

EARLY LESSONS IN LIFE FOR MPs



THE staunch beliefs of Nottingham's Labour MPs stem from the valuable lessons they learned early in life.

Nottingham North MP Graham Allen left school to work in a warehouse, but it was not long before he took a dislike to the way the management treated — and sacked — employees.

"Coming from a mining background I didn't find that acceptable. It was obvious some action was needed."

The headstrong 18-year-old visited the local branch of Usdaw to get on setting up a trade union branch at the company.

"They gave me some forms, I recruited people to the union and then I was sacked," he said. The newly formed union, which is still going strong today, contemplated strike action, but the headstrong 18-year-old visited the local branch of Usdaw to get on setting up a trade

union branch at the company.

Mr. Allen discouraged it after deciding to concentrate on A-levels he had been studying for in his own time.

He may have lost his first job but the shadow home office minister has never regretted his actions.

"I paid the penalty but I think it was, in the long-term, a very valuable experience. It brought home how important it is to collectively on occasions to defend the rights of individuals," he concluded.

John Heppell was "really chuffed" when he learnt he was to be taken on as an apprentice fitter by the coal board.

He began his four-year apprenticeship at a mine in Wallsend, near Newcastle, but before his training ended the pit closed, forcing him to transfer to another colliery in the North-east. Rumours that this pit was to close brought him to Nottingham in the 1960s in search of work.

The MP for Nottingham East has a great deal of sympathy for today's miners. He was lucky. There were more opportunities open to him than those leaving the industry now.

"The paper was full of jobs. In some way that is why I feel sorry for the young lads now," he said.

MP for Nottingham South Alan Simpson graduated from university as an economist but he was so disillusioned he did not bother applying for any jobs. He spotted a vacancy with Nottingham's Council for Voluntary Services — he had good organisational skills from his days as student union president — and he was appointed to co-ordinate the volunteer bureau.

"All my politics have grown out of that sense of community action and community involvement," he said.