

# Eviction attempt is postponed

By DAVID PALLISTER

An attempt by Mr Joseph Levy, the property millionaire, to evict 81 squatters from a group of decaying Georgian houses next to Euston Station has been postponed for a month after intervention by the Camden Council.

The squatters, based on the Tolmers Square redevelopment area, were summoned to appear in court today by Gleniffer Finance, a subsidiary of Mr Levy's Stock Conversion and Investment Trust, which was responsible for the Euston Centre. The company's application for possession orders on the 26 houses is the latest move in the acrimonious and protracted dispute over control and development of the area.

The company has now agreed to adjournment of the case until April 25 after representations by the Labour leader of the Camden Council, Mr Frank Dobson. But if the evictions go ahead next month the Tolmers Squatters Action Group, which has organised a spirited campaign against Mr Levy's plans, has pledged itself to resist.

The squatters are particularly perplexed about Stock Conversion's motives since Camden has now turned its back on a joint development scheme in favour of its own plans which include substantial rehabilitation. A compulsory purchase order on the properties is being held back until the council has had time to study the implica-

tions of the Government's Land Bill, published yesterday.

"We have been unable to get any reasons from the company for the evictions," says Mr Pedro George, a member of the squatters' committee. "We can only assume that the company think they will be in a stronger negotiating position if they have vacant possession. But the houses will be standing empty then for maybe two years."

The Stock Conversion and Investment Trust said yesterday: "We have no comment to make, and we have never made any comment in the past. That is our policy."

It appears that the Land Bill will not substantially reduce the price which the council will have to pay for the properties since development land will continue to be compensated at market value. In the case of Tolmers Square, where Stock Conversion started buying property in 1962, land values have soared from £300,000 an acre in 1970 to over £1 million.

Ironically, the Bill could benefit Mr Levy. Some leading council officials believe that Stock Conversion wants to evict the squatters so that the houses can be renovated as long-lease, expensive flats which would push up the market values before acquisition by the council. The company's architects are understood to be working on renovation, but have been advised not to comment because of the "politics" involved.