



picture by Ron Vaughan

The bridge to nowhere...

Whenever Liverpool Corporation spends a few thousands on a building it's proud of you can be sure there will be an opening ceremony, speeches galore... and loads of publicity.

But the Free Press noticed that a new bridge had been up a full week without a whisper of a grand opening.

So we arranged our own ceremony (see picture). For this bridge is certainly unique. It cost £40,000

and leads nowhere.

It begins in St John's Precinct and comes to an abrupt end in mid-air above a car park. Steps are being added to bring pedestrians down to earth again;

The bridge is intended eventually to link the Precinct and the proposed Civic Centre. But in view of the flood of objections to the multi-million pound centre, perhaps it will always be the bridge to nowhere.

A comic comeback

Spluttering with rage a former 'thirties Liverpool music hall comedian by the name of Smeddles threatens to make a comeback on June 22 after several years of living in south-west London.

His stage will be the Rent Tribunal offices in the Royal Liver Building. Mr Smeddles is on in the afternoon so that he can get back to London on an "off-peak cheap day return" rail ticket.

He owns No 8 Empire Street, where, as a bad joke, he has charged a family £4.50 a week (excluding £38 per year rates.) for the privilege of living in a dilapidated house in a clearance area.

Eventually Smeddles was taken to the Rent Tribunal who lowered the rent to £1.80. Shortly after, the Corporation Housing Department repaired the toilet which had no door and was flushing across the

back yard. The landlord had refused to obey a Corporation order to put it in good nick.

Now Smeddles is appealing to the Rent Tribunal because all these judgments have gone against him.

TV makes Echo squeal

The BBC has received an ominous phone call from the Liverpool Echo over a programme about the community paper, the Tuebrook Bugle.

During the programme, the first in the BBC-2 series "Let's Get Going" Mrs Chrissy Maher, one of the Bugle's editorial committee criticised the Echo's presentation of news.

Next day the Echo phoned the Beeb to say they had "heard" they had been slandered. They then asked the Beeb to repeat what Mrs Maher had said.

Why they wanted the supposed

WHILE builders in Bootle are working on the eighteenth — and final — storey of a gigantic government office block a startling series of facts has come to light. One: The government wish the building had never been started. Two: They are in no hurry to see it finished. Three: When it is completed they will be wondering what to do with it.

The £5 million St John's House (known locally as the I.R.O. building) was one of nine regional centres planned by the Wilson government to handle the computerisation of Pay-as-you-earn for the Inland Revenue Office (IRO).

The Heath government has since announced that computerisation was a "disaster". Seven of the planned centres were scrapped, but the one in Bootle, and another in Cardiff, were already fast sprouting out of the ground. So work on them went ahead.

The building was due to have been completed in August this year but won't be ready. This news has proved

a blessing to the government. A civil service memo which has come into the hands of the Free Press shows that civil servants in Daniel House, Bootle, are so busy repaying Post-War Credits that take-on of work for the computer at St John's House (just opposite) has been postponed indefinitely.

The computer intended for the building is now languishing in Victoria House, Liverpool, "doing testing work" (i.e. next to nothing).

On May 19 Private Eye magazine reported that stationery printed for the new computer centre at a cost of £50,000 had been sold for scrap at £1 a ton, and suggested that the specially designed IRO building may have to be converted for some other use.

The future of the building is therefore in some doubt. However, the civil service memo insists there will be no office redundancies. And in May this year Simon Mahon, MP for Bootle spoke optimistically of 3,500 people being employed when the building is completed.

AND ON THE I.R.O. SITE...

Electricians keep up their fight

A DISPUTE involving 17 electricians at the IRO site is now in its fifteenth month. One of the reasons why no settlement has been reached is that the government, who ordered the building, do not want it completed just yet.

The electricians are demanding a minimum of 25p above the present hourly rate. At the moment their pay is 35p or more below that of the lowest paid building worker.

The problem is that while other stewards in the construction industry are allowed to negotiate locally with their employers, electricians' stewards are forbidden to negotiate.

In support of their claim the men have now been on strike for a total of 13 months. They have returned to work twice in the hope of a

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The position briefly is that due to the extra work load imposed by the early repayment of post-war credits and the need to utilise space in Daniel House to accommodate the staff needed to deal with these repayments it has been decided to postpone the take on of work to the computer at Centre 2. The postponement is open-ended because until the extent of the work-load involved in the early repayment of post-war credits, as well as the effect of introducing a new unified tax structure is known, it is not possible to say when work and preparation for take-on can re-commence. It is not envisaged that work in connection with take-on at Centre 2 will start again before April 1973.

Staff may possibly wonder whether there is any possibility of redundancies in the light of the above note. In this context I would refer them to the statement of the Financial Secretary of the Treasury on 1st December 1971, a copy of which was circulated with WDN 2570, when he said "There will, however, be no question of any redundancy arising in the Merseyside area."

Part of the text of the civil service memo. 'Centre 2' is St John's House (the IRO building). Daniel House is a neighbouring building.

£200,000 down the hospital drain

Liverpool's Regional Hospital Board have spent about £200,000 on a hospital which surgeons aren't using.

They have just finished building modern operating theatres and wards at Mossley Hill Hospital. But surgeons are refusing to use the theatres as they are not happy with the staff or facilities.

And now the whole future of the hospital is in doubt because the Board plan to re-organise the city's southern hospitals.

No definite plans have yet been made, but Mossley Hill could even close.

There are 150 beds in the hospital but at the moment a large number

of these are empty.

The alterations were finished about three months ago and were only started because a few individuals pushed the plans through.

FANCY THAT

"It is not likely that Governor Wallace will walk again but he's going to run for the next presidential elections."

—BBC news bulletin