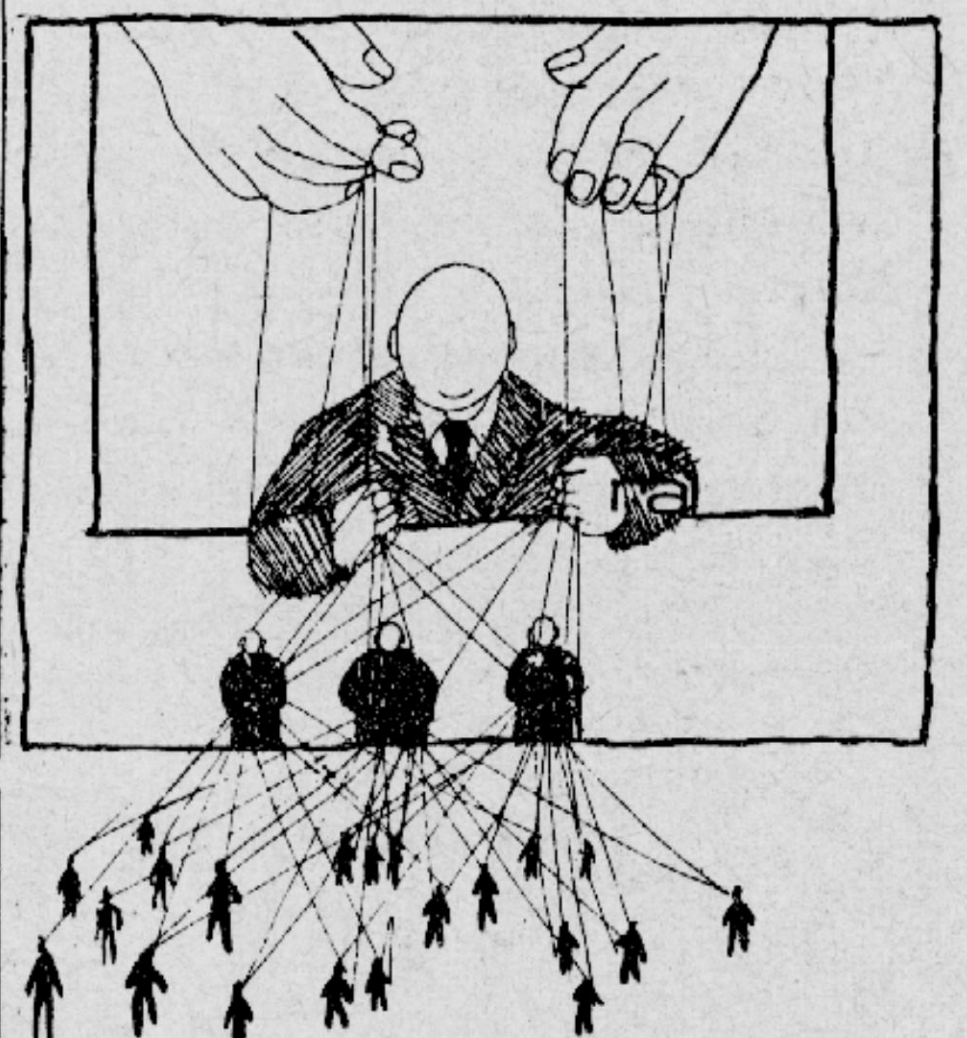
Michael Aspel, who had only a vague idea of where he was, kept referring to the winner as "Miss Tyne Rail".

And one rather bored railway man told the audience: "I think



Michael Aspel

that the standard has been exceptionally high, considering we only picked these girls up on station platforms."



HINT FOR HANDYMEN: Need a hammer? Try using a sausage. The amazing versatility of the sausage was demonstrated to the Duke of Kent at the British Oxygen Company's Widnes factory recently when workmen knocked a nail into a piece of wood using a sausage at 186 degrees below freezing point. So now we know why they call them bangers.



A 22-year-old Vancouver man has been ordered by a judge not to make another girl pregnant for three years. He was also given three year's probation for possessing an offensive weapon.



Arrested on multiple charges of malicious mischief, Mr Frankie Taylor, aged 86, of Hollywood, used his one free phone call from the police station to contact Los Angeles International Airport and make a bomb threat.