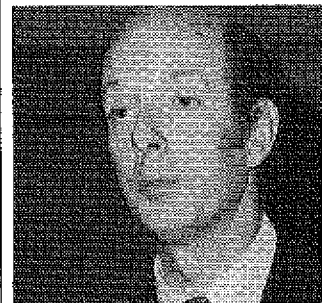


► Government to get Whitehall "off the back of private sector development."

Another Tory with a strong chance of entering Parliament for the first time is Kenneth Hughes. He stands in the Plymouth, Devonport constituency currently held for Labour by Foreign Secretary David Owen with a 2259 majority.

Mr Hughes was managing director for Tallboys (Builders) Ltd until his retirement in 1973 but retains his status as a retired fellow of the Institute of Building and as a director of the family building firm. Mr Hughes says he needs only a three per cent swing to the Conservatives to take the seat. If he achieves this



Erith: Ipswich hopes

he will work for the industry by seeking increased incentives for private development in order to get more work for builders and for the repeal of the Community Land Act.

Mr Hughes will also fight any renewed Government attempt to cut public spending simply by trimming the capital works programme while leaving the current spending untouched. He says: "I hate to see building being the first to suffer whenever there is a recession."

Another Conservative with a good chance of being returned to the next Parliament is construction industry investment analyst Bob Erith who stands for the Tories at Ipswich against a Labour majority of 1733. As well as his stockbroking interests, he is a director of his family builders merchants company.

On the Liberal side, the candidate with the lowest majority to combat with a building industry background is Paul Tyler, formerly RIBA director of public affairs. He fights Bodmin - a seat he lost in 1974 - against a Tory majority of 665 and wants to see an end to councils selling council houses in rural areas with special housing problems. Some councils, he claims, have been spending money on buying back houses they have sold. Instead, he wants more money to be spent on subsidising mortgages by councils to encourage more private building and to get council tenants into the private sector that way.

If returned to Parliament, he will continue to campaign for a barrage on the Tamar river instead of the proposed nuclear station for the South West.

Other Liberals from the industry with a chance of being returned include architectural assistant Andrew Stunell who stands against a Tory majority of 4618 at Chester, and chartered surveyor Gerald Hodgson who faces a 4215 Tory majority.

Several Labour candidates, fighting small majorities, are drawn from the construction industry. Among them are Ian Ashead, a contracts manager for the CEGB, who fights a Conservative majority of 1112 at Hereford. University lecturer in town planning and RTPI member John Gyford is facing a 1090 Conservative majority at Braintree and former quantity surveyor John Lowe is attacking a Tory lead of 2831 votes at Hazel Grove. Architect William McKenzie is hoping to win the Perth and East Perthshire seat from the Scottish National Party which has a 793 majority. Planner Henry McLeish is trying to overturn a Conservative majority of 2914 at East Fife.

One of the oddities of the election is the industry's apparent determination to unseat Joe Grimond from his Orkney and Shetlands seat where he has a 6852 majority. For the Conservatives, architect Charles Donaldson is making the attempt and for Labour, planner Robina Goodlad is taking up the challenge.

Of the industry stalwarts from the present Parliament, Eric Heffer (Labour, 9862), Michael Latham (Conservative, 14 196) and Albert Costain (Conservative, 8442) are almost certain to return next month. Only Bob Bean (Labour, 2418) has a particularly marginal majority in the Medway town of



Tyler: marginal fight

Rochester which has seen-sawed between parties since the 1960s.

Most spokesmen in the Government and Opposition on environmental, housing and construction matters have strong positions. Environment Minister Peter Shore (Labour, 20 976), Housing Minister Reg Freeson (Labour, 8927), and junior environment Ministers

Ernest Armstrong (Labour, 18 756) and Guy Barnett (Labour, 9906) are expected to return.

For the Conservatives, Michael Heseltine, environment spokesman (Conservative, 10 216) is in a much stronger position than his junior housing spokesman, Hugh Rossi who has only a slender majority of 782. Mr Rossi's opponent is the controversial left wing leader of Lambeth's Labour council, Ted Knight.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CONTRACTORS?

The National Contractors Group of the NFBTE was considering a revised code of conduct at its annual meeting in London on Wednesday this week.

The thinking behind the move is that the national contractors are the leaders of the industry and that as such they should be showing the way to the rest of the industry. It is also important to the idea's supporters that the public should be able to see that the major contractors are working to strict rules and procedures.

The code, which is expected to pass the Group's scrutiny, will lay down ground rules for contractors to ensure that they adhere to the best principles of contractual and business practice. Breaches of the rules could lead to suspension or even expulsion from membership of the Group. Opposition to the move within the NFBTE could, however, lead to it being blocked despite many months of preparation and lobbying by its supporters.

The Group is also expected to consider preliminary drafts of a confederation plan for the FCEC and NFBTE which would entail inviting other bodies to join in the formation of a new confederation body to be superimposed on the existing structure and which would have as its main aim the presentation of the industry's case to politicians and public with a single voice.

The Group will also confirm Bill Lindsell, manager of John Mowlem's group services division and a director of the Mowlem (Building) Ltd subsidiary as its next chairman in succession to joint Wimpey managing director Cliff Chetwood.

MAY DAY STRIKE CALL

A half-day building strike on 1 May in London and the South has been called by shop stewards in the building industry unions in support of the wage claim. Stewards from five major sites in the London area have

already indicated that their members will support the strike and the intention is to halt over 100 other large sites. The five sites are the Thames Barrier, the Littlebrook power station, the National Westminster Bank Tower, the Isle of Grain power station and the Gages development in Holborn.

A meeting of 200 stewards from the London region of UCATT and the Southern region of the T&GW decided last week on the action because of unsatisfactory progress in the wage talks. "There are indications that the employers will be coming forward with no substantial improvement in their offer at the recalled wage talks on 27 April." London region T&GW secretary Peter Kavanagh told *Building*. He warned that a 1972-style strike might be approaching.

The strike will start at mid-day next Tuesday 1 May, and could be followed up by selective action against one major construction firm. Wimpey and McAlpine are known to be high on the unions' list of disliked employers.

The response from the building industry employers is that wage negotiations are continuing.

ASHFORD DEMOLITION GETS THE GREEN LIGHT

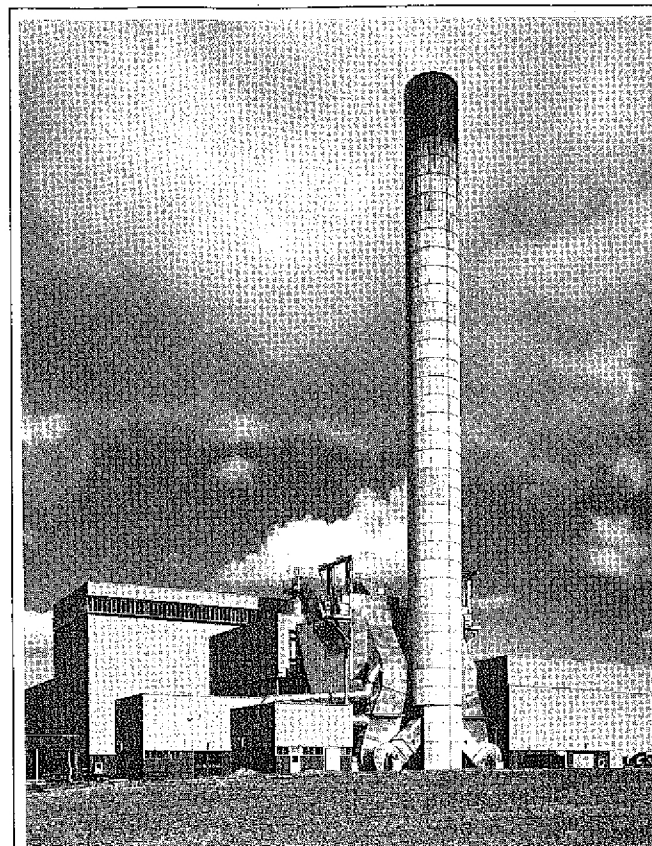
Demolition is now certain for the 114 timber-framed council houses in Ashford, Kent which have been the subject of major investigations (*Building* 15 September 1978). Indications have been given by the DOE that the replacement houses will be eligible for grant.

Among the defects found in the houses, which are the worst of a group of over 500, are water penetration, faulty wiring fittings and a potential fire risk from the polyurethane ceilings. The fire risk was the subject of a recent programme on Thames Television.

The new houses at present being designed by the architect's department will be conventionally brick built. The plans include a much higher proportion of two-bedroom dwellings, replacing the four-bedroom existing houses.

The assurance of DOE grant follows a report to the council that the houses, even if repaired, would last no longer than 30 years. Full cost of replacement will be about £2 million and this cost, plus the repayment of the existing loans, still represents better value than rehabilitation. Council leader John Bartram told *Building* this week.

The new designs will be approved at the first meeting of the new council after the elections on 3 May.



The new incinerator plant at Dundee can operate automatically

PROVOST UNVEILS NEW INCINERATOR COMPLEX

The new incineration plant for the City of Dundee was officially opened on Monday by the Lord Provost.

The plant, on the east side of Dundee, has two furnaces, each equipped with Heenan rocking grates, giving a total refuse treatment capacity of 14 tonnes/h. With the exception of the main residuals elevating belt conveyor and storage bunker, each plant stream is independent.

The plant can be operated automatically and is capable of reducing the incoming refuse to less than one-tenth of its original volume and to about one-third of its original weight. The inert clinker and ash residue, after removal of ferrous metals, is being used for land reclamation in the River Tay estuary.

Refuse arriving at the plant is tipped directly into either of two 1300 m³ concrete storage bunkers. Two identical remotely controlled overhead travelling cranes transfer refuse to both incinerator feed chutes. The refuse enters each furnace on to the first of three grates. The rocking action of the grate teeth breaks up the burning refuse and propels it towards the next grate until finally the burned out residue is discharged from the last grate into a water quench.

The quenched clinker and ash is conveyed by scraper conveyor from the quench tanks

via a troughed elevating belt conveyor to a ground-level concrete storage bunker. From here, it is loaded into road vehicles by means of an overhead travelling crane fitted with a clamshell grab.

An emergency conveyor system by-passes the main elevating conveyor and discharges directly into road vehicles or containers should the need arise. Ferrous metals, recovered after incineration by magnetic separator, are baled and loaded automatically into skips for removal by the scrap purchaser.

The water used for gas cooling, drawn from the nearby Dighty Burn, is stored in two concrete settling tanks beneath the tipping hall floor. A waste heat boiler operating from No 1 incinerator unit uses exhaust gases at 300°C to provide heating and hot water for the entire complex. An independent batch-feed incinerator is included on the site to handle confidential documents, animal carcasses, contaminated items, waste oil and bulky items of furniture.

The complex includes a gatehouse and weighbridge, an administrative block and a refuse vehicle operators depot block. A comprehensive landscaping scheme for the entire site has been included.

Consulting architect, A G Sheppard Fidler and Associates; consulting engineer, W S Watkins with W A Fairhurst; main contractor, Heenan Environmental Ltd.

CHANGE ON THE WAY FOR TRAINING LEVY?

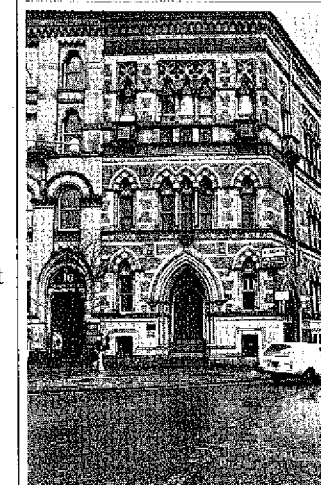
Discussions were started last week between the building employers' bodies and the Construction Industry Training Board over possible changes in the levy system whereby payments are made to the board by construction firms. The employers' side, with representatives from the NFBTE and the Federation of Master Builders, have argued for a change in the cut-off.

This is the level of turnover of the individual firm, currently £15 000, below which no levy is paid. The employer side is saying that this is unrealistic and should either be scrapped or raised to about £40 000.

The response from the CITB has been on practical grounds, that the cost of collection from the smaller firms would be higher than the sums collected. The total cost of the CITB is met both from levy and Government grant through the Manpower Services Commission.

The MSC, which has been the fastest growing of any government agency in the last few years is thought to be anxious to show how it can cut its expenditure. Its training subsidies schemes, particularly Training Opportunities (TOPS) could come under the axe if a Conservative Government is returned next week. The board will consider a response to the employers' suggestions at its next meeting.

WORTHY OF CONSERVATION



Permission to demolish Manchester's Memorial Hall, a Victorian building in Albert Square, has been refused by the council. The Worthington-designed building, built in 1864, houses the Manchester Press Club. Its new owners, Three Star Properties, said they were unable to sell or let it.

DERBY CUTS BACK LABOUR

The Conservative-controlled county council in Derbyshire decided this week to reduce labour in its Works, County Surveyors, Playing Fields and Landscape Maintenance departments. The decision follows a nine-month evaluation of performance undertaken by a working party of committee chairmen.

The conclusion is a recognition that while both direct labour and private enterprises have something to offer, private enterprise has in the past missed some opportunities to carry out council work. So the direct labour force will be reduced by a process of natural wastage and an improved system of financial control introduced next year.

"The new policies will give both private enterprise and direct labour the chance to tender for the bigger jobs in competition," says Walter Marshall, leader of the council. A full council meeting on Tuesday was expected to confirm the recommendations, which include plans for full consultation with the trade unions to be set up through the normal negotiating machinery.

Guidelines for the size of each department are included in the plans. The County Surveyor's department will, for instance, be fixed at 350 men actually working at the road-side.

Landscape maintenance is to be re-organised so that it comes under an expanded playing fields section of the Education Department and at least 10 per cent of the work will go to private contractors. Another key element will be that head teachers in schools will be given powers to organise minor repairs themselves with an annual allowance based on school size. A sum of £200 000 has been set aside to cover the cost of this work.

But there are some worries as to whether the private sector will be able to pick up the work. "I have some doubts," Walter Marshall told *Building* just before the council meeting, "as to what happens when the head teacher or someone goes to find a local tradesman, and whether he will find one. The big firms tend not to be interested in the small maintenance jobs.

"So it is up to the private sector to show what they can do," he says.

The direct labour department is quite a good one, he feels, and he is prepared to keep an open mind on the subject of its efficiency. The competition with the private sector can only make it more efficient.