

## Who's hit?

YOUR ARTICLE entitled 'Rates hit council tenants hardest' [Free Press No 6] is an inept combination of half-truth, ignorance, stupidity and prejudice.

Firstly you compare Liverpool Corporation owned housing stock with the remainder of the city's private stock. The Corporation housing is virtually all post 1919 in construction, many of it well built two storey houses with gardens. Practically all have internal WCs, baths and hot water. A great number of Liverpool's privately owned housing has none of these and spans an enormous range, from posh detached suburban houses to some of the most squalid and overcrowded slums in the country; many of them more than three or four times the age of the average council property and in a very poor state of repair.

Secondly you castigate council housing as "huge bleak estates... shoddily built...often damp." A few months ago you criticised the Corporation (rightly) for not building the proposed 4,100 house Church Road/Suttons Lane estate in Halewood. Now you complain of "huge estates" that have been built! You are also wrong to generally condemn the standards of municipal house building. There have been errors, but Local Authorities have a long tradition of building to better standards than mass market speculative developers.

Thirdly high densities (I agree that 140 people per acre is excessive) are not the sole prerogative of the Corporation property. The Granby General Improvement Area, almost all privately owned, has an actual density of 120 people per acre, and was designed for much



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Fourthly your criticisms of the rating system are confused in the extreme. The system is certainly a bad one, and it is quite unfair that flats should be rated higher than comparable houses, but this also applies in respect of privately owned flats. Your comparison between Princes Park Mansions and Heysmoor Heights is also misleading. The Mansions were built in 1830, have been chopped about and converted into flats since then and are in a rather dilapidated condition compared with Heysmoor Heights.

You also omit to mention the well established fact that privately owned property houses a higher proportion of the poorest sections of the community than council housing does and that nationally the average income of local authority tenants is very close to the total population average income.

I would agree that a great deal of thought and energy needs to go into curing inequalities in our housing financial systems, but I also believe that the large scale municipal ownership of housing is the most important social development of this century and that the Free Press does no service to the working class by producing this kind of half-baked, half-true criticism of the system.

D. Simpson, B.Eng., AIHM.  
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● The Free Press would welcome comments from tenants on the points raised in this letter.

## That bus

I RECENTLY observed at the Pier Head a Liverpool Corporation bus decorated in a distressing way. It was not the usual green, but was painted in a variety of colours and printed all over the bus were advertisements for the Barclaycard - obviously intended to cut the losses of the MPTE.

I suggest that to cut the losses they should stop the white elephant services and not advertise supporters of the South African apartheid economy. The Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority couldn't be so blind not to know that Barclays DCO is the biggest bank in South Africa and a mainstay in the South African economy. Anything that strengthens South Africa's economy strengthens apartheid. Barclays are also helping to finance the Cabora Bassa dam in Mozambique which has displaced 24,000 black Mozambiquans who have been resettled in 'fortified hamlets'.

The MPTA are advertising Barclays and helping them to make money, so, therefore, indirectly supporting apartheid. Many of us are boycotting Barclays while the MPTA seem to rate helping the suppressed black South African in a small way, very low on their list of priorities.

William John Carmichael  
1, Edgfold Road, Kirkby

# Kensington gets its fields back

LIVERPOOL CORPORATION have had to come to terms with Kensington Fields Community Council in their dispute over the building of four new reservoirs on the area's last remaining patch of green open space.

Until the residents began their fight the Corporation were determined to evade their legal obligation to offer adequate compensation - acre for acre - for any open space taken for reservoirs.

The Corporation were offering a 3-acre site, with minimal play facilities, and an undeveloped area of

cleared land as compensation for about seven acres of open space.

Now in the face of the residents' threat to force a public inquiry, the Corporation have climbed down completely. They have agreed to:

- Withdraw the original land appropriation order.
- More than double the area of land offered as compensation under a new order (Kemble St: 4 acres. Minto St: 3½ acres. Hall Lane: 1 acre).
- Equip the Hall Lane site with a hard surface play pitch, a toddlers' playground, seats for mothers and pensioners, safety barriers along Hall Lane and landscaping with trees and grass.
- Lease part of the Hall Lane site to the community council for a community centre.
- Begin work on the Hall Lane site before the end of March.

A spokesman for the community council said: "The Corporation's concessions meet every single one of our original demands.

"But these concessions have only been brought about after eight months of persistent effort by the community council to obtain for local residents their rights."



## THREE DAY FESTIVAL

A FESTIVAL of contemporary arts and music, - rock, folk, theatre, events, exhibitions - the lot! is to be held in Bickershaw of all places.

That's just 20 miles from Liverpool, between Leigh and Abram.

It starts on May 6 and goes

on for three days. Tickets are £2.25 in advance or £2.75 when you arrive.

Artists booked so far include Country Joe, Donovan, New Riders of the Purple Sage and the Grateful Dead.

Details from 2-6 Rennie Street, Salford, Lancs.

# The Little Red Schoolbook: 7

The Little Red Schoolbook is obscene, we're told. But most people who have not read it probably have a very inaccurate idea of what it is really like. So here is another extract, reprinted to help Free Press readers make up their own minds about it.

### The System

#### Your place of work

Grown-ups built your school and paid for it. They decide how things should be in the school. But it's you who use the school and first and foremost it's your place of work. You're not paid for your work, and unlike grown-ups you can't change your "job". So if you want a better school the only thing you can do is to start changing the one you've already got.

If a few of you get together you'll be much stronger, and you'll be able to influence things which grown-ups would otherwise decide on their own.

#### Marks

Marks are used in schools as a kind of bribe, to get you to do things you don't want to do. Some teachers think that marks tell everything about a pupil. This is nonsense.

Marks do tell you something about a teacher. They tell you what he thinks of your work and what he expects of you.

If marks are only used as a guide for the pupil, and the teacher explains to each pupil why he's given him a particular mark, this is acceptable.

#### Exams and tests

Schools often use exams and tests to frighten you into working.

In some schools teachers believe that exams and tests can show exactly what you know. By far the greatest number of exams don't show what you know. They often ask the wrong questions. They may show what you've learnt parrot-fashion or had knocked into you. They rarely show whether you can think for yourself and find things out for yourself.

In schools which have a lot of school exams and tests, education suffers. You don't learn about the subjects themselves: you learn how to cope with tests and exams.

#### This can be changed

Most schools still have exams at the end of every year. This wastes a lot of time, both for pupils and teachers. Try to get a big discussion going between teachers and pupils about these exams, and see if you can't get them abolished. It's up to each school to decide.

If everybody seems to agree that it would be better to do without these exams but nothing actually gets done about it, try more direct methods. If possible, get everybody to simply boycott the exams altogether. If this is too difficult, everybody can turn up for the exams but simply hand in their papers blank.

#### Discrimination against girls

Unfortunately, many schools seem to think that girls shouldn't be treated the same as boys.

If you want to do a subject that girls don't normally do in your school, just ask the teacher concerned or your head of house. You may be allowed to do it, without any difficulty. But if the answer is no at first,

insist on your right to be treated like anyone else.

#### Careers advice

All too many pupils find when they leave school that our society seems to have nothing to offer them except the dregs. They've been put in the lowest streams at school because nobody has had the time or patience to find out what they're good at.

Some schools have a teacher who is responsible for careers advice, either full-time or part-time. But often these "careers advisers" don't have either the time or the patience for the big long discussions most pupils need.

The local council runs a youth employment service, with officers whose job is to help school leavers find a job. They sometimes don't have enough time for proper discussion either.

A special note about careers in the Army.

The Army has a special boy apprenticeship scheme for boys leaving school at 15. The advertisements in cinemas and elsewhere make army life seem rather glamorous and exciting. A lot of boys sign on full of enthusiasm, only to find that the life isn't so exciting from the inside. Once you've signed on for the minimum period, it's really difficult to get out again if you change your mind. And the years before you're 18 don't count towards your minimum period.

You may decide that you really do want to be a soldier. Think hard before you commit yourself, though, and remember, whatever the adverts say, when it comes down to it, armies are concerned with killing.

See if the school will invite a trade unionist from a local factory to come and tell you about his factory and any other jobs he's

done. If the school won't invite him officially, either invite him yourselves or meet him somewhere else for a discussion with a group of friends.

#### School and society

The power and influence of big business is so strong that it affects the demands society makes on schools. Schools change, many things are improved. But so far this has always been either because big business has needed the changes or because ordinary people have made themselves into mass organisations strong enough to force big business to give in to their demands for improvement. Our society is founded on the idea that people exist for the sake of big business - not the other way round.

Big business most clearly shows its interest in school in careers advice or vocational guidance. Vocational guidance and training are used by employers to tempt you in the right numbers into the jobs where they need your labour. Don't believe that the only career opportunities are the ones offered to you, or that you have to choose your career immediately you leave school.

Some people believe that school cannot really be changed until the whole of society is changed. They are right.

Others believe that society cannot be changed until school is changed. They have a point too.

Every little thing you change in school may have results in society. Every little thing you change in society may have consequences in school.

Work for change always starts with you. The struggle is carried on by many different people in many different places. But it's the same struggle.