

# Say a Rude Word

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A PLAIN STATEMENT of fact in a news release from the London Borough of Lewisham is headed "Grant from Lewisham Council for Greenwich Theatre." The facts are simple enough and are admirably summed up in the heading. But let us pursue the matter a little further.

The Greenwich Theatre, which naturally enough is in the Borough of Greenwich, is a privately-owned and run theatre and already receives subsidies from the Arts Council and from its own ratepayers. One of its claims to fame is that among its other cultural productions it launched the musical hit "Sing a Rude Song," later transferred to the West End.

I am now wondering under what other less neutral headlines this grant from neighbouring Lewisham could have been announced. It depends, of course, upon the point of view.

For theatre lovers—and particularly those who patronised the Greenwich Theatre—a suitable headline would be: "A Well-deserved Grant from Lewisham."

From the Ratepayers' Association of Lewisham (if there is one): "Lewisham Ratepayers Subsidise Greenwich Playgoers," and from the Greenwich Ratepayers' Association:—"Lewisham Ratepayers also Dunned to Keep Greenwich Theatre Going."

The Greenwich & Lewisham Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Societies would headline their news-sheet

"What about Grants for Us?" And why not, indeed.

Davy Crockett would have taken a very dim view of the whole business. He is reported to have stood up in the United States Senate during a debate on giving a generous grant to a deserving and notable U.S. citizen and offered to start a collection there and then amongst senators who were in favour of the state grant (almost all of them), because, as he put it, they shouldn't give away other people's money no matter how worthy the cause.

It could be argued that darts and dominoes are part of our national culture and thus deserve a subsidy. And then there are fox-hunting and boxing and playing the bagpipes. (Bingo isn't really cultural). Come to think of it, why do we tax some pursuits like horse-racing and subsidise others like opera?

Now if my local authority proposed to engage the Sadlers Wells Opera Company to play a season at our local Town Hall (the programme would have to include Carmen, Faust, Rigoletto and La Boheme), it would have my whole-hearted support as an opera lover if not as a ratepayer. Well, I mean, opera *is* culture isn't it? Particularly that bloodthirsty melodramatic Rigoletto—wonderful music. The trouble with some people is that they can't tell culture from quackery or art from a piece of bent wire. Councillors can, and so are the best judges of what should be subsidised and what shouldn't.

Of course, there is always the spoilsport or Scrooge who doesn't want to spend his own money or that of his neighbours on theatres and such like, and he can always be relied upon if not to sing a rude song, at least to say a rude word.

## A Planner as Seen by the Public

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### What is a planner?

A planner is a close relative of the Income Tax Inspector. He has no personal relatives since his parentage is doubtful.

Planners come in three sizes—thick, very thick and bloody impossible. A planner is difficult to recognize. He has no face whatsoever, but might be spotted by his corduroy shoes, pink shirt and yellow suede tie. Because of the planner's vague affinity to the Arts, most local authorities will allow him to wear a higher percentage of mod gear than a clerk or an engineer. There is an unspoken agreement between authority and the planner as to how

much he should support the image of the establishment.

Most planners are employed by local authorities solely to create problems in order that they might justify their existence. The planner's efficiency in doing so, is equal only to his powers of multiplication once he is appointed.

Having entered into Local Government service the planner is immediately let loose on the most important work in hand. He is encouraged to converse with all manner of people on all topics and within a few short weeks is able to engage in long conversations without understanding a single word. Here he learns to develop his technique. The broad smile, the confidential grin, the nervous giggle and the

elementary standard insurance of non-committal openings to each remark.

Once he has been successful in creating a few minor crises he can expect rapid promotion and a series of pay rises.

A planner has many talents. He is extremely skilled in the art of delay. Any planner worth his salt can produce a six-month delay with contemptuous ease. A skilful manipulation of Committee meetings, sickness, holidays and the democratic process, coupled with assistance from the law, can be devastating. Decisions can be avoided for years on end, and a quick transfer to another authority can enable the process to be repeated *ad infinitum*. A planner's dearest wish is to send everything back first

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time round to see whether the applicant means it.

A sense of humour is also a vital asset to the planner. Immense hilarity is gained in selecting all of the refined, clever, worthwhile, exciting and profitable aspects of any proposal—and then objecting to them. The ordinary, mundane, and dud bits are of course praised or passed without delay.

This highly specialized form of humour can be seen in a number of ways. The planner will take great delight in bringing the full weight of the law to bear down on you if you dare to use your telephone for business purposes or if your wife is wicked enough to run a mail order catalogue from your home. Your neighbour's newly created car-breaking and maggot shredding business in the back garden remains untroubled as being "quite different." Other variations of the planner's mirth can be seen in his choice of road lines, public buildings, children's playgrounds and recreational areas; not that these ever get built of course, but the humour is always there. Harry Worth himself would be proud of the planner's reasons for refusing most planning applications.

## ***And a Planner as Seen by a Planner***

### **What is a planner?**

All planners are direct descendants from Solomon and are closely related to Einstein, St. John and Gordon Banks.

Planners come in four sizes—very clever, brilliant, magnificent and ecstatic. A planner is difficult to recognise since it is well known that genius comes in many disguises. However, if you happen to see a tall, handsome, benevolent, intelligent, humble, well-dressed and thoroughly likeable fellow wandering through the local corridors of power, the chances are—he's a planner.

Whilst all planners could become millionaires within a very short space of time if they cared to, most of them dedicate their lives to humanity by choosing to serve society through Local Government. Without this magnificent sacrifice all Local Authorities would of course

Only he could really appreciate the logic in refusing your own modest extension to your outside bog as being detrimental to the blood boiling factory and multi-storey chip shop next door.

The planner's written word is sheer poetry—or something. His vocabulary and his language are unique and completely unintelligible. It is not difficult for the planner himself of course since it is never meant to be understood—that being a mere detail of no possible importance. All planning language is simply made up on the spot as it is being spoken. The greater number of likely sounding words and phrases that are coined, the higher his status becomes.

Among Local Government officials generally the planner reigns supreme as "not me old boy." The planner never, under any circumstances, deals with anything himself. His colleagues, his assistants, his boss, his opposite number, the Committee the Council, the Government or even the Queen might be dealing with the matter in hand, but the planner never "happens to be dealing with this himself."

Yes—the planner is a very special person indeed.

collapse instantly, the public would run riot and anarchy would reign within a few months. Sadly, and incomprehensibly, this dedication goes unnoticed by all but other planners.

A planner is called by divine power into the profession. Anybody who does not measure up to the incredibly high standard required is quickly weeded out by the good Lord above and is simply not called. As an added safeguard the TPI examinations are made five times more difficult than any other two professions put together and only real men of learning battle through.

A planner's training is enlightened. A gentle but firm supervision goes hand in hand with an encouragement to develop original ideas and imagination. In this way a sound technique is built up with the emphasis on clear, simple, straight-

forward communication.

A planner's progress and promotion are slow, but with such high-



class competition from other planners this is inevitable. Fortunately all planners are always completely satisfied. A planner never moans, complains or bleats about extra money. A crust of bread and a cup of fluoride water are more than enough food and drink to the planner. Curiously most developers support this view and some would even add a ball and chain for luck.

The planner is indeed rich in talent—speed, decisiveness, clarity, eloquence, diplomacy—the list is endless. Perhaps his two most valuable assets are an ability to shift three times more work than any other officer, and a unique gift for spotting other people's stupidity, instantly. It is truly amazing how a planner can read, digest, analyze and dismiss six months' work as being "a load of old cobbles."

A planner's sense of humour is highly refined. Other officers' frailties, personal abuse, unfortunate Committee decisions and petty jealousies are all met by a benevolent smile and inward laughter. This control does cause a certain amount of mental pressure which is released occasionally by the planner being the life and soul of the party as he gets stoned out of his mind.

The planner's language is perhaps his finest achievement. All planners are fully agreed that their work is so complex and complicated that it is quite impossible to communicate in the present language. To overcome this problem the planner has risen to the occasion and has invented a series of brilliantly clear phrases which express a mountain of technical meaning. Far from trying to educate the rest of society before its time, the planner is quite content to let the rest of the world catch up at its own pace.

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