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EIGHTPENCE

Were youths frozen out of the inquiry?

By JOHN HALLOWS

WERE the three members of Tenterden Youth Club really given "short shrift" when they went to tell a Government inquiry at Ashford just how urgently their friends and all the young people of the town want jobs? If they were, is this the sort of thing that causes modern youth to hold "protest marches," "sit-ins," and use all the new kinds of demonstration technique?

There was a new turn on Tuesday in the controversy over what did happen at Ashford on November 22 at the Ministry of Planning and Local Government inquiry into Tenterden Council's objection to the K.C.C.'s refusal to free more land for industry.

Mr. R. Matthews, of Readers Bridge, St. Michaels, leader of the Tenterden Youth Club, wrote to the KENT MESSENGER, after doing a re-check over all the facts.

The three Youth Club members who said they felt they were not wanted, although they had taken a day off work and gone with prepared statements to tell the Ministry Inspector why young people needed more jobs, were Wendy Bugden, 16, of Oastleigh, Fourth Quarter; David Mills, 18, of Greenside; and Michael Morris, 21, of Hookstead, all of High Halden.

Mr. Matthews was at the last Tenterden Council meeting when Ald. K. G.

Jessop, the council's only witness at the inquiry, made his report. Ald. Jessop said then he thought the only thing that marred Tenterden's effort was the "sensational" use which had been made of the young people's stories.

Last week, Mr. John Halton, Kent County Information Officer, wrote to the KENT MESSENGER saying that although the County Programme Officer had guided many people at the inquiry, he was not approached by anyone from the Youth Club.

Keen to speak

It was in reply to Mr. Halton that on Tuesday, Mr. Matthews wrote: "I would like to record the details of the reception these youngsters had.

"They were keen to speak. They had gathered signatures to a petition; prepared outlines of evidence to give; contacted



WENDY BUGDEN



DAVID MILLS

the Borough Council's solicitor, visiting him at his Woodchurch home; taken time off work and got themselves to Ashford for the inquiry. This was all of their own initiative, and it was not half-hearted.

"They were, however, quite, respectable, diffident teenagers.

"The boys, at the inquiry, signed themselves in as representing 'Young People of Tenterden', and asked a man at the solicitors' table if they would get their say; he said they need not bother waiting as he did not think they would be called.

"The girl arrived after the inquiry had started, so

spoke to an official in an ante-room and explained her mission.

"He said he did not think she would be needed, but that she would go in and sit listening if she wanted. She says: 'I was disappointed, but I could obviously not go in and cause a stir, and insist on being heard'.

"Perhaps if these young people had been so slightly different temperament, they would have staged a sit-in, a protest, or a placard demonstration; would this have received official approval?

"No wonder, sometimes, they think they cannot win."