

George McMillan reports on...

# 'MAY DAY' ALARM FOR SQUATTERS

*But strong-arm eviction is denied by council*

TO aid the squatters in Tolmers Square, Euston, the Tolmers Village Action Group will be holding a benefit dance this evening at nine o'clock at the Bank, Tolmers Square.

ABOUT 100 long-stay squatters in Tolmers Square, Euston, fear a massive "strong-arm" eviction within the next few weeks.

They claim that reports have reached them that a "large-scale brute-force eviction" is being planned — but Camden Council, who own the property, deny any knowledge of this.

About 50 squatters live on the south side of the square in houses which are due to be demolished to make way for offices. A possession order dated May 1 has been granted for the property.

Around another 50 squatters are living on the north side of the square and this

property will also shortly be required for residential development.

The squatters spokesman, Geoff Watters, states: "When Camden Council bought the houses in 1975 some squatters were already there. We offered rent and rates to the council but these were

refused. We pay the bills for electric and gas."

### OFFER

The council has over 2,000 empty properties on its books, maintains Mr. Watters. He condemns it as "unacceptable" that the council should be considering evictions on such a scale.

Meanwhile, the squatters' group are waiting for replies to letters sent to all local prospective parliamentary candidates.

The letter asks: "Are you in favour of rehousing all residents in Tolmers Square — due to be evicted by Camden Council after May 1 — in council tenancies in 'hard-to-let' properties?"

Camden Trades Council is among the squatters' supporters.

Camden housing vice-chairman Derek Godfrey comments: "We are going to offer permanent accommodation to the small number of families among the squatters, as we are required to do under the Homeless Persons Act."

### CAMPAIGN

When asked about any possibility of the feared mass-eviction by force, Cllr. Godfrey said he hoped eviction would be unnecessary and that the squatters would leave in peace of their own accord.

A Town Hall spokesman, after pointing out that legal residents also lived in the square, also said that he knew nothing of any plans for eviction.

When asked about another group of squatters in Burton Street, half-a-mile away from Tolmers Square, he said there was an agreement that the squatters could carry on living there until the property was required in September.

Yesterday, back at Tolmers Square, the squatters were carrying on their campaign for them to be rehoused. They fear that May Day — also a distress call — will herald a black day for them.

