

TOLMIERS NEWS

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Levy threatens evictions

summonses

On Tuesday 11th March Glennifer Finance, one of Levy's companies, issued a writ to evict 81 people from 26 houses in Tolmers Village. The occupants of these houses were summonsed to appear in court on Friday, March 21st. We immediately contacted Frank Dobson, the leader of the council, who then asked the company to adjourn the proceedings for 28 days in view of the impending CPO. Now the case is to be heard on 25th April at the Foyal Courts of Justice in the Strand.

squatters

The people now threatened with eviction have been souatting in these houses for up to 2 years. The houses had been left empty for periods of up to ten years before they were occupied. They had been deliberately neglected: it has been Stock Conversion's policy to let our area fall into a state of decay and thus pave the way for redevelopment.

The work of the squatters has made these houses habitable again. They have mended leaking roofs, replaced floorboards and broken windows, put in new plumbing and wiring and redecorated the houses. The transformation John and Vera have made of their house in N. Gower Street is a shining example. The squatters have also helped to bring back some life into the community. They have started projects like the bakery and the bookshop and have been active in supporting the TVA with the garden and the Bank Community Centre.

why?

Last September the Council committed themselves to obtaining the ownership of all the property in the Tolmers Square Area including all the houses now threatened with eviction. However, the Council has been waiting for the government's proposed legislation on the public ownership of development land. Last Friday the Community Land Bill was published. Once this becomes law the council will go ahead with the CPO (see Frank Dobson's statement). In this context the evictions seem pointless. Glenifer Finance gives no reason for the evictions; they can have no use for the houses in the short time before the Council acquires the property. The houses would only be boarded up and left empty again.

It is interesting to note what happened last year in Camden High Street. Crowndale Holdings, another company associated with Levy, evicted the occupants of 220 Camden High Street stating in court that they had immediate plans for reletting. Immediately after the eviction the Company's agents moved in and smashed up the toilets and ripped out the staircase.

campaign

Meanwhile, the squatters are doing all they can to prevent themselves being made homeless. A big campaign is being mounted to gain support in their fight against these evictions, which highlight the property speculators' power to create homelessness. Regular meetings have been held and groups formed to deal with publicity, legal matters, benefits etc. They have produced leaflets, posters, banners and a press statement, and a petition is being circulated. Trade Unions, tenants' associations, councillors, the labour party in Camden are being contacted and asked to support the campaign. The General Management Committee of Camden Labour Party has passed a motion of support. Last Monday we picketed the Housing Committee Meeting at the Town Hall. A picket of Levy's offices in Jermyrn Street was organised last Friday. There have been several benefits to raise money for the campaign. The Campaign needs your support, so come to the TVA and find out how you can help.



Cllr. Dobson's Statement

19th March 1975

TOLMERS SQUARE: WHERE CAMDEN COUNCIL STANDS NOW

Statement by Frank Dobson, Leader of Camden Council.

Camden Council is still fully committed to obtaining the ownership of the land and property in the Tolmers Square Area so that by rehabilitation and redevelopment it can provide decent housing in the area for about 1700 people with an old people's home or sheltered housing for 40. The council's plans were announced in September last year, have been displayed in the area and were discussed at a public meeting organised by the Tolmers Village Association.

To obtain possession of the land and buildings, the council has decided to make two compulsory purchase orders, one covering the area east of North Gower Street, the other covering the area to the west. Submission of these CPOs to the Department of the Environment has been postponed until the terms of the government's Community Land Bill are studied in detail. This is to make sure that the council does not do anything in advance of the new law which could ruin the chances of local people benefiting from it.

Once the CPOs are submitted, no action in the area requiring planning permission would be possible until the Environment Secretary had come to a decision. So the council is pushing through plans for infill housing on sites it owns or where there is a good chance of getting the agreement of the present owners, so that the design work and even the building work can get under way while the CPOs are being considered. These will provide homes for 161 people in total.

In the meantime the council is keen to buy any land in the area from any of the owners who wish to sell. Also, as soon as the homes in Robert Street are ready for them, the council's pledge to rehouse the worst-housed, longest-stay residents will be fulfilled. It could not be done sooner than the new places were ready to be occupied.

Camden and squatters

As far as its own property is concerned, Camden takes the view that short-life housing is better in use than left empty. Therefore it is willing to license the use of its short-life property to squatters and it takes no action against squatters in such property, provided they are not a nuisance to their neighbours and are not preventing the council housing people off the waiting list or special cases.

The council will not accept squatting in the normal part of the council's stock of homes, and it takes immediate legal action to get rid of squatters in anything but its short-life property. The council will also take legal action against anyone destroying or damaging reasonable council housing from which they are evicted.

This week after much delay the Tolmers Village residents who are being re-housed under Phase 1 of Camden's re-housing scheme are moving into their new homes in the Netley Street flats. It was in November last year that a council representative informed the prospective tenants to prepare themselves for a move before Christmas. In February the tenants were shown the flats which they were being offered. Not until now nearing the end of March are the flats ready for habitation. The 3 months delay has been, at the least, inconvenient and for some of the older residents very distressing. Although the standards of their living conditions will be greatly improved, the size of the new rents came as quite a shock involving an increase of over £8 per week for some people.

Another cause for dissatisfaction has been that no home loss or removal expenses have been granted by the council, although most families had expected at least some compensation to help set up their new homes. The council stated that the land was not needed for immediate redevelopment nor were the houses being emptied because they were unfit for human habitation (a statement which has caused much amusement amongst those leaving them). Thus they did not qualify for any home loss payments. Anyway we wish you all well in your new homes. Don't lose touch with us this side of Hampstead Road. Let's hope that whoever owns Tolmers Village the houses won't just be left to decay and the quality of life allowed to deteriorate as has happened in the past.

new tva committee

Elected at the public meeting on 3rd March

Chairman	Heather Hockey 214 N. Gower St.
Secretary	Sheenagh Goodingham 183 N. Gower St.
Treasurer	Colin Ferguson 119 Drummond St.
Suzi Nelson	78 Hampstead Rd.
Ches	102 Drummond St.
Maureen Holland	67 Coburg St.
Jayant Patel	Diwana, Drummond St.
Mrs Ullah	Starcross St.

LEGAL ADVICE

A free legal advice service is available in the TVA office, 102 Drummond Street, every Wednesday evening 6.45 - 9.00 by a team of barristers.

EXODUS

If the council applies the same principles to squatting in privately owned property, the council has few, if any, powers to assist or prevent squatting in such housing. Therefore, when I was informed that the private owners of squatted property in Tolmers Square had commenced legal proceedings to get the squatters out, I asked the Town Clerk to make immediate representations to the owners to stop their action. This was done the same day, and the owners sought the court's permission to adjourn the action for 28 days. This permission has now been given, partly because the council sent the attached letter to the owners* which was presented in evidence to the judge. Camden will continue to seek to prevent unnecessary action of this nature against squatters, but in the end the outcome will depend on the owners and the courts. I think I should make it clear that when Camden does take over the ownership of the Tolmers Square area, it will continue its policy of leaving alone any squatters who are not a nuisance. However, it will not allow squatting to hold up its plans to provide decent homes for about 1700 people.

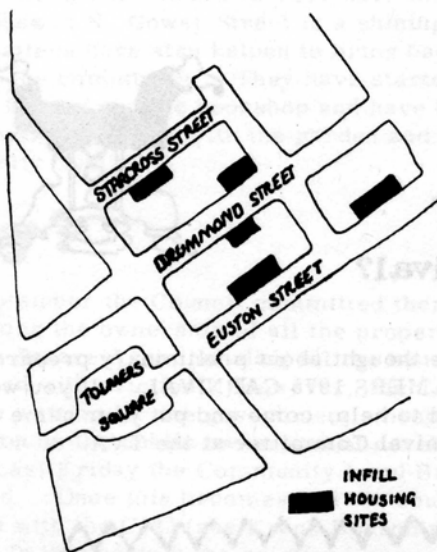
*A copy of the letter referred to is available at the TVA for anyone who wishes to see it.

Heather



Anyone who has any problems with moving come into the TVA office and we will see what we can do to help.

camden gives go-ahead



On Monday, March 17, the council's housing sub-committee agreed to give the architects for the Tolmers Square area the go ahead to draw up detailed plans and bills of quantities for the "infill sites". These are the relatively small sites in Euston Street, Drummond Street and Starcross Street. The plan is to build housing of similar size and character to that which surrounds the sites. Building work may start as soon as November this year.

118 Drummond Street having been kept empty for the last two years by McGlynn, is now being taken over by the council. They plan to use the shop to display the architects' plans for the area. The house above is to be done up as a living unit. We should get a chance to look around when its completed and thus get some idea of what the other houses in the area will be like when they have been rehabilitated.

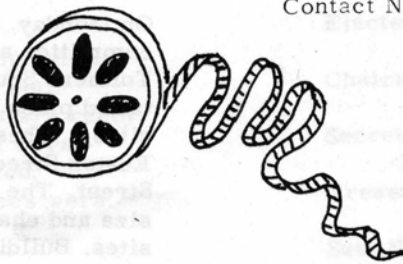
danger! speculator at work

Yet another area in Camden is threatened by developers. Harry "Centre Point" Hyams has his eyes on Denmark Street, better known as Tin Pan Alley, which lies in the shadow of that infamous empty office block. Hyams has plans for ob iterating the whole of Denmark Street with a massive Centre Point Phase 2. The area has a very mixed community similar to ours - small shops, work-shops and houses. Redevelopment will mean all the local people will be forced out and Tin Pan Alley will become yet another memory of the character of London while office blocks loom above us. The people are not taking this sitting down and have formed a community association to fight to save their homes and their jobs. Good luck to them!



FILM FOR HIRE

'Tolmers, Beginning or End', the film about Tolmers Village, directed by Philip Thompson. Black/white and colour. 30 mins. From Cinegate 727 2651 or Nick Wates, 12 Tolmers Square. Cost £10 (price negotiable)

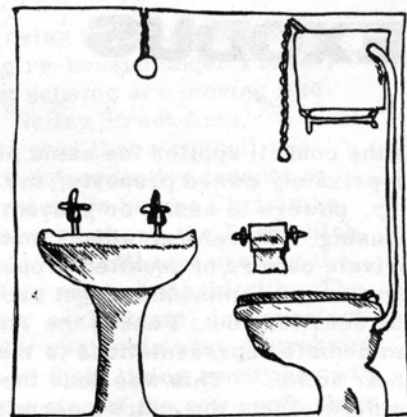


TOLMERS NEWS

Up to now the printing of the Tolmers News has been grant-aided by Camden, but this may not be continued as they, like everybody else, are short of funds. It costs £300 p. a. If you think this delightful little publication is worth it, you should at least give us 50p for the next year's supply. We will be asking you SOON ...

MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR THE TVA ARE NOW 30p. PLEASE COME AND PAY IF YOU HAVE NOT RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 1975. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE ASSOCIATION, COME TO THE TVA 102 DRUMMOND STREET.

bank job done



Ches and Suzi, the famed loo-installers, have succeeded in their battle against all the odds to get the Bank Bog working at last. The Initiation Ceremony took place last Saturday when hundreds attended a Benefit Dance featuring three great new bands - The Blue Diamonds, Medium Wave Band and Expensive. The Rave-up went on to the wee hours, helped by barrels of Young's Special Beer, and everyone had a ball. And the Squatters Action Group made £30 towards their fighting fund, for which they thank all who helped.

The week before there was another Benefit which raised £11 for the fund, music supplied courtesy of Paul's band 'Shifty' and Ches's Disco. It followed a jumble sale held in the afternoon which made £30.

So the Bank is in working order and from now on we can use it for dances, meetings, clubs, classes etc. All enquiries for its use should go to Ches at 102 Drummond Street.

WANTED: any old photographs or newspaper cuttings about Tolmers Village. Contact Nick or Pedro at 12 Tolmers Sq.



Carnival?

It's time we thought about preliminary preparations for the TOLMERS 1975 CARNIVAL. If you would be prepared to help, come and put your name down for the Carnival Committee at the TVA.

STOP PRESS:

Homeless families are being moved into two houses in Coburg Street which have become empty. Let us know when you are moving so houses won't stay empty.

