

SOHO CLARION

THE SOHO SOCIETY'S FREE NEWSPAPER

No.18 JAN - FEB 1978

WESTMINSTER BOTTOM IN HOUSING RECORD

A remarkable collection of facts on housing in Westminster has been published by the Paddington Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations and sent to the Secretary of State for the Environment asking for a public enquiry into WCC's housing policy.

The Associations accuse WCC of consistently failing to achieve housing targets. The report reveals that WCC have no plans for building homes for rent after 1981, despite the fact that there are still 8024 families on the housing list. Over 30,000 households in Westminster are affected by unsatisfactory housing conditions (WCC's own figures) and every year over 600 dwellings become sub-standard (the total by 1975 was 11,000. WCC's programme of acquisitions and improvements for 1976/77 consisted of only 52 dwellings).

The authors argue that WCC readily acknowledge the extent of housing need but always suggest solutions that will only be reached in the distant future. When the time arrives the programme is simply rescheduled to another, far-off date and nothing is done.

The report compares WCC's housing record with that of similarly placed inner London boroughs. WCC are accused of not enforcing the Public Health Acts and the authors provide examples of statutory obligations imposed on councils which seem to work everywhere except Westminster.

In 1973/75 Kensington & Chelsea declared 1,416 houses unfit. Brent were highest with 2,374. WCC declared none!

WCC do not come last in the record of housing defects remedied, but only second to last. (Brent came last, Islington highest) Whereas Islington remedied 4019 housing defects, WCC could only manage 667. WCC's estimates of capital expenditure on housing in 1977/78, compared with Islington's (a borough with similar problems) are given below:

| | Islington | WCC |
|---------|-----------|--------|
| 1977/78 | £42M | £17.3M |
| 1981/82 | £36M | £7M |

Over the years 1974-77 WCC acquired just 3% of the number of dwellings for housing use as Islington.

Figures for many other London boroughs show WCC consistently bottom of the list in planning, expenditure and achievement. The authors point out that the various housing and health acts impose duties and obligations on the council as well as giving them powers to act. While there are many controls over high-spending councils, no action seems to be taken against councils that fail to fulfil their housing obligations.

In common with most other amenity groups, the Soho Society has sent a letter of support to the Secretary of State urging him to agree to a public enquiry into WCC's housing record and to consider the appointment of a housing commissioner for Westminster.

Copies of the report may be obtained from 1 St. Mary's Terrace, London, W2 Price 40 pence for residents of Westminster, £1.00 for others.



CRITERION SITE APPLICATION APPROVED

Westminster City Council has approved the redevelopment of the Criterion site in Piccadilly Circus despite vigorous objections by the Soho Society, other local amenity groups and the Labour (minority) party on the council.

The scheme involves demolition of 80% of the existing Criterion site including buildings listed as of historic interest. Most of the proposed new building, which in appearance will be similar to the existing one, will be given over to offices. The Criterion Theatre itself and most of the Lillywhites building will be retained. The proposals incorporate a revised traffic scheme of the GLC's that involves re-routing the bus lane down Great Windmill Street, making part of Shaftesbury Avenue one-way and entails 'moving Eros slightly (sic) to the north'. (Continued on page 2)

NEW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION FORMED

Westminster Association of Residents was formed in Victoria, but at its inaugural public meeting some 100 or more people from associations throughout Westminster attended and elected a committee. Stephen Fry, a Soho Society Committee member, was asked to be on it. The committee sees standing for election to the City Council as an essential way to advance its policies which are, briefly, a better deal in planning and housing for the resident, as opposed to other interests.

Many people in other boroughs seem to be having the same idea and at the time of going to press it is likely that

Westminster Association of Residents will associate itself with a London-wide umbrella name of other organisations doing similar things- the 'London Alliance'. Their overall policy statement demanded 1) an end to dominance of local affairs by party politics; 2) constructive conservation; 3) smaller boroughs, less bureaucracy and rate reductions.

So you may see a 'Westminster Association of Residents/London Alliance' candidate on your ballot paper on May 4. But, much more interesting thought, it might be you! If you are interested in being a candidate ring Stephen Fry on 734 7752, especially if you believe, like him, that local government can do without political parties.

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EDITORIAL

If the Soho Society is to survive, we must have a permanent headquarters. Efforts are being made to set up a community centre (see page 8). The society has short-term use of premises at 37 Gt. Pulteney St. Although these are donated, rent-free, by the Soho Housing Association, the outgoings, including rates, insurance and electricity (but not a telephone at present) amount to about £10 weekly. This is a lot relative to our 'income'. At their last meeting, the executive committee did a lot of soul-searching about the expense and finally resolved to continue with it. What is desperately needed is help and donations to make the premises comfortable and useful. Help, in the form of decoration work, cleaning, staffing, etc. Donations, in the form of furnishings, electric kettles, cups etc. If you have anything to offer, please ring Rene Tempia on 439 3754.

In December 1973, in the very first issue of the Clarion, we reported on the battle to save the Criterion site in Piccadilly Circus from demolition. Now, in 1978, it seems we are finally going to lose that battle. Odd to think that the majority of the councillors both at WCC and at the GLC, who are ostensibly elected to represent us, see us only as irritating obstacles to their plans to turn the whole of central London into empty office blocks. Clearly the Draft City Plan we've all heard so much about recently is a dead duck before it has even been implemented, for what can this latest decision be but an open invitation to property developers to ignore the council's own planning briefs? WCC's record on housing is a disgrace, as the report on page 1 reveals. Yet, in attempting to justify the demolition of the Criterion site's perfectly-good, fully-occupied buildings and replace them with an inferior, empty, office block, Councillor Sandford talks of 'only wanting to get things moving'. How about getting some housing projects moving? How about getting some building underway on the WCC-owned site in Old Compton St, empty now for 35 years? How about building a permanent tourist centre on the GLC-owned site in Denman St? How about eliminating the eyesores of the so-called temporary carparks which bring so much unwanted commuter traffic to Soho?

Moving Eros 'slightly' to the north is a fitting accomplishment for such people.

Alan Wakeman

SOHO CLARION

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Advertising Rates: £5 per single column inch, £27.50 for six issues; larger spaces by agreement. 5000 copies go all over Soho, and to all Society members. Your ad allows us - and you - to say more to and about Soho. Phone Leslie Hardcastle on 437 5149 to book space

CRITERION SITE (Continued)

In the last issue we were happy to report that permission had been refused and hoped that this was the last we would hear of the story. However the property developers, Trust House Forte, had apparently merely been asked to justify the enormous increase of office space in their proposals (from 109,000 sq. ft. to 174,796). They declined to do this and simply reapplied and, on 8 Dec. 1977, WCC Town Planning Committee gave their consent to the scheme anyway. In his report to the committee, Director of Architecture and Planning, Joe Hirsh, commented: 'No financial justification has been produced by the applicants, nor has any information been forthcoming regarding the change in schedule of uses.' He then recommended that the committee accept the scheme!

'PICCADILLY BEING TAKEN BY STEALTH'

Letters from a number of local amenity groups objecting to the proposals were ignored by the planning committee. The Soho Society's views were not made known at this meeting because WCC had not seen fit to consult us and we were unaware even that an application had been made. The Planning Group of the Society immediately wrote a letter to the Secretary of State for the Environment asking for a public enquiry. Unknown to members of the society, however, Labour councillors on the committee had demanded that the application be considered by the full council. Since this meant the issue had become one of party politics, regardless of the wishes and well-being of local people, the result was a foregone conclusion. However, the delay enabled members of the society to organise a statement of their objections, which was read out at the full council meeting on the 23 January by society member and local councillor David Avery (Tory) who consequently found himself in a minority of one in his own party. 'We are seeing Piccadilly being taken from us by stealth,' declared Councillor Harrington (Labour). 'We just want to get the damned thing moving,' retorted Councillor Sandford (Tory).

The battle to save the Criterion site is a familiar one of course. In the very first issue of the Clarion over four years ago we warned of threats to Piccadilly Circus, including the Criterion.

Schemes to demolish the Monico site, the London Pavilion and the Trocadero site have all been defeated by the concerted efforts of the Save Piccadilly Campaign, the Soho Society, the Save London's Theatres Campaign, the Westminster Society and other local groups. All of these sites are now in the process of rehabilitation, repair and small-scale, infill development, which is what the local groups set out to achieve five years ago. Another year and Piccadilly will be looking good again - but not if WCC get their way. If the Criterion site redevelopment goes ahead we can look forward to at least another five years, possibly more, of the Piccadilly Circus Building Site Saga and consequent planning blight of the worst possible kind. This will be the first battle we have lost in our five-year struggle to preserve the neighbourhood from the voracity of property-developer tycoons. This must not be allowed to happen.

Councillor Garside (Labour) has also written to the Secretary of State for the Environment demanding a public enquiry, the chief objection raised being that the approved proposals include nearly double the office space in the council's own planning brief.

In our letter to the Secretary of State, our chief stated objections are:

- 1) The existing buildings are sound and fully occupied and have a useful life that is longer than the lease the would-be developers currently hold from the Crown Commissioners.
- 2) The existing buildings provide good cheap central accommodation to a large number of long-standing, small businesses that would all be permanently dispersed.
- 3) The existing buildings are better designed and constructed than the proposed ones.
- 4) There is no guarantee that redevelopment would actually follow demolition. There are many examples in the area of empty sites that have served as paper investments since demolition of sound buildings as a result of planning permissions. (See picture on page 3) Mostly they are used as 'temporary' carparks.
- 5) The whole of central London abounds in large, empty modern office blocks. Housing is what we need, not offices. (Compare WCC's record on housing - see report on page 1)

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GETTING THINGS MOVING?

There was a sound building on this site in Golden Square until WCC gave planning permission for redevelopment about 3 years ago. The owners immediately demolished it. This is how the site has looked since.

GLC SEEKS CENSORSHIP OF PRIVATE CINEMA CLUBS

Despite a setback in the courts at the end of last year, the GLC's 'Clean Up Soho' campaign continues. In mid November, Judge Bruce Campbell, chairman of the Inner London Appeals Committee accepted an appeal by two Soho cinemas the Soho and the Pigalle, against the GLC's refusal to renew their licenses. After the hearing, David Grant, head of the Langlian Group of Cinema Clubs and the appellant in the case, repeated his claim that the GLC's campaign, led by Bryan Cassidy and Bernard Brook-Partridge, was 'politically-motivated'. For his part, Councillor Cassidy was 'very disappointed with a judgement that would give encouragement to some rather sinister people' but said they would fight on.

At the end of December, an appeal by the owners of the Astral Cinema in Brewer St. against a publicity display

condition imposed by the GLC was dismissed at Middlesex Crown Court. Bryan Cassidy greeted this decision as 'encouraging' and must also have been pleased to find Mr Grant back in court accused with four others of 'keeping disorderly houses' at their respective cinemas. They are due to appear at Wells St. Court for committal proceedings in June.

More importantly, the GLC is submitting evidence to the Williams Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship, suggesting that a national statutory body should be set up, replacing the British Board of Film Censors, which would classify all films submitted for exhibition, including those to be shown in private cinema clubs. They are also calling for stricter controls on advertising and publicity as well as suggesting a more selective licensing of sex shops in the same way that betting shops are controlled.

JUBILEE HALL OPENS

Having thrown a hall-warming party for locals on 28 January (see page 4) the Jubilee Hall Recreation Centre officially opened its doors on the 30th with facilities for basketball, 5-a-side football, volleyball, netball, badminton, trampoline, table-tennis, dance, weight-training, judo, karate and roller-skating. The hall is for anyone who lives or works in Covent Garden, Soho, Holborn or Bloomsbury and has special low membership rates for local residents, families etc. This is currently our only community recreation centre so it's important that we not only use the facilities provided but also help to organise activities of our own. The hall is to be given a second, ceremonial opening on February 14 by H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh. For more information and bookings apply to Ian McNicol or Lynda Bennett on 836 2799.

SOHO LOSES COUNCILLORS IN ELECTORAL REORGANISATION

Many members will be very sorry to hear that local councillor, David Avery, will not be standing for re-election in May. Electoral reorganisation means that Soho and Mayfair will share two councillors instead of four in future.

David Avery has served on the committee of the Soho Society since its inception and many Soho residents and workers can testify to his effectiveness as a councillor and his willingness to help in local affairs. He has also been willing with local problems to fight for a solution which was just and equitable irrespective of party dogma. Although no longer a member of the council, we hope he will continue to play an active role in Soho.

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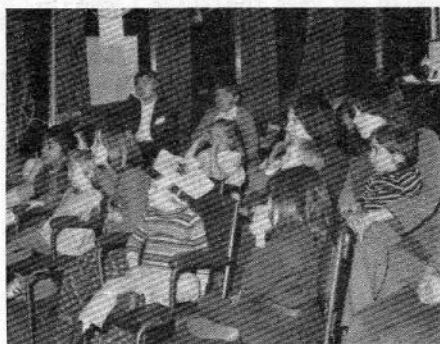
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CHRISTMAS PARTY



40 Children sat down to a spread that would have made Billy Bunter envious and, having consumed it, were further entertained with two hilarious full-length cartoon films. Party games followed, including a chaotic version of musical chairs and the 'traditional' battle between helpers and children (harmless missiles provided by unidentified helper). Anne Capon, as Father Christmas, distributed presents all round.

Our especial thanks to Anne Capon; and to Sue Bowers of Age Concern for the use of the Charles Norton Centre; to Sheila for the delicious cake; and to everyone whose efforts and contributions helped to make the event a success.



**PARTY CHILDREN- EATING
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JUBILEE HALL OPENING PARTY

Directors of the Jubilee Hall Recreation Centre threw a party on 28 January to introduce residents and prospective users to the hall's numerous facilities (see page 3). A running buffet was provided and for those who like their food in liquid form there was sustenance aplenty for a small donation. Entertainment for the evening included a display by the Blue Supremes Drum Majorettes, from the Basement Youth Club, and a friendly 5-a-side football match between the directors of the centre and its builders. (See Sports Report on page 7) To wind up the evening Fred Rickshaw and his Hot Goolies set the joint bopping with some first rate jazz. All in all a most enjoyable event. Thanks to Jubilee Hall from the Soho Society and all best wishes for success with the centre.



**Football, with Director
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**Fred Rickshaw and his
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THE SOHO SOCIETY & YOU

The main tasks of the society for 1978 were outlined by its chairman, Leslie Hardcastle, at the 4th AGM. First priority: **Housing.** We must support the SHA who face the daunting task of rehabilitating and reconstructing Soho's dilapidated housing stock. Next: **Planning.** All applications to WCC will be closely vetted to ensure that the present balance between premises suitable for small trading activities and residential is maintained. Illegal changes of use will be prevented and the Conservation Area consolidated. **Social Activities.** To bring together the trading and residential communities, a 6-day festival, a football tournament, children's and senior citizens' parties, and a regular monthly get-together with music are planned. **Premises.** The development of 37 Great Pulteney St. as the society's HQ and the rehabilitation of the rooms in St. Anne's Tower for community use. **Fund-Raising.** To cover the cost of a full-time member of staff to co-ordinate voluntary workers and activities. To establish a much-needed Soho Youth Centre. **Sexploitation Industry.** To call a halt to the proliferation which now threatens the social and trading health of Soho as did the property speculators of 4 years ago. To attack its public advertising policy by giving evidence to the Williams Committee. **Participation.** The society intends to quadruple its present membership during the coming year. For it is only with the active support of Soho's residential and trading communities that we can ensure

the survival of Soho which is still very much in the balance.

Listed below are the names of local people who were elected and who are dedicated to making Soho a better place to live in, work in and visit. The society has 650 active members, of which 125 are Soho businesses. **JOIN US!**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 1978

Chuck Anderson (public relations); Paul Benscher (trader); Terry Berry (van driver); Bryan Burroughs (foreign office); Alberto Camisa (trader); Dorothy Donaldson-Hudson (master tailor); Mario Forte (restauranteur); Stephen Fry (printer); Leslie Hardcastle OBE (film industry); Elizabeth Jenkins (trade union official); David Jockelson (law student); Dick Laurie (public relations); Robin Moon (chef); Peter O'Rourke (photographer); Jan Piet (architect); Islwyn Pugh (milkman); David Rouse (office manager); Mildred Salisbury (housewife); Jan Shah (secretary); Petter Stensby (architectural student); Rene Tempia (housewife); Maxwell Vine (master tailor); Alan Wakeman (author); Lily Walters (housewife); Eric Wee (restauranteur)

Co-opted members: Sue Bowers (Charles Norton Centre); Pat Cassidy (neighbourhood policeman); Henry Joelsson (trader); Rev. John Knight (St Anne's Church); Charlotte Robinson (SHA)

JOIN US!

1978 SOHO FESTIVAL

This year the Soho Festival is moving to Sunday June 11. The main reason is to avoid clashing with the Covent Garden Festival. We are looking for a larger waiters' race which would possibly be run around Soho Square on the morning of the festival with a big cash prize as well as a trophy for the winning waiter and restaurant. Meetings will take place in April. For further information phone Mario Forte after 3pm on 437 8778.

HISTORY GROUP

The Group enjoyed a most interesting meeting in January on the Birth of the Cinema. The speaker was Leslie Hardcastle who, when not acting as the society's chairman, finds time to run the National Film Theatre. This being so, visual aids were plentiful and members saw one of the first ever moving pictures (made in 1895).

The February 21 meeting will consist of an account by Mr Winterton of the Middlesex Hospital of the Soho Cholera Epidemic of 1854 and the March 14 meeting will be given by a member of the GLC Records Office on the Soho Archives. Both meetings at 1 Greek St. at 6.30 pm.

JAZZ CORNER

RONNIE SCOTT'S: 13 Feb, Dexter Gordon (Tenor Sax); 27 Feb, George Coleman (Tenor Sax); 13 March, John Williams (Guitar); 20 March, Tania Maria (Brazilian Singer); 3 April, Monty Alexander (Piano); 10 April, Earl Hines (Piano) Further information on 439 0747 PIZZA EXPRESS, 10 Dean St. From third week in Feb, jazz 5 nights a week. Further information on 437 9595. THE CROWN 68 Brewer St. Every Tues night, Mike Ellis Band (Admission free) Clubs and Pubs wishing to be listed in this column, ring Dick Laurie on 734 0491.



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A fire in Rupert Street killed Fayn Nicholson, a local resident.

STORMS, FIRE AND FLOOD

After a night of storm force winds, on Monday morning, 16 January, Soho's streets were littered with debris. The King's Head, in Newport Place, had part of its recently renovated facade whipped off. In Charing Cross Road, the public caught a glimpse of the old John O' Groat's Pub when part of the present frontage of a cinema was removed. A French lady who kept her casement window open late at night found it across the other side of the road. L'Epicure Restaurant had a shock for its customers when a mysterious flying object, ten feet high, four feet wide, came sailing through one of its windows in Romilly St. Their insurance company would like its owner to collect it. Cranks, despite its reputation for fittings of inch-thick seasoned oak, lost half a front door and Pam, the manageress, almost decided to put up her oilskins, but reason prevailed and she'll be sailing again, but not till the summer months.

A warm reception was given to a man who was pursuing artistic pleasures with a model in Romilly St. He ended up on the roof with her and her maid when a fire broke out on the staircase. Another loser was Manny Abrahams whose fish restaurant, the Neptune, was badly damaged by water that three young policemen and a waiter from Capaninna Restaurant used to put the fire out. A similar fire in Rupert Street, next door to the White Horse, resulted in the death of Fayn Nicholson, who used to have a stall in the market. Two other fires gutted a Sauna Massage Establishment next door to Mooney's Irish House in Charing Cross Rd. and damaged a sex cinema next door to the Swiss Pub in Old Compton Street.

NEW MEDICAL CENTRE

An experimental medical centre for the young homeless (under 25) was opened at 13 Great Chapel Street on the 9th January. The Centre will function on week-day afternoons between 2 pm and 4.30 pm with a nurse present at all times and a doctor on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays.

The Department of Health and Social Security is funding the scheme with £10,000 per annum for three years. The Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless who are managing the scheme jointly with the Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster Area Health Authority and the West End Co-ordinated Voluntary Services have been eager for such a Centre for some time.

It is envisaged that the Centre will provide a medical service for those young people in Central London who cannot find a doctor to register with. Soho's own local GP, Dr Peltz, is said to be 'delighted' at the news.

PLANNER TAKES TIME FOR SOHO

The Director of Architecture and Planning for Westminster, Joe Hirsh, was spotted by an observant member in the vicinity of Michael McKay's clock workshop where St. Anne's Tower Clock is being overhauled. However we understand there is no question of a compulsory purchase order. It turns out that Mr Hirsh is an amateur horologist himself and just wanted to look at the piece. Assuming that Michael and Ivan Garnham (of the History Group) can remember how to put the bits together again (some doubt has been expressed on this topic in the Crown and Two Chairmen) the clock should be installed soon when the builders start work on the Tower.

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SPORTS REPORT

Here is a brief resume of what Jimmy Hill would have shown but for the over-time ban and an uncanny sense of the public puke factor. His main item, the opening of the Jubilee Hall (see story on page 4) when the highlight of the evening - a 5-a-side soccer match between the directors of the hall and its builders ended 5 all. The Soho Society's new secretary, Mario Forte, struck three times, once in each half, and a left-hook in the centre circle. Mario's goals were too late to be entered for the Goal-of-the-Month competition but Jimmy could have included any of Soho's in the 4-4 draw against Barclays Bank or any of ours which crushed Covent Garden 7-4. Both matches were played on the Hackney AstroTurf. The Garden boys claimed successfully - that their match should not count towards the Paul Benschner Cup on the technicality that they lost! This loophole has now been plugged so the remaining events can take place in the new hall.

The Barclays Bank 'keeper, Peter Hinson, broke his leg when making a daring save, but was fortunate in one respect - Peter had the good sense to belong to a private patient insurance scheme. Several weeks after having his leg expertly set, they expertly broke it again and re-set it at no extra cost. A right you cannot demand on the National Health!

See you on Sunday 21 May at York Way AstroTurf Stadium where the Soho Society 6-a-side Soccer Cup Tournament will take place from 10 am-6 pm. The superb Maxwell Vine Trophy must stay in Soho, so if you bump into any team managers tell them that the managers' meeting will be on Thursday 13 April at the Tower at 6.30 pm.

Terry Berry.

TRIMMINGS

CONGRATULATIONS

Ahmad Hallawani has just received his British naturalisation papers and plans to try them out immediately with a day trip to France. Well-known to society members for his high-class craftsmanship, Ahmad decorated the ground-floor room of St. Anne's Tower. Bon voyage and Bon Retour, Ahmad!

Congratulations also to Anne Cutbill who's off to Australia and marriage. Thank you for all your work for the society, especially from the Planning Group!

DISPLAY OF GENEROSITY

Warm thanks to House Brothers hardware and ironmongery shop in Rupert St. and to Reg, the manager, for giving their old display counter to the society. Almost a museum piece itself, it will be used to house the various pieces of paraphernalia given to the society when we get our hoped-for permanent premises.

RETIRING VICAR

The Rev. John Knight of St. Anne's is retiring in February after over 40 years in the ministry. He has acted as chaplain to most of the West End theatres and to several Soho hospitals and will be missed in Soho. He served on the committee of the society and we offer best wishes to him in his retirement. He is succeeded by the Rev. Michael Hurst-Bannister who is head of the Actors' Church Union and until recently of the C. of E. Children's Homes. He comes from the West Country.

WINDSCALE: Demonstration against expansion of nuclear power, March 19 Trafalgar Sq. For details contact Czech Conroy, Friends of the Earth, 9 Poland St. W1 434 1684.

READERS' LETTERS

Sir, For some time I have both worked and lived within a stone's throw of the Soho area and still find it the most ugly and depressing place I've had cause to pass through. It is like a ghetto where human degradation is commonplace and where robots are passed off as the real thing. The other disturbing aspect is that the greater number of images portray women as objects of sexual pleasure and very few, if any, men. This would seem to imply that frequenters to the Soho area have a distorted and one-sided view of women.

Mrs Valerie Lewell, London, WC2.

We're not an 'area' to 'pass through' reluctantly, Mrs Lewell. We're a living community. We didn't create the sex industry, but had it foisted on us. As for the puritanical tone of your letter, I can only give my personal view that the sex industry is the flip side of the coin of marriage. While society continues to brainwash its citizens into the highly unnatural state of heterosexual monogamy, and denies the truly diverse nature of human sexuality, sexploitation and prostitution will also continue to thrive. EDITOR

OPEN LETTER TO COUNCILLOR DANIEL

At a recent council meeting you raised the question of the amount of money the Highways and Works Committee proposed to devote to street cleaning and objected to the fact that £100,000 extra was to be spent. As a resident and rate-payer who lives in central Westminster, I am delighted to hear that the council is to spend more money on cleaning. If you had ever walked round Soho in the early evening tripping over bags of rubbish spilling all over the pavements you would understand. Those of us who do live in this area get very disheartened by the way in which the authorities continually overlook our needs.

Liz Jenkins.

OBITUARIES

The death occurred suddenly on 25 January of Kathleen Mary Kennedy, joint managing director of L. Roche Ltd, the French provision store in Old Compton St., where she had worked for 48 years. A quiet and kindly woman, an expert in her trade, her loss will be deeply felt. The funeral took place at Marylebone Crematorium on 2 February.

Staff and customers of the French Pub (The York Minster in Dean St.) will sorely miss Aida Sidoli, the charming Italian woman who did the cooking for the past 21 years. She died recently after a long illness. Our sincere condolences to her family.

Bert Hall, transport manager at William Page's in Shaftesbury Avenue, where he had worked for over 30 years, died recently. This big jovial character will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Our sincere condolences to his wife, Leslie, and son, Jimmy. After a service at Westminster Cathedral on 21 January, interment took place at Streatham Hill Cemetery.

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The Westminster Chamber of Commerce is to finance an investigation into the recent history of Sandringham Flats West in an effort to pinpoint the cause of planning blight on this block. The results may be published as an awful warning to others.

Major proposals are shortly to be announced by Richard Ellis, surveyors to Electrical Supply Nominees, who own the site, for works which will involve the refurbishment of many of the buildings and which will confine redevelopment to the central part of the site. Details in next issue.

Westminster City Council is to ask street traders in Berwick St. whether they would like to hire storage space at £15 weekly in part of NCP's Wardour St. Garage, leased by the council.

Committee on 31 January, acknowledged that the garage has never been more than half used and accepted one of the recommendations of a report presented to the town planning committee last October, that space should be made available for street traders.

The earlier report found that 65 out of 106 traders operating in Berwick and Rupert St. markets are without storage space and the problem is exacerbated because many of them deal exclusively in fresh foodstuffs. The Director of Environmental Health said that this lack of accommodation contributed to the accumulation of waste in the street and made it difficult to enforce satisfactory standards of hygiene.

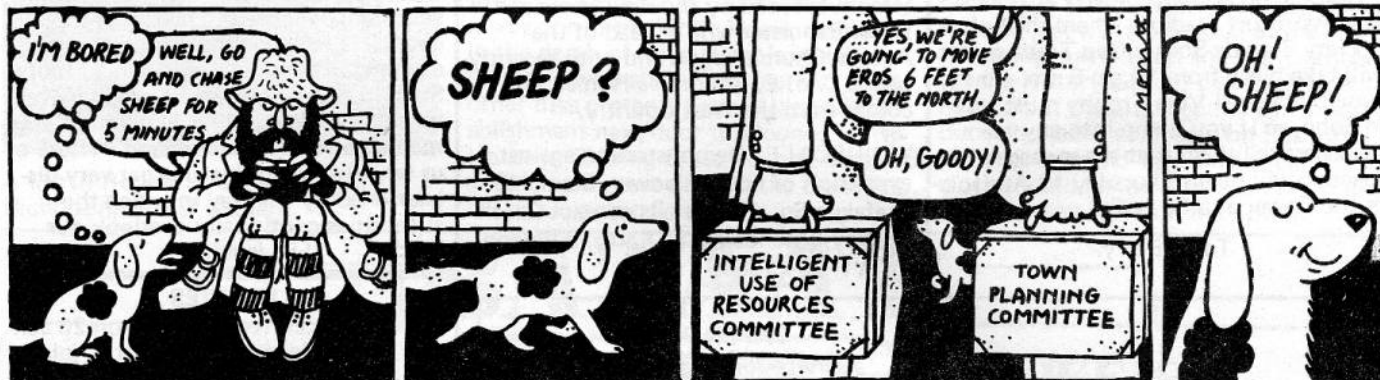
Local traders could eventually benefit from a WCC decision to make part of Poland Street garage available for the parking of commercial vehicles from later this year. There is space for 8/10 vehicles and the charge would be £60 for a 12 week period. Unfortunately the council seems unable to decide how to organise the hiring of the spaces. If and when it does, we'll report how to apply in these pages.

The annual general meeting of the society on 5 Dec last overwhelmingly endorsed a plan, put forward by Stephen Fry, to create a community centre along the lines of the successful one in Covent Garden. It was agreed that we need a place where people can meet informally, where meetings can be held, local information exchanged and members can be drawn into society activities. An informal coffee-house atmosphere, or licensed, members-only, bar would clearly be an important element in fostering a sense of community. Stephen Fry volunteered to put 'all the energy he's got' into getting the project underway.

The next step is to find premises. Since we do not expect any estate agent or property owner to volunteer a building for our needs (though we live in hope!) we propose to ask WCC to allow us to build our centre on one of their empty sites. We will keep you informed of progress in future issues of Clarion.

SOHO SOCKY & W.C.

by ALAN WAKEMAN & JOHN MERRITT



MEMBERSHIP

[illegible]

| | | |
|--------|---------------------|-----|
| Feb 27 | Clarion Meeting | GPS |
| Mar 1 | Executive Committee | BFI |
| 14 | History Group | GrS |
| 15 | Work Group | GPS |
| Apr 5 | Executive Committee | BFI |
| 19 | Work Group | GPS |

GPS= Great Pulteney St.
BFI= 127 Charing Cross Rd.
GrS= 1 Greek St.

CREDITS: This issue of Clarion was put together by: Matthew Bennett, Terry Berry, Bryan Burroughs, Tony Butler, Mario Forte, Stephen Fry, Leslie Hardcastle, Liz Jenkins, Laura Knap, Dick Laurie, John Merritt, Peter O'Rourke, Fiona Preston, Islwyn Pugh, Peter Ridge Ward Ulrich and Alan Wakeman.