

CHAPTER 4.

POWER IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGION.

After Labour won the municipal election in 1958, I was elected Chairman of the Housing Committee and although my life had been crammed with a series of experiences at many levels, and had met many people who were destined to become famous world leaders, I had never held even the smallest amount of power based on a democratic election and with a substantial budget at my disposal. The decisions I would take in this position would either add to or detract from people's happiness.

I had a whole range of anti-establishment prejudices, some creative organisational ability, and an increasing knowledge of finance and administration. Previous experiences had been acquired from the many beyond the fringe activities which had dominated my life up to that time.

To find myself as Deputy Leader of the group and Chairman of a Housing Committee, with a radical reforming City Labour Party behind me, and certain that my own policy and organisational concepts were fully endorsed by the rank and file because they had been almost totally involved in their development was an exciting situation full of political potential.

I then experienced for the first time in my life the gap between those people who select people for public office and the people who are elected. Committee Chairman assumed a sense of importance when they were taken into the officers' confidence. The officers regarded themselves as the ones that mattered, who would survive elections. Councillors given some power and authority, resented being questioned by rank and filers who wanted to see policies they had discussed and agreed emerging. Councillors answered, "you do not know all the facts, if you did, you would understand why we have not implemented the policies we agreed."

I saw myself being in authority and with a mandate to change the system. I began on day 1 to propose new policies for slum clearance, anti-eviction, old people, design and layout, and I called all of the officers before me to outline the changes I wanted to bring about. Most of them were obviously pleased and expressed a willingness to do all they could, ^{but} two of them were determined that they would do all in their power to carry on as usual. It was interesting to me to observe how they got their committee members convinced to carry ^{their} battle into the Labour Group. The Architect resented my using his officers for such meetings and quickly told me so.

Housing problems were acute ^{as} there had been no long term assessment relevant to real need, although the Planning department argued strongly that there had been such pre-planning.

In addition to those ^{people} on the waiting list, there were those without homes, those living in, living in rooms, in slums, in property which in itself was good but located in slum areas, and yet others facing eviction for a variety of reasons.

I gave the officers three months in which to prepare a new housing policy and proceeded to work with a political friend to produce it. Within three months the policy was available for discussion within the Labour Group and the Party. It had been prepared only because I had cut across the committee's ^{who} delegated powers and got support ^{from the} many officers wanted to see good policies vigourously applied.

The real effect of the policy was to commit for the first time the Council to firm dates relating to housing and re-housing and to offer in general terms to everyone on the housing list a firm promise as to when they would be rehoused and ^a say in where they might go ^{to live}.

It became a housing bible for councillors ^{and} it was something they could quote, to people with housing needs. It offered some _____, to others it offered long periods of waiting, but at least it carried a firm promise. The effect of the new policy was to reduce housing enquiries at the Department by over three thousand in less than a year, itself a sound financial saving. More importantly it indicated that people concerned with the basic need of a place to live had accepted an assurance from elected representative given in precise terms. It was this housing policy which brought me into contact with senior Ministry of Housing officials and with Hugh Gaitskell.

As part of the housing policy, I had evolved 'Operation Revitalise', which was designed to save as many of the worthwhile houses in the City by acquiring them and carrying out effective modernisation. If I could have ^{persuaded} Whitehall to introduce legislation empowering us to acquire large areas of rented property before the rot had set in, and vandalism made restoration impossible or too costly, ^{the success of that policy would have saved} ^{Britain} billions of pounds worth of expense. Once again I observed that the time lag between conception and implementation had effectively prevented democracy from working either humanly or efficiently. ^{Sir Keith Joseph's was the Minister of Housing at that time and his failure to introduce the legislation was his contribution to today's inflation.} There was not a single building site available within the City, and the City Engineer who had prepared the City Plan argued, with some justification, that the sites constructed at Long Benton and Newbiggin Hall were adequate to cope with the City's housing need.

Had he been able to coordinate slum clearance and new site Building his forecasting would have been correct, but because there was an acute conflict between the City Architect and the City Engineer which prevented them even discussing with one another there was no such coordination.

The Housing Manager was not a Chief Officer and had no status to discuss at Chief Officer level. I found this down grading of officers dealing with people totally unacceptable. Why? ~~asked~~ was a Housing

Manager less important than a Housing Designer? One deals with people and the other buildings.

The consequence of lack of coordination meant that a housing land enquiry being held to examine a private builders claim to have land re-zoned for housing was going uncontested so far as the City Council ~~was~~ *was* concerned despite the Housing Committee having no land on which to commence building.

The legal and constitutional position was *clear*. *The* previous City Council had accepted the City Plan, which included no claim for the *use by the land being determined at the Public Enquiry*. The Town Clerk could not over-*rule that* decision no matter what I, or the Housing Committee, argued. I decided to fight the enquiry as Chairman of the Housing Committee in order to expose the nonsense that was passing off for a housing policy and prepared the case without any help from the City Engineer or his department.

That was not all. *The* City had embarked on the re-building of Scotswood Road, immortalised by the song the Blaydon Races, the Geordie National Anthem. *The* houses being built on Scotswood Road represented one of the worst municipal outrages I had ever seen

The construction was well and competently done and was no reflection on the skill of the builders. It was the conception, the use of attractive sharply-sloping site, combined with a choice of housing types that bordered on criminal negligence if there had been such an offence *for architectural design*.

The Council had decided to build three and four storey blocks of inordinate length, in roughly parallel lines, facing over Scotswood Road, and had already completed hundreds of them in the previous five years while I was a minority Councillor. I had a deep hatred of the scheme and availed myself of every opportunity in Council debates to attack it. My attacks were made more embarrassing for me because the Chairman of the Housing Committee was my accountant, and future business partner, Bill Kirkup, and he saw no humour in my constant bitter attacks on his policy..

Because of the steep slopes and the height of the houses people who lived on the top floor of the top block were faced with the daunting task of climbing a height equivalent to a fifteen storey block. The estate was ironically called Noble Street, and soon began to develop the reputation of a ghetto. It became the collecting centre for what were loosely described as problem families. It was a social and financial disaster and a condemnation of the Local Authority, Whitehall, and elected representatives for perpetrating a social outrage which was infinitely more damaging to hundreds of human beings than any offence I ever committed.

Conversely, by fighting, as I successfully did, to scrap such a policy, and by bringing humanity into the design of houses and estates my contribution as Chairman of the Housing Committee was measured in the more important terms of human happiness. I claim that we made democracy work through ^{relevant} housing policies and the means and determination to implement them.

With deep hatred for the housing schemes under construction at Long Benton, Newbiggin Hall, and elsewhere at the time I became Chairman of the Committee, I at once approached the City Architect, the late George Kenyon, and told him to scrap the rest of these terrible developments.

It took over two years to usher in new housing concepts.

I wrestled with the problem as to how a group of dedicated housing architects could produce such bad housing

I argued hard with the City Architect to let us analyse and report on how it had come about. He was adamant, ^AAt no time was I entitled to discuss with his staff, and the discussions which I had begun with his Deputy could not be continued. I decided that the department needed to be restructured and took the first steps to do it. I made the point to George Kenyon that while I was all in favour of the new Civic Centre buildings, I resented the lack of attention to housing policy matters which were clearly occurring as a result of his preoccupation with the Civic Centre.

The Noble Street Scheme was demolished in

and it had cost the tax and ratepayers ^{with} the costs in human suffering, immeasurable. Its contribution to increasing crime by herding together too many under privileged people was measured by the Chief Constable.

^{later,} The headlines and the countless articles written about my part in the Poulson Affair ^{would have} people accept, as part of Newcastle's history, that I was a corrupt councillor and Newcastle was one of my happy hunting grounds. At least I ^{prevented further housing schemes being constructed along the diagonal limbs of Noble Street.}

My conduct while a Councillor in Newcastle was beyond reproach, and in every position that I occupied, there was not a single officer who could ever say that I asked for a favour for myself or any one else connected with me, nor that I influenced a Councillor or a Committee to act in any way advantageously for me.

I must offer some explanation for the public outcry which became known as the Cruden Affair. Building Contractors, who were concerned to secure municipal building contracts used all kinds of devices to secure inside supporters. They would employ councillors as consultants advertising agents, safety officers, sub contractors development officers, solicitors, estate agents or for a whole range of activities.

the Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies and other private companies would allow their staffs a certain amount of time a year in which to take part in public affairs. Providing declarations of interest were made, there was nothing either morally or legally wrong in such practices. But the more unscrupulous, would offer to a committee some indirect benefit in some other project or company in order to avoid the councillor having to making any declaration of interest. I carefully avoided such commitments although I was unimpressed with offers. There were other councillors who had direct interests. I was one. I was Chairman of a decorating Company which undertook contracts for work in the City and I always declared my interests. If my company was interested in a sub contract with a main contractor who was in contention for a direct contract with the City then there was no interest to declare until the main contractor signed the contract. I and other people were free to take part in the discussions and vote on such matters. I never did, but I knew at least seven councillors who did.

It had become the general practice for large contractors to entertain whole Council Committees and to entertain Chief Officers and Committee Chairman on a lavish scale, often the wives among the guests.

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There was nothing new in the practice of entertainment, in private business it was normal practice. What was new was that as Local Government emerged as one of the biggest of big businesses, it became a prime target for the salesman of private companies and professional practices.

In 1960, two years after Labour had gained control of the council, I was elected by a substantial majority as Labour Group Leader. I was mandated, by the Labour Group to make the position an officially recognised post and to ensure that this important municipal job carried the staff and resources to allow the holder of it to carry out this key function. My announcement of such an intention was greeted with a public outcry and with words of "dictator" and "dictatorship" being hurled around and many of my own colleagues reeled back under the attack. The proposal simply meant that the party in power had the right, without outside opposition in the exploratory stages, to discuss and decide priorities, prior to introducing agreed majority policies into the traditional committee system for subsequent detailed examination and decision by them.

The traditional local authority system, which I inherited, included no place for a Council Leader; that place being reserved for the Lord Mayor who was in fact 'politically neutral' during the year of office. The committee and Chief Officers structure allowed each Chief Officer to be a law unto himself, and be responsible to his own committee, acting on the powers delegated to them by the Council. The system was irrelevant to the methods we needed to employ to initiate the introduction of a really democratic and commercially viable system. Translated into administrative terms, the old system meant that the Council Treasurer prepared the Councils annual estimates, checked performance against estimates during the year, and then, on the basis of performance and aspiration, prepared next years estimates.

There was no way that I could see the organisation carrying out the mammoth tasks we were going to place upon it. Nor was I sure how we were going to effectively and democratically undertake the kind of economic and financial exercise that would ensure that every pound spent, was looked upon by us as though it was our own personal pound we were spending. We had to begin by breaking down into comprehensible units of finance, sums of money which were assuming astronomical proportions. Certainly the sums we were dealing with were in excess of those being dealt with by most multi national companies and yet few of us had dealt in projects involving thousands let alone millions of pounds.

The political decision we had taken to develop our own commercial central area sites had exposed a certain lack of commercial skill in some of our departmental officers. I knew such deficiencies had to be rectified, for I knew that if we could not do the detailed assessments ourselves, neither could we negotiate hard enough with the more experienced developers if we decided later to develop certain commercial sites. Our design and building departments had no cost experiences related to the kind of costly central area buildings we were proposing to construct and manage.

At that time Newcastle had three senior Chief Officers each of them with personal ability and they controlled their separate departments with a jealous possessiveness.

The Town Clerk was the legal officer with a wide range of responsibilities and on his staff were experts in all the activities carried on by the Council. He conducted public enquiries on behalf of the corporation, provided the prosecuting solicitor for the Magistrates, and Organised the arrangements for the Parliamentary and Local elections. Although he was accepted as the senior officer he had neither the power or the necessary delegation of functions to permit him to a system of over riding priorities.

He saw himself as the guardian of his brother officers and of the councillors. He was responsible for presiding with the Lord Mayor at the meetings of the Council. His committee was the parliamentary committee and it was responsible for ensuring that New legislation was allocated under the council's delegated powers to the appropriate committee for implementation.

The City Treasurer wielded his power through the finance committee, a committee given a priority by councillors as it had the final say subject only to council approval over other committees estimates and exercised power in that way.

I argued that the group should lay down policy, including financial policy and that it was the function of the finance committee to carry it out constantly seeking more efficient and more democratic methods of achieving our policy objectives by combining a finer balance between social justice and commercial efficiency.

By these means I argued that new priorities would take their place in the consideration of overall priorities.

The old system was based on a method approved by the Treasury and began with the consideration by the finance committee of the previous years estimates and worked forward from them. Supplementary estimates to meet the deficiencies as well as for surpluses being reallocated during the year for other purposes. Next years budgeting would carry forward anticipated rises brought about by the expansion of services new construction and increasing loan charges or development of new services.

The treasurers book columns matched those laid down by Whitehall and were approved by the district auditor who would examine and report annually on the Councils financial performance.

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He would not report on such financial disasters as Noble Street although such issues were of more financial importance than most of the issues he did report about.

If you were caught stealing an office eraser you would be sacked. Design a monumentally bad housing scheme which had to be pulled down shortly after and lose millions of pounds and you might still get an M.B.E.!

The city engineers department emerged from the need to deal with sewage and personal waste and against the background of the infectious diseases of the previous centuries.

Sewers, drains, making up streets repairing cobbles and then relaying the modern roads by laws health regulations fire regulations and a host of new acts requiring enforcement were constantly being added to and the Town and Country Planning legislation of 1947 added the functions of town planning to the city engineers department.

Each chief officer armed with his committees estimates worked through his chairman to the committee and the officer chairman relationships developed into the closest of council relationships and too often reflected the disagreements between officers.

This system created a councillors loyalty to 'his or her' committee creating tensions and getting priorities completely confused.

It also cloaked a general incompetence as most of the councillors were attracted to council work for social reasons and few were trained to appreciate the financial and economic consequences of their decisions. It was generally accepted by the officers that they would have long discussions about sums of money that could be comprehended by the councillors while millions of pounds would go through on the nod.

I was certain that this general administrative inefficiency was responsible for a worsening in the overall effectiveness of local government which if it was not tackled fundamentally would in time destroy local government as the scale of financial and other resources past completely beyond comprehension of M.P.'s and of councillors.

The procedures were inadequate and increasingly irrelevant and I was certain needed changing.

Inevitably all the Committee activities which had proceeded in a piecemeal fashion suddenly received a jolt. I informed the Town Clerk that I was to be recognised officially as Council Leader and Chairman of the Policy Advisory Committee, and that the Committee had to be recognised by the Chief Officers as the Senior Committee, and that the Council Leader had right of access to every Chief Officer at any mutually convenient time.

The effect of that elementary ^{long overdue} proposal, essential as it was to making the administration ^{efficient} was dramatic. Major city centre stores with their own development plans, were concerned about the effect on them of any new proposals. I arranged to meet them separately and to have with me all the appropriate officers. Within weeks I had taken them into our confidence, telling them of our proposals to set up an independent Planning Department. I spent several days a week answering questions as far as I was able to, without prejudicing Wilf Burns ^{soon to take up his job} as City Planner.

But it was at the very time, when these major changes were being ^{organised} that I was 'tipped off' by the senior police officer that a meeting had taken place at which were present a number of representatives of ^{building} Contractors and ^developers, and more worrying that there had been two of my own Labour Councillors present at the meeting and, as expected, several of the leading City ^{Tories}. The aim of the meeting was simply to get rid of Smith. I was shocked and sceptical ^{yet} took no further action. ^{That was} My first major mistake ^{made} within a year of becoming Council Leader.

Two Central Area schemes had been approved prior to my election as Council Leader and both of them fundamentally damaged the kind of proposals I had in my own mind ^{for the} comprehensive replanning of the City.

The schemes had to be stopped, ^{The} main scheme included a new traffic island at the key Pilgrim Street city junction, a well known traffic black spot bringing the main weight of A.I. traffic into the heart of Newcastle, ^{and King} involved the Ministries of Transport and of Housing and Local Government. It was then that I realised the value of having friends in Whitehall ^{and} ^{sought} their intervention to stop both the Pilgrim Street Island Scheme and the clearly abortive proposals to develop Princess Street as a new shopping street in the City.

At the same time I set in motion a holding operation to prevent the implementation of two planning applications already approved, one in Newcastle's finest street, Grey Street, in which permission had been approved to allow the Midland Bank to build a new modern office ^{block} without regard to the architectural quality of the street, and one in Northumberland Street which, if built, would prejudice a major aspect of what I called the Arne Jacobson Eldon Centre Scheme.

I had made up my mind on the team of Architects I wanted ^{the Council} involve in the City and I envisaged four important local architects, Ryder and Yates, Bill Williamson, Jack Napper and, a go getter, Richard Turley. Nationally I had talked to Basil Spence ^{and} Robert Matthews. Internationally I had met and talked to Le Coubusier and Arne Jacobson. To each of them I had put the position as I saw it pointing out that the officer who would be in control of the development was not yet in appointment in the City and my actions were simply exploratory.

I had been approached by the Ministry of Transport on behalf of the Transport Minister, Ernest Marples who asked me if I would be willing to serve on a Steering Committee under Sir Geoffrey Crowther. The committee would be working and advising as necessary a Committee of Civil Servants, under Sir Colin Buchanon who were examining the increasing problems being created by 'Traffic in Towns'. I was delighted to accept and attended my first meeting, which was held in London's Dorchester Hotel, at the invitation of Sir Geoffrey who was the Chairman of Trust Houses Hotels. Ernest Marples, as a special *gesture* had laid on some of his own special wine. I met my fellow committee members and soon we were holding regular committee meetings at the Transport Department Headquarters at St. Christopher's House, Southwark, London.

It was a valuable experience for me and, although I may not have contributed much to the Committee, I learned so much of value to Newcastle and, additionally, met and learned to value the work of a number of Civil Servants. I was later to get to know many of them much better.

The policies I was initiating in Newcastle called for a scale of regional thinking, and yet it was very clear to me that each local authority the upermost need to *be to* retain its *own* independence above all else.

Recognising the *entrenched* parochialism I decided that, at the same time as Newcastle would press *her claim as the Regional Capital*

I would also argue for the creation of new democratically elected Regional authority.

I would also launch a series of Regional and sub-regional proposals. There was a natural suspicion from other authorities that 'big brother Newcastle'

was trying to take over the other County Boroughs of Gateshead, Tynemouth and South Shields.

What I *found difficult to appreciate* was the way that Labour controlled Gateshead and South Shields allied themselves

to Tory controlled Tynemouth against a Newcastle Labour controlled authority fighting to retain a major foothold in a traditionally Tory City. Party politics took a second place to parochial council politics and the scale of ^{their} thinking was totally inadequate for the size of the Regional problems we were all facing.

My priorities were clear. I learned on my increasingly frequent visits to London, that the University Grants Committee and the Government were committed to extend their investments in Universities and already new Universities had been or were being established in many other parts of the country. I had only met Sir Eustace Percy, Vice Chancellor of Newcastle University on a couple of ^{occasions} and had pressed on him from my minor opposition councillors position my strong view that Newcastle needed a University independent of Durham and that there was an urgent need to get that Charter through and to take advantage of the prevailing mood while it lasted. Sir Eusta Percy died before I really got to know him and was replaced by Charles Bosanquet and ^{it} was possible for me through him to develop a period of City and University Cooperation which represented for the City and the University an important period of ^{progress}. Meanwhile while Lord Hailsham was working under Prime Minister McMillan's North East Special Programme, it had been possible to discuss with him and his officials the prospects for a New Polytechnic, a subject first mooted ^{when} some years earlier he was Minister of Education and he had expressed some strong opinions about the merits of the then College of Technology. I got a feeling that the ideas I was strongly pressing for the concentration of both the Polytechnic and University on adjoining central area sites was being received ever more favourably in Whitehall. M.P.'s. Ted Short and Ernie Popplewell were both giving unqualified backing to these efforts.

Once those major educational decisions had been taken I felt that I had become involved in ^a continuing series of important joint City and University discussions which could open up all kinds of additional possibilities for the City and the wider Region. At the same time, I tried hard to get Teeside Councillors that I knew to press an urgent claim for a Teeside University, a plea which was eventually launched many years too late.

I next planned to launch three major regional initiatives two of which had relevance throughout the three rivers ^{catchment of} Tyne, Wear and Tees, and the third which covered only the Wear and Tyne ^{areas}.

I decided to think aloud to Bob Clough, ^{H.R.} Regional Director of Thompson Newspapers, and spell out to him the broad direction of our plans and policies. He listened carefully and raised a number of doubts about the Council Cabinet concept and its one-party control. ^{He also} questioned me about the truth, or otherwise, of the Cruden Affair and then arranged for me to meet the Editors of the Evening Chronicle, The Newcastle Journal, and the Sunday Sun. I repeated to them the concepts we were developing and answered their questions. ^{They} promised as journalists that, if we made news, they would report it without prejudice. The Editor of the Northern Echo, Harold Evans, was out ahead on most major Regional issues.

Shortly after my meeting with the Thompson Press Editors, I met Lord Thompson and his son Ken. Lord Thompson agreed to sponsor a dinner at which I could pose to each of the important northern guests the simple question, 'If you could talk to Lord Thompson on behalf of the North East for three minutes what would you say to him?' The ^{dinner} was a marked success. It had the effect of adding strength to the policies I was advocating and it was ^{informed} important regional figures of our intentions, and ^{give} us the benefit of their reactions to our proposals.

I launched the idea of widening NEIDA The North East Industrial Development Association into a local authority backed employment agency to co-ordinate all the regions efforts behind one regional organisation

The idea was quickly endorsed and operative. I then persuaded the Lord Mayor of Newcastle to convene a meeting of Local Authority representatives to discuss the possibilities of founding a Regional Arts Association, an idea given to me by Charles Bosanquet, and in no time at all Britain's first Regional Arts Association was off the ground. A Regional Sports Council quickly followed, and I realised that so long as there was no linking of Regional local government reform and Regional action the ideas were enthusiastically welcomed by most local authorities. One other proviso for that support seemed to be that as Newcastle must be prepared to let other authorities take over the Chairmanships. Newcastle had maintained an Airport for many years and this was the next operation for Regional policy. I invited Durham Labour Councillors to discuss a partnership with Newcastle, they willingly agreed and together we called a meeting of interested Authorities and the Regional Airport was off the ground. Up to that time its only real asset was the ability, dedication and enthusiasm of its Director, Jim Denyer. Lord Hailsham quickly dealt with the capital grant. Other minor schemes were put together and eighteen authorities agreed to set up a joint Board to plan a long term clean up project for the River Tyne and together these schemes developed into successful additions to the amenities, a meeting other needs of the Region.

The convergence of Hailsham's powerful team of civil servants and the new input of high quality Local Government Officers in a number of Local Authorities, and certainly in Newcastle, created a feeling of optimism founded on reality.

Wilf Burns had taken over as Planning Officer in Newcastle and had appointed three section heads. Two of them shared his enthusiasm and had his ability to comprehend, although they did not have his powers of persuasion or tenacity. Together they quickly *seized* the opportunities and began to produce a whole series of important policy documents covering every aspect of City and *regional policies*. I saw to it, *with* the help of Ted Short, that the policies were read in the right political circles. I had initiated the idea of employing a City Manager, and *taken steps to have the appointment made* to coincide with the retirement of the Town Clerk, John Atkinson. *He* represented the best type of *Local Government* officer *operating* the old system, and *was a* far cry from John Betjemens' view of a Town Clerk.

By now the *press* all over Britain were interested in what we were doing, trying to do, or even thinking about and I began ten years of intensive publicity. *This* saw me taking part in *Radio* programmes such as 'Any Questions' under Freddie Grisewood and later David Jacobs, 'Desert Island Discs', talking with Roy Plumley, 'A Word in Edgeways' with Brian Redhead and a range of interviews with Fife Robertson, Michael Barrett *and others, came* then an invitation to take part in the launching of a programme 24 hours in which it was intended to include a trio *of people* discuss the topical issues of the day. I was one of the trio and I took part in a number of programmes getting to know great broadcasters *like* Kenneth Allsop, Cliff Mitchelmore and others, I also got to know a lot of the producers and editors and that led me to do other programmes. I did a number of important *Third Programme* broadcasts and then was featured in a film directed by John Read and called 'Dans Castle'. That was followed by appearances in Northern and Southern Ireland and a feature film made in Wales.

I was speaking in Universities, and in all sorts of places to all sorts of people throughout Britain and abroad. I was being asked to talk to representatives of small European Countries about relevant Regional problems. I even took a small part in the first B.B.C. Colour Programme, 'A Day in the Life of the B.B.C.'

This had the effect of my meeting countless journalists on the way to the top of their profession. Many of them remain my friends and today occupy important journalist seats. T.V. also had the effect of making me instantly recognisable and, while this was never any embarrassment to me, it was a constant source of irritation to my wife who always shunned publicity no matter how favourable it was.

One of our major schemes was totally frustrated during my time in the City and that was our effort to persuade the Directors of Newcastle United Football Club to join with us in the development of a multi purpose sports stadium. Newcastle City Council and the City Freeman were the joint owners of the site, an intake of the Town Moor. The ground was badly in need of updating and football was entering what I called its European phase. The ground was situated in the City Centre, It adjoined the University and the Polytechnic and both these institutions were likely to build up to populations which would certainly exceed 20,000 young, mainly active, people. The Directors of the Club, inheritors as they were, of great football traditions, and thought that they could carry on with improving the ground and were determined not to take part in any scheme which would include non-football activities. I fought and fought to convince them of the merit of enlightened thinking, even to the point of the conflict preventing FIFA allowing World Cup matches to be played at St. James Park.

It is somewhat ironical that in the period that the North East was developing an Opera Company and its own World famous Northern Sinfonia Orchestra, the once mighty football team with massive support has continued ^{and its} slide into mediocrity. ^{Later across the} River Tyne ^{due} mainly to the personality, efforts, and performances ^{of} Brendon Foster, ably backed and supported by ^{the} local authority and others, Gateshead Stadium ^{showed} what ^{could} be done from scratch by people who had the desire and ^{vision} Would that we had won the battle for the St. James Multi-Purpose ^{Sports Stadium!}

Many of the policies that were ^{devised} by the original working groups set up by Newcastle City Labour Party were brought to fruition. I have avoided discussions on major educational issues such as the introduction and development of ^{comprehensive} education which took place in the ^{city} and ^{Those} years ^{brought} us ^{the} most 'unacademic' hostility from at least two well known University Professors.

I look back on that period of remarkable change as being almost totally successful ^{and} Certainly, ^{had it} provided the basis for a historic and progressive reform of our Local Government System, ^{it would have been} ^{outstandingly} ^{worthwhile}. Instead the lessons were ignored.

I remain proud to have ^{to have} lead the Council and, ^{been} deeply involved in reviving the pride of the Geordie in himself, in his culture and traditions ^{and} to have stuck my neck out to ^{found} and support all sorts of minority causes in the City. I am equally proud that I have left no foundation stones with my name on them, nor a single building that bears my name.

My greatest regrets relate to some of the buildings that were built after I left the City ^{Council}. The decision to demolish Eldon Square was taken ^{after} the City was committed, by a Public Enquiry ^{decision}, to employ Arne Jacobson in the re-designing of the Eldon ^{Centre} Scheme ^{which} included, ^{as} a ^{central} feature of ^{the} development, a new ^{luxury} Hotel on the North Side of Eldon Square.

These conditions were laid down in a series of agreements, and after a national invitation had secured into the teens of numbers of potential hotel developers.

They were all interviewed and one by one eliminated until finally one developer was selected to build the centre and manage the hotel, which was part of the development approved by the inspector.

The economics of that scheme were never in doubt, and the financial visibility of the development is now a matter of public record.

The newly opened Metro Transport Central system will from now on pour extra shoppers into the Eldon Centre in their thousands.

When the Metro scheme was initially discussed ^{between} Ernest Marples Minister of Transport, Sir Geoffrey Crowther, Chairman of Traffic in Towns, and myself, the commercial potential of it to the ratepayers was one of its main attractions to me.

The Eldon Centre shopping scheme was conceived against the background of municipal ownership. I was so convinced of the commercial potential of the Eldon Centre scheme, that I would have fought bitterly and relentlessly to retain it in Municipal ownership for the benefit of the ratepayers.

Had the community retained the Eldon Centre scheme, then the vast expenditure of public money justifiably spent on the Metro would now be beginning to pay the rewards.

Instead, the Metro investment will act against the interests of the out-of-town shopping centres and will work to the financial advantage of the owners of the Centre.

In my original scheme, the ratepayers would have been the main beneficiaries, financially and architecturally.

Newcastle City Council took their decision to discard the Arne Jacobson Scheme for the redevelopment of Newcastle's Eldon Square and exclude *completely the concept of an international hotel.* These two factors were *critical* to the case *Newcastle argued before* a Public Enquiry when applying to pull down the old Eldon Square, and were *decisive* considerations for the Inspector when making up his mind to permit the demolition of the Square. The City should have been compelled to justify their change of policy *to* another Public Enquiry before being allowed to demolish the Square.

I was astonished by the limited and muted *public* protests when the Council *changed* its policy especially in view of the bitter attacks made on my decision to bring in Jacobson *in order* to ensure a worthy rebuilding to a by one of the 20th Century's best designers.

Certainly had I still been active in the North East I would have objected to turning Eldon Square into an advert *is made* for the brick industry, instead of the lively heart of a thriving city. I consider it to have been a considerable misfortune for the citizens that Jacobson's scheme was replaced by a monumental environmental tragedy incongruously constructed around one of Britain's commercial gold mines.

The opening by the Queen in November 1981 of Newcastle's Metro System, as the first stage of Britain's first fully integrated public transport system, is another example of the long time scale between idea and implementation. The original concept for the Metro was first discussed by Lord Crowther, Transport Minister Marples and myself in the early 60's while we were discussing the general subject of Traffic in Towns. It was not until Barbara Castle became Minister of Transport in Wilson's Government and *in 1965 through* her attracting from the Ministry of

Housing one of the best Under Secretaries J. D. Jones,
that ^{she} initiated a series of worthwhile
activities, which included the setting up of the ^{Passenger Transport Authorities,}
^{that led to the} launching ^{of} the Metro.

I was closely involved behind the ^{schemes} until the
P.T.A. Committee was set up and the only conflict up to
that stage ^{arose} when it came to appointing the Committee's
first ^{Chairman}. The ^{TRANSPORT MINISTRY} wanted Councillor
Neville Trotter, now M.P. for Tynemouth, ^{but} Andy Cunningham
had the backing of Transport House and so added another
Chairmanship to his already overloaded portfolio.

My disappointments included the rejected scheme
for the redevelopment of St. James Park, the home of
Newcastle United Football Club. Side by ^{side} with the
launching of the Regional Sports Council, and because
the football ground was in the joint ownership of the
City and the Freeman, I advanced the proposal to develop
an International Sports and Leisure Centre based at
St. James Park.

One of the proposed Metro stations was located outside
the ground, and the ground was in the centre of the
city, adjoining the University and the Polytechnic,
with a constantly changing population of around 25,000
young people.

I was sure that from such a physical base with
the links to the University and the Polytechnic whose
Departments were concerned with a wide range of Social
and Recreational subjects, and with a background of
declining job opportunities especially for young people
the Sports and Leisure Centre could ^{have} become an important
local amenity as well as an important educational and
training facility for the country.

I was equally certain that such a centre would have become a magnet for those footballers who were concerned to stay in sport, after their playing days were ended, and the scheme could have been beneficial for the club. There was a hostile response from the club and regrettably the club has languished for most of the years since.

My greatest project defeat was ~~the~~ failing to persuade successive Health Ministers, from Ian Macleod through Enoch Powell and finally Dick Crossman, of the merits of locating a proposed new hospital on a site adjoining the University and the Royal Victoria Infirmary.

The hospital was eventually built on an out of town site, inconveniently located for daily visitors and out patients.

One of the strongest arguments for having an elected authority in control of major public services and especially the health services, is that ^{so} ~~that~~ ^{Regional Hospital Boards} are beyond direct democratic control it is never possible to enforce ~~them~~ ^{them} to look beyond ~~the~~ ^{the} health implications of new hospitals.

Had we been able to intergrate ~~the~~ hospital location with the proposed Metro system linked to the University and Polytechnic facilities, I am certain that we could have persuaded a major pharmaceutical company to locate in an ~~centre~~ location. ~~Had~~ ^{Had} we been able to do that, then another 5,000 top line and needed jobs could have been secured.

Such a possibility was never fully explored because it was no-one's job to explore it. Not the Ministry of Health, Not the University, Not the Regional Hospital Board and Not the Local Authority.

The project was a classic example of how a democratic society can decline simply by failing to relate its democratic institutions to the challenges and opportunities it creates, *and* failing to realise even the potential it generates itself.