

BACK TO FRONT?

Hackney Borough Council's recent proceedings to stop the use of a warehouse building in the Shoreditch area as the National Front's headquarters have opened up a large and interesting can of worms.

In 1978, having been pushed out of their premises in Twickenham on planning grounds, the NF raised a fund of uncertain size to buy a place of their own. Some of the business types in the Front leadership set up a company, NF Properties Ltd, which bought a disused warehouse in Great Eastern Street for about £47,000. Practically all the company's shares were issued for cash to NF members or NF leaders as trustees for the members. Two wholly owned subsidiary companies were bought off the peg, one to do the Front's printing and another to sell NF ties and other regalia. In September 1978 an ugly mob put by the NF at 3,000 marched into Great Eastern Street chanting 'It's ours!' and the former warehouse was reborn as Excalibur House, heralded by a celebratory spread in *Spearhead* starting with Tennyson's lines about King Arthur

She gave the King a great cross-hilted sword

Wherewith to drive the heathen out. . . and surmounted, with an impeccable sense of history, by a photo of the statue of Boadicea on Westminster Bridge.

It therefore came as a surprise to some of the Front's best friends when they turned up

at the planning inquiry in Hackney with one lawyer (their Leicester organiser Tony Reed-Herbert) and the companies turned up with another, both announcing that their clients had practically nothing to do with each other: a commercial group of companies was occupying the building, and since one was a printing company which worked for the NF it has simply seemed convenient to give the NF's publicity department a few square feet on the second floor.

It didn't start too well. 'Sir, I represent NF Properties Ltd,' said the company's lawyer. 'What does it stand for?' asked the Inspector. 'Well actually it doesn't stand for anything' said the lawyer, 'It's just a coincidence.'

And so it went on for two weeks. Fortunately, Hackney Borough Council had got hold of some quite interesting internal material as well as a lot of NF publications, and Hackney Trades Council during the inquiry added a startling piece of evidence: they called as a witness a young man who had joined the NF to see how it worked, had become a security guard, and had recently left, taking on his way an 18-page manifesto signed by a large number of leading Front members calling themselves the Constitutional Movement, denouncing the NF's Chairman, John Tyndall and Activities Organiser, Martin Webster, in damning terms.

The Inspector will report and make recommendations to the Minister in due

course, but meanwhile it has become possible to get some sort of a picture of the NF's current ructions.

Following their electoral disaster in May 1979 the NF's leaders embarked on some serious self-criticism of each other. The respectable wing, led by Andrew Fountaine and Michael Kavanagh, both wealthy men and the latter the chairman of NF Properties Ltd, believe that the unacceptably Nazi image of Tyndall and Webster is responsible for the setback. The ANL can claim much credit for this. Fountaine, Kavanagh and their allies control the companies and hence the building. But Tyndall, Webster and Richard Verrall (an intelligent and sinister figure) have retained control of the party, whose active members are still more interested in the boot and the fist than the ballot box.

The feud had reached the stage of litigation by the end of 1979, with the property company slapping injunctions on Tyndall and co and finally serving them with notice to quit the building.

The problem the Constitutional Movement faces is that it has the building but not the party in its hands. Some of its leaders have been expelled from the NF. The party, however, has in its turn far more problems. Reed-Herbert announced that the Leicester branch, probably the NF's biggest, was seceding and setting itself up as the British People's Party—taking with it, incidentally, the building which the Front had been telling the Inspector was its real national HQ, a converted bank in Leicester. That particular rift may heal. But the long knives are now coming out: Tyndall has announced that either Webster goes or he does, and that will probably be a fight to the death. He has already lost the chairmanship over his attempt to secure dictatorial powers within the NF, and by the time this note appears in print the power struggle in the Front's Directorate will be in a new phase. Meanwhile, *Time Out* has located the Constitutional Move's intended substitute for the present NF structure once they have evicted the present leadership. It is an organisation called the League of St George, an ideological neo-Nazi group with links with French and other European fascist movements. But it is also likely that if Tyndall ousts Webster he will then make his peace with the new masters of the NF, for every Fuehrer needs a mob to be at the head of and every fascist think-tank needs an organisation of louts to do its work.



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