

AN EXPERIMENT IN DEMOCRACY

This is an account of an interesting experiment in grass-roots democracy.

It is the story of how the Northumbrian village of Stocksfield set about the job of assessing its own needs, and planning its own future. It is, probably, a unique story because there appears to be no precedent for such a do-it-yourself exercise. There have been several examples of

planning projects sponsored by local authorities, or research groups. But this is not one of these. This is a case where a village stopped in its environmental tracks, took itself by its social collar, shook itself creatively, and came up with a collective testimony as to the way it wished to evolve during the latter part of the 20th century. There was no particular motive - apart from that generated by

a lively and caring community. And certainly no threat - apart from the perennial realization that if "we" didn't do it, "they" inevitably would!

It was an exercise which started, effectively, in April 1970 and ended in March 1971. It involved something like 2,000 people, of all ages, in varying degrees. And this is the story of how it came about.