

Bootle's four just men

A GROUP of magistrates in Bootle are in a position to act as judge, jury, prosecutor and hangman in the case of council tenants threatened with eviction.

This strange anomaly was brought to light at a recent Bootle Council meeting. It can occur because of the ultra-secretive antiquated methods used by the Labour-controlled council to evict tenants.

In Bootle, the only people who can authorise the Town Clerk to apply for and execute a warrant of eviction are a small clique of seven members of the Housing Standing Sub-Committee.

This committee is so high powered that four of the seven members are Bootle magistrates.

Bootle is one of the small number of corporations still using — perhaps illegally — the 1838 Small Tenements Recovery Act to obtain evictions.

Under this act, all evictions are obtained — for any reason whatever — from the magistrates' courts.

Secrecy

So the unusual position could arise where the magistrates on the sub-committee apply to themselves or their fellow magistrates for an eviction order.

Bootle's Town Clerk's office say the magistrates on the sub-committee would never agree to hear the case in court. But even so, judgement is still being passed by their friends and colleagues on the bench.

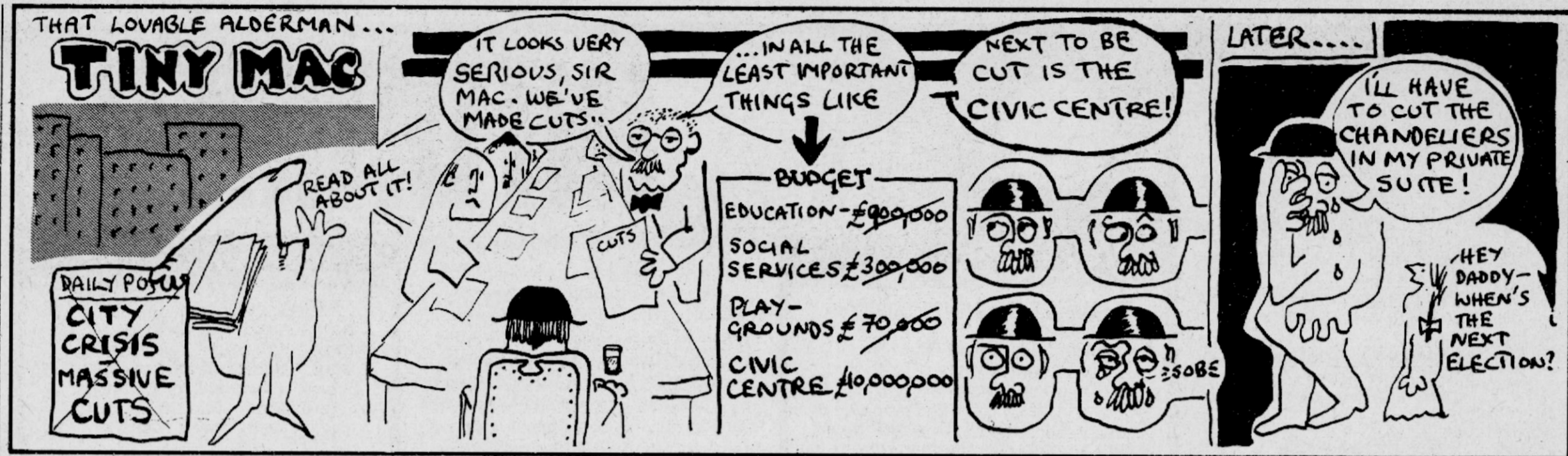
On top of this, the whole procedure to evict tenants is shrouded in secrecy.

The council has delegated full powers on eviction matters to the sub-committee. And the report this committee makes to the full housing committee is brief in the extreme.

For instance, the committee's minutes of September 15, 1971 were clearly marked "For information only" when they went before the council. No matter could be raised, no questions asked.

The minutes simply stated: "The Town Clerk and Chief Executive is authorised to carry out legal proceedings for the recovery of possession of eight Corporation dwellings.

So the extremely important question of a family's home and welfare can be decided by five people — a quorum of the standing committee — four of whom could be magistrates.



Will King succeed where Thorn failed?

CAN International Property Development, a company unable to pay out a dividend for eight years, with shares standing at only 10 p at the time of the takeover, and a net loss last year of £249,000 take on Fisher Bendix and make it pay where the mighty Thorn Empire has failed?

The man to answer that question is Mr Harold King, former telegram boy, postman, shopkeeper, car-hire operator and trainee buyer.

His first venture — a newsagent's shop — proved to be too much work on top of his office job.

He then set up a car hire service but gave it up "because it never made me a penny."

A third venture — a baby linen shop — went a little better, "but was bringing in little more than enough to meet the mortgage repayments."

He then started his more successful KC Developments soft drinks business, which collapsed after the cyclamate scare.

Now, as managing director of Clohurst Ltd, a subsidiary of IPD formed recently to take over the Fisher Bendix plant, he will have a great deal to say in the factory's future.

Land deal

In the deal IPD bought Clohurst for about £825,000 in shares with the option of purchasing the factory and 20 acres of adjoining industrial land.

For the moment employees can be contented with a guarantee of work for the next two years, and

substantial compensation for transferring their labour.

For a man who has worked eight years at Fisher Bendix this will amount to about £300 tax free.

Curiously enough this works out at about the same as redundancy pay. Which begs an interesting question: If Clohurst fail to make the factory a profitable concern and decide to back out, who carries the can?

Thorn could deny responsibility, having sold the factory and given the equivalent of redundancy pay.

Mr King, guaranteed a 9% profit on his investment by Thorn, should not be too worried.

The successful blacking of all Thorn products during the sit-in

was perhaps the workers' most effective weapon.

But having agreed to a non-legally binding 'no strike' and 'no resistance to re-organisation' clause, could they do it again — if necessary — under IPD, whose interests are in land and property?

In a statement on IPD, the Investors' Guardian said: "The 10p shares must remain something of a gamble until the board put some solid achievements on the table in the way of disposable profits and dividends."

The workers at Kirkby would do well to heed the same advice and stay on their guard until the board can put some solid proposals on the shop floor and in their pockets.

Why it pays to live on the Wirral

PUBLIC TRANSPORT on Merseyside has become increasingly bizarre since the Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority took over. Only four months after announcing a massive £1½ million surplus, Big Al Burrows, the authority's £8,000-a-year chief, has announced an equally massive £1½ million loss.

Following Burrows' prediction of yet more rises in fares — and Sir Tiny Mac's hasty denial of this — some travellers on the West Kirby line were surprised to find their fares had actually gone down — by 1p.

And rail commuters from West Kirby are being enticed back to Liverpool's city centre in the evenings with 'special offer' journeys at 19p return. But there's no such luck for the people of Netherley and Halewood, who have to stay at home or fork out 13p each way to the city.

The financial situation hasn't been helped by spending £68,000 on the Royal Iris (recognised by old salts as the ugliest ship on the Mersey).

It hasn't been helped either by starting work on the expensive Inner Rail Loop being burrowed beneath the city. The cost of this has soared from a modest £7 million in 1969 to the present £12 million, and with only a 75% Government grant, the MPTA has to find a quarter of the cost.

And the only people who will benefit from this vast expenditure are the Wirral commuters — although most of the burden will fall on Liverpool, which is the biggest financial contributor to the MPTA.

Six months suspension for striker — no appeal

A BOOTLE man has been disciplined by the electrical contracting industry's Joint Industry Board for his part in a strike.

Mr John Byrne, chairman of the electricians' strike committee at the Inland Revenue Office site has no right of appeal against the decision to suspend him from sick pay, insurance benefits and other rights for six months from the day he returns to work.

Fixes pay

The Joint Industry Board, which fixes pay and conditions for the whole electrical contracting industry, consists of eleven employers' representatives and eleven officials of the Electrical, Electronic and Telecommunications Union (formerly ETU). It is the only organisation in the country where employers and unions combine to take disciplinary action against workers.

Mr Byrne's trial is the first in the four-year history of the JIB.

Since the JIB took over all negotiations, electricians have become the lowest paid workers on building sites. While other stewards in the construction industry are allowed to negotiate locally, electricians' stewards are forbidden to negotiate. As a result, an electrician's hourly pay is 35p or more below that of the lowest paid building worker on the IRO site.

In support of their claim for a better deal the IRO electricians have been on strike for a total of 12 months

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