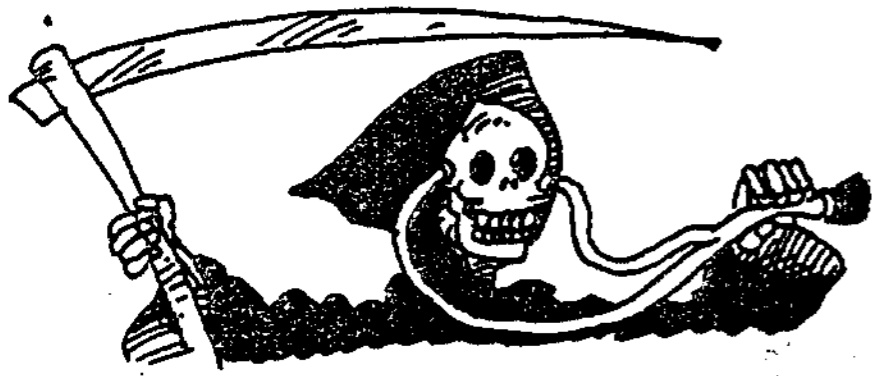


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DOING THE ROUNDS

THE GREAT waiting list cash give-away has resurfaced at the Bristol Royal Infirmary, where orthopaedic surgeons have been paid £140 per operation, irrespective of whether the patients turned up or not.

Such sound management has lead Dr John Roylance, chief executive of the United Bristol Healthcare Trust (UBHT), to apply for a "charter mark", the department of health's new gold standard of service provision. The bid is spearheaded by high-flying special projects manager Margaret Maisey, who endeared herself to theatre sisters in 1989 by referring to their peri-operative patients as "slabs of meat".

Before the DoH bestows its mark of excellence on UBHT, it may wish to ponder the perilous state of its paediatric cardiac surgery. In 1988, mortality was so high that the unit was dubbed "The Killing Fields". Despite a long crisis of morale among intensive care staff, the surgeons persistently refuse to publish their mortality rates in a manner comparable to other units. And although Dr Roylance and the DoH are well aware of the problems, they won't recognise them officially.

Recently, the unit failed to provide a paediatric cardiac surgery nurse for post-operative care

because it was assumed the baby would not survive the operation. And although Liverpool surgeons have successfully operated on 160 babies with Fallot's tetralogy, a congenital heart abnormality, the Bristol mortality rate is between 20 and 30 percent. Hardly the stuff of commendations.

● **THE Alexandra Hospital, Redditch**, a second wave trust, has entered the great rationing debate in style. Earlier this year in a letter to a patient and her non-fundholding GP, consultant orthopaedic surgeon Mr Mohamed Arafa cancelled her April operation. "Unfortunately, due to financial difficulties, we are only operating on patients who are: 1) Urgent Cases 2) On the waiting list for more than two years or 3) Funded by their General Practitioner."

This two-tier directive comes from the Alex's general manager John Parkes, famed for the sacking of consultant haematologist Dr Helen Zeithin when she publicised her feelings about the inadequate number of nurses.

● **THE MOST** prominent outcome of the Government's GP reforms is that no one wants to be a GP anymore. Latest DoH figures show that the number of GP trainees fell by 336 last year, hot on the heels of a 199 drop in 1990. And total GP numbers fell by 378. The reforms have created a sub-culture of GP assistants and locums who are landed with all the drudgery without the benefits of partnership. And the miserly out of hours supplement for trainees earns them up to £10,000 less than their hospital peers.

● **BLACKBURN Royal Infirmary** still hasn't implemented the 1 February pay rise for junior doctors, while **Stockport Hospital** declined to issue doctors with contracts, preferring to pay them spurious amounts. The pay rise involves translating units of medical time (UMTs) into additional duty hours (ADHs), a simple four-fold multiplication.

The Freeman NHS Trust in Newcastle has managed to translate 10 UMTs into 36 ADHs, while the arithmetic whizzkids at the Royal United NHS Trust Hospital in Bath have somehow converted 12 UMTs into 43 ADHs.

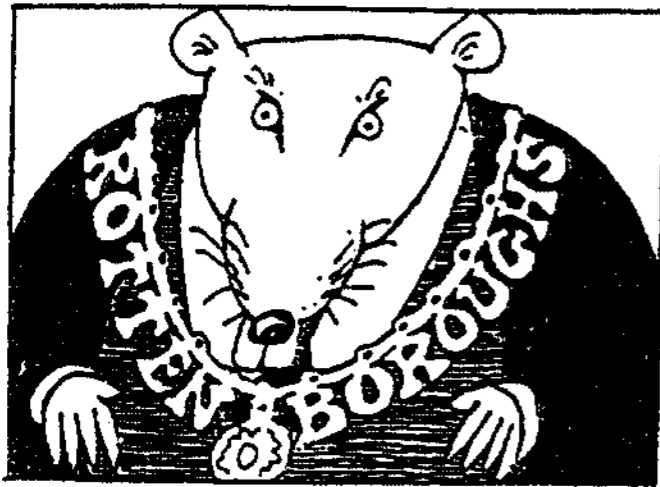
● **TRELISK Hospital** in Truro has just completed a £16,000 refurbishment of its main reception area, which is due to be demolished in six months' time as part of the next phase of redevelopment.

● A **DOCTOR** in Greenwich recently tried to arrange an urgent CT scan at Guy's NHS trust flagship for a lymphoma patient who was undergoing treatment at Guy's. She was refused because "Greenwich don't pay their bills."

● **TWO** months ago, an infant with advanced liver diseases was transferred from the Gloucester Royal Infirmary to the liver unit at King's Hospital, London. Unfortunately, the infant developed a chest infection, was deemed too sick for surgery and was sent back to Gloucester to recuperate. On a National Express coach.

● **MAJOR J.P. Edmondson-Jones** has circulated a lucid MoD memo to any members of the army medical services wishing to obtain clearance on clinical articles for publication. "All material should be passed to the CO via the relevant Director, Matron or Senior Consultant. The CO forwards the material to the relevant CA or HNE, who clear the technical content themselves, before forwarding to Col AMD for policy and security clearance by DGAMS, Med (F&S)2 and DPR(A) as required. This can take in excess of six weeks. Col AMD will finally notify the Director/CA/HNE of the result. It is requested that the Comds Med promulgate this revised annex down the chain of command."

'M.D.'



SALFORD

LABOUR-RUN Salford council operates a very uncomradely set of double standards when it comes to dealing with people who owe it money.

A lowly council employee found to be in arrears with poll tax payments is likely to be unceremoniously sacked; while the really important people — like elected fat cat councillors — will receive preferential treatment.

In Greater Manchester's second-string city, a 29-year-old accountant in the council's treasury department was sacked for running up a £400 poll tax bill after failing to register for two years. But, as Nalgo union hacks reminded their council leaders, the politicians are treated more softly.

Town hall officers have given Tory group leader Karen Garrido, a failed local estate agent, "no action" status — that is, more time to pay up — despite the vitriol she has poured on the city's Labour leaders over the last 10 years.

A probable reason for this inconsistency in Salford's debt-chasing was revealed by Labour councillor Joe Burrows, who admitted that an unnamed Labour colleague had been given similar privileged status.

That information about the councillors' impenitence could only have been discovered by a breach of the data protection laws is neither here nor there.

BIRMINGHAM

THE chaos in Birmingham children's homes continues unabated with the resignation of Tony Myers, principal of the appalling St John's home.

This follows a riot by teenage inmates in which they burgled a school, smashed windows in a

nearby church and then ran amok in the home itself, causing £2,000 worth of damage.

Unable to cope, the social workers called in the police. The children hid in the grounds and the police had the undignified task of crawling through the undergrowth with dogs to find them.

Myers' resignation follows the suspension of two social workers: Gilbert Lewis has just been reinstated with a final warning for allegedly making unusual visits to hostels; Audrey Wynter, a former child in care at St John's who grew up to become one of its social workers, is suspended for alleged excess use of force.

Last December saw the infamous mass escape from the secure unit, which was subsequently closed. (A new one, double the size, is due to open on May 18.) But Myers' decision to quit has nothing to do with any of the above — he has been "offered a new job elsewhere".

BROMLEY

UNABASHED by having its name dragged through the mud over the last two years while Inspector Knacker investigated dodgy junkets to America (see *Eyes passim*), Bromley council is now sending 10 officials on a fact-finding tour of Germany.

The privatisation-mad Tory council is sending six councillors, plus officers, to Buxtehude, Vegasack, Stuttgart, Cologne and, quaintly, "Rothenburg" (*sic*), to, er, look at how the Germans pedestrianise their town centres. Rothenburg is a mediaeval walled city and Cologne a smoking industrial tip. Bromley is of course neither.

The trip will cost borough ratepayers £9,000, and the junketing council has a swift riposte to all those who claim examples exist nearer home — the Kent globe-trotters are also visiting Hereford, Wakefield and Worksop.

Last year Bromley social services director Mike Carpenter resigned after being suspended by councillors who had found irregularities in financial documents. Shortly afterwards Carpenter and Tory councillor Montey Blazey met Inspector Knacker to discuss allegations that they had illicitly visited America to check out privatised old folks' homes.

Council leader Denis Barkway seems to have learnt nothing from his colleagues' misfortune. "If the community wants us to get pedestrianisation right and we spend £3,000 to £5,000 out of £2.5m looking at the best type of materials, features and treatments, that's money well spent," he claims.

TORBAY

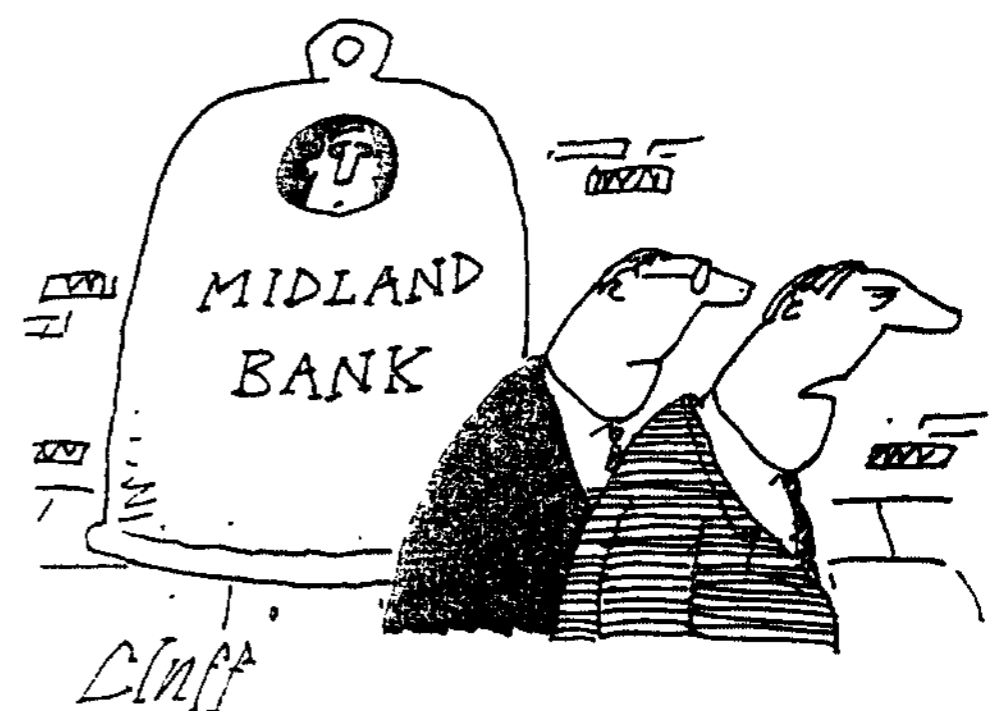
IN PROSPEROUS Torbay, Tory councillors are terrified lest the district auditor, who usually persecutes Labour councillors, surcharges them all for millions of pounds.

More than £5 million was lost on the expensive and ridiculous Riviera Centre (the Tory councillors' pride and joy). And the Tories' first reaction to the loss was to load it on to the poorest in the town — the ones least able to use the centre.

Council house rents were raised dramatically, and the housing revenue account was plundered to pay for the Riviera loss. The district auditor refused to accept this device or sanction the accounts. He was worried that the council had managed to claim a government subsidy of £1.6m in housing subsidy because it had used rent money to finance the Riviera debt.

Torbay's Tory leader at the time, Tony Key, has replied to continuous allegations on the affair with full-blooded enthusiasm. "The officers of the council," he told the local *Herald Express* last month, "took legal counsel advice on the transfer and it was indicated to them that it was a fully legal situation."

The Tories have throughout been enthusiastically supported by their MP, Rupert "Babyface" Allason, alias Nigel West (MI5).



"They're being forced to rationalise in a very big way"