

TOLMERS NEWS

JUNE
77

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fight the cuts!

On May 11, School Meals workers members of the National Union of Public Employees, at Netley Primary School, joined thousands of other workers in Camden in coming out on a one-day strike against the cuts in public expenditure. The strike was part of a Day of Action called by the National Coordinating Committee of Trade Unions against the cuts.

A contingent of Camden workers, including hundreds of health and local authority workers, marched behind the E.G.A. banner from the hospital in Euston Road to Hyde Park. There it joined up with over 6,000 other strikers on a demonstration to Temple.

The cuts in Camden will have a drastic effect on those who can least afford them. Residential and day-care facilities for the elderly, the young and the disabled have been reduced, and some centres will close completely. Meals-on-wheels prices will go up, libraries will shut for some part of the week and the Council's staff vacancy programme will mean overworked staff and less employment opportunity in Camden.

The home building programme has been halved (including work on Tolmers Village) at a time when thousands are homeless or living in bad conditions, and increased rents, rates and central heating charges will mean extra hardship for those already suffering from the effects of rising prices and inflation.

All Council tenants, including pensioners, will be asked to redecorate their homes themselves and this will also apply to people taking up new tenancies, exceptions being pensioners and hardship cases. Many tenants are up in arms about this because it could cause hardship, and because they see it as a source of cheap labour for the Council.

All over Camden, people are beginning to take action against the cuts: parents against the closure of playcentres, residents over the closure of public baths and libraries, hospital workers against the loss of health facilities, and Camden NALGO against reduced public services and loss of employment. The one-day strike formed another part of the struggle.

The cuts affect everyone - at



Tolmers Carnival is gradually beginning to take shape and all should be ready by the time we kick off at 12 noon on Saturday June 25.

We've got some good music lined up including Dave Brookes and his new band, rock bands, free-form jazz from Paul with Implision, African music and dance from Agor Mmba, a steel band, a little bit of classical from Patrick and many more. We also hope to have an Indian dancer accompanied by a sitar player.

There will be clowns from Albany Street to make you laugh, and a clown and puppet show from Covent Garden Community Theatre. The Theatre will also perform their play "A Planner in the Works" in the early evening.

If you want some activity you can try your luck at Barry's coconut shy, or take part in a Tug-of-War with the Fire Brigade (if they agree to a return match)

work it may mean a drop in real income and redundancies - in the community it means rising prices, and reduction in the services and facilities which we take for granted but which are so essential. Living standards are generally depressed.

And at this particular time when people are trying to save

or have a go in the games and races organised by Nick. For a bit of intellectual stimulation you can try to guess how much John Stansfield weighs, and where the Treasure is in Tolmers Square.

And of course, there'll be plenty to eat and drink, with food and refreshments being provided by Alex, Chiara, Mr Shah, Phillip, Dee, Tim and John S.

There'll be lots of stalls and exhibitions too, hopefully from Camden Against Racism, Camden Pensioners, Camden Women's Centre, CACTL, the Poster Collective, the E.G.A. Campaign, Rising Free and Tolmers Village Action Group. And you'll be able to buy balloons from Vince, "Tolmers Rules OK?".

If you can run a stall, sing, dance, help supervise events, or offer financial aid, please let us know. Bring your ideas to 12 Tolmers Square, where we have meetings every Monday at 9pm on the Carnival.

their homes, jobs and services by occupying, a Criminal Trespass Law is being introduced which will make such forms of direct action an imprisonable offence.

Direct action is one of the few means we have to voice our protest against the measures imposed on us. We must ensure that it is not taken away.

criminal trespass

On April 19 the Criminal Law Bill passed its 2nd reading, and is now having its committee stage. All accounts suggest that it will be law by the summer. Part 2 of the Bill threatens anyone taking part in any occupation with 2 years in jail. It gives police the right to enter property without a warrant, and to arrest and evict trespassers without going through the courts.

HOW THE BILL WILL AFFECT YOU

This Bill could be used against the many people occupying empty buildings in this area, either to house themselves, or to provide much needed community facilities such as the refuge for battered women. Any owner could evict squatters or ex-licensees without a court order as long as they did not use violence, eg if the residents were out. Landlords who could claim to use a property occasionally as a residence would even be allowed to use violence in evictions, and if police believed the owners claim, then they could arrest the squatters or ex-licensees. The Bill gives the police the right to enter squats without a warrant eg to look for offensive weapons- which can be anything from a hammer to a rolling pin. Obstructing the bailiff would become a crime, and even standing in their way can cause an obstruction- let alone barricades.

And it isn't just an attack on people occupying empty houses- but on any occupations or sit-ins whether at work or in the community. The workers down the road who have occupied the EGA hospital to keep it open and to safeguard their jobs would be threatened with eviction and arrest if the law was passed. In the past, Camden building workers have occupied 'lump' sites to smash the lump, and to gain better conditions for building workers. Tenants in the St Pancras rent strike barricaded their houses against eviction. And on many occasions, tenants and community groups have been forced to sit-in at Council meetings to oppose their policies.

This Bill is an attack on us all; on our right to take action in defence of our jobs and our standard of living, and for decent health care, education, housing, and social services.

Over the next two years many people will be forced to move to make room for the Council's development in this area. Housing law is very complicated, but it is important that people are aware of their basic rights in it.



If you are a tenant: It is Council policy to rehouse all tenants who have been asked to move, and all such tenants here will have first option on the accommodation to be provided by this development. Some tenants have already succeeded in being allocated places, although they are not yet completed.

If you wish to be rehoused in Tolmers Village, and have not yet been contacted by the Council, it is important that you get in touch with them immediately.

Whilst this sounds fine in theory, in practice things may not run so smoothly, so be ready to stand up for your right to live where you choose!

There are also certain allowances to which you are entitled if you are required to move by the Council.



Disturbance Payments: Tenants and owner-occupiers can claim this for removal expenses, cost of altering soft furnishings and movable fixtures and fittings, telephone reconnection charges etc. The allowance has just been increased

HOW TO FIGHT THE BILL

The only way that we will stop this Bill being implemented if it becomes law, is by using the strength we have if we unite together in opposition. The only way we can be effective is if we overcome the divisions that are created between us- between workplace and community, workers occupying a factory and people occupying a house, between black and white, men and women, young people, the unemployed.



These divisions only weaken us, and allow attacks like the CTL, which are a threat to us all, to be made law and then to be implemented.

HOUSING

to £100, but claims for more than this will have to be negotiated with the Council. You may also be entitled to a Well-Maintained payment if you have kept your home in good repair.



Home Loss Payment: Is available to owners, lessees, and tenants who have occupied their dwelling for at least a five-year period before displacement. Payment is not less than £150 or more than £1500. You can apply to the Council before you move or within six months after moving.



If you are an owner-occupier: and the Council buys your home by Compulsory Purchase Order, they are obliged to pay you the open market price for it. The valuation of property can be very complicated, and if you cannot reach an agreement on price with the Council, your case can be referred to the Lands Tribunal, an independent body. Solicitor's and surveyor's fees are normally repaid by the Council. You are also entitled to disturbance money and home loss payment (if you qualify for this).

If you sell by agreement to the Council, you will not qualify for a home loss or disturbance payment,

BUILDING UNITY IN CAMDEN

If we in Tolmers want support in the event of this law being used against us, then we must go on building links with other groups in the area, and we must do it now.

The Camden CACTL group is planning a one day event/conference which is aimed at all the groups and organisations active in the borough. It will consist of stalls exhibitions, workshops and discussion, as well as film, theatre and music. It will be an opportunity for people active in different fields to get together to discuss their activities and experiences, and how to support each other more closely in the future. There will also be discussion about the implications of the Bill, and how we can build a united campaign against it in Camden.

The conference/event will be at the beginning of July. The TVAG are planning to mount an exhibition about the history of the area and the campaigns for plans for the area which meet the people of Camden's needs. The more people from Tolmers at the event the better. Camden CACTL meets every Wednesday at 8.0pm at 30 Camden Rd

RIGHTS

but the authority have the discretion to make such payments if they choose.

Owner-occupiers are also entitled to rehousing when their property is required because of Council redevelopment. If you accept rehousing, this will not affect the amount of compensation which you will receive for your home.



If you are a squatter: the situation is much more difficult since you have no rights to rehousing. However, if you have children, you may be offered accommodation if you are evicted. Usually you will be put into bed and breakfast for a few months, for which you have to pay quite high prices. Alternatively, you may be put into one of the Council's reception homes. Your next move is usually to a short-life property, and then ultimately to a permanent Council tenancy. Occasionally you may be offered somewhere quite quickly. The Council may also rehouse old-age pensioners or disabled people.

For the homeless single, or childless couples, the picture is bleak since there is no real provision for them within society. With rented accommodation scarce and pricy, you have the choice of a bed in a hostel, nights on a

park bench, or finding another empty property in which to live (which will be much more difficult when the Criminal Trespass Bill becomes law.)



Although most of those who are housed in Council property are people who have been decanted because of redevelopment, and although many people are on the waiting list for years before they get a place, it might be worthwhile putting your name on the waiting list if you would ultimately like to become a Council tenant (forms available from Bidborough House, Bidborough Street, NW1.) A new system of points is being introduced based on need rather than on waiting time, and there is a growing awareness of the need for housing for single people.

This is only a basic guide to your rights and the procedures can often be lengthy and cumbersome, so it is best to get qualified advice on the subject. Camden Community Law Centre gives free aid and advice at 146 Kentish Town Road, NW5 (tel 485 6672) or you can try the Housing Aid Centre at 83 Euston Road (tel 388 0331).

And it is to be remembered that the rights you have are only minimal. There is no law in the country that guarantees everyone the right to a decent home at a cheap rent, and in an environment that is based on the needs of the community. This is a right which has to be fought for!

Old friends

Tolmers Village residents may miss Dorothy and Betty Norden who used to live in Hampstead Road until a few months ago. But for the sisters there are no regrets about their move to a council flat in 30 Grafton Way. "We love it" says Dorothy. After 25½ years of neglect in Hampstead Road, the new flat seems like a dream to them. "The only thing we miss is our nice square kitchen - here you have to be either ten feet tall or very small to get things out of the cupboards". Nevertheless, there have been teething problems for the first residents in Grafton Way. Apart from constant trouble with the central heating, hot water, floods, pipes installed the wrong way (the list is endless), the residents are lucky if they get their post and milk. If and when the post does manage to come, the postman can only deliver to each flat by ringing on the Nordens bell. Likewise the milk; each morning at 6.30, Dorothy gets up to let the milkman in. And there's the garden: a large, paved area with raised flower beds and benches. But it's not for the residents - only the office workers are allowed to use it. Nevertheless, to the Nordens, the advantages of living in 30 Grafton Way far outweigh the problems.

Shop talk

The Tolmers Shop has been open and well-used for weeks now. It has also seen two jumble sales, one in aid of the Tolmers News, and the other in aid of the forthcoming Carnival.

Alex and Chiara hope that people will use the shop as their own. They want people to make and bring in things to sell.

The veg are very cheap and varied, and the bread is hot and delicious. But this is more than just a food shop. Any ideas or help you could offer for it would be very welcome.



The spice shop at 161 Drummond is one of the many shops that gives Tolmers Village its unique character. Like other small businesses in the area, it may not last very much longer if the council and planners have their way. We talked to the man that runs it, friendly Mr Shah.

Jharerchand Shah was born in Gujerat in South India, one of four brothers and three sisters. His father had a small business. Mr Shah studied up to the equivalent of O levels and became qualified to work in "accounts".

Mr Shah and his wife moved to Kenya and lived there happily until 1963.

Despite his family's traditional feelings against emigration to

England, Mr Shah surprised his wife and friends by coming here alone in what he calls "a search for adventure". He said that he had become restless and bored in the Kenyan Asian community. As a storeman in the Lindair Radio shop in the Tottenham Court Road, he earned £11 per week. He found a room in Drummond Street above "Overseas Grocers Ltd", the shop he was later to take over.

When his wife, Radiat, joined him, months later she brought their two children. She felt isolated after she arrived with the combination of coping with a new language and looking after a new baby.

Mr Shah became involved in the shop more by luck than intention. The previous tenants wanted to leave because the area was "day by

day becoming silly for them"- expenses made the business more trouble than it was worth. Mr Shah took over the lease and now has the shop and three floors above.

The days that he hardly has any customers he does not seem too bothered. He, Radiat and their four children do not seem too worried about the future despite the fact that their lease runs out in March 1979. Mr Shah has no idea how the council plans will affect his business but says that something will turn up.

We sincerely hope that Mr and Mrs Shah will not be forced to leave this area and that they will be able to remain near where the children are happy at school and they feel settled and untroubled.

SQUATTERS CONFERENCE

Last month, a conference was called to discuss ways of forming a central organisation of squatters which would be more representative than existing bodies. Not much was achieved then and after referring the suggestions raised back to local groups, the conference met again on May 15. This time, there was a degree of consensus on certain things, as follows:

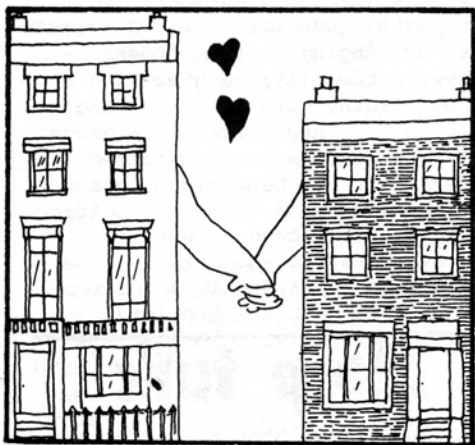
1. The squatting movement is as strong as its local groups and these need to be strengthened and extended.
2. There is a need for a central body, at the very least to
 - a) aid co-ordination and communication between the local groups
 - b) co-ordinate relations with, and responses to, outside bodies, groups, press, unions etc (a contentious point)

- c) produce a Newsheet
 - d) have regular meetings
3. The proposal of having a Squatters Charter of declaration of principles was accepted.
 4. The Advisory Service for Squatters (ASS) and the Squatters Action Council (SAC). The two existing national(?) bodies have agreed to work intimately with whatever new central organisation is set up for the first 3 months after inauguration, while maintaining their autonomy. Then, all being well, they will dissolve as separate entities and become totally accountable to the central organisation.

These points remain somewhat general. The details and content of each are still contentious and broadly the disagreements still remain on:

1. What power should the central body have? Although much air was spent on the issue of a union vs a federation (the latter being a much looser sort of alliance), whichever name is chosen, the problems still remain of:

- what power should the union have to be the spokesbody for squatters to take initiatives
 - to whom is it accountable
2. Membership. A union is a tighter grouping than a federation. It implies a clearer statement of aims and a more precise commitment and support from members.
 3. The content or political line of the Squatters Charter. There will be another meeting on Sunday 29 May (see What's On) which will hopefully see these problems resolved. It is important for us to go along as with the Criminal Trespass proposals virtually sure to be law within weeks, we need all our strength.



STOP PRESS

Thanks to all the people who gave money towards the Lost Purse fund. Love, Moni

Just received two more letters in response to our alternative proposals for the area.

- from the Environment Group of Kings Cross Community Association expressing wholehearted support.
- from St. Pancras Labour Party asking us to send a speaker to their next meeting. Great interest expressed in our proposals by the Constituency Party. More in next issue!

CHECKED MOVE

The Colsons, whose housing problems were featured in last month's Tolmers News, are still living at 52 Hampstead Road. But the end is now in sight, for they have a flat in Woodhall in Robert Street. Because of new council policy, the Colsons must carry out redecoration themselves, even though they are pensioners. So Mrs Colson does not know when they will be able to move into their new home, as her husband has not been well recently and has been unable to get on with the work.

BUILD for TOLMERS MAY 28

Remember The Bank? And the multitude of uses to which it was put? Well, for some people, those memories weren't so happy. Although in principle they agreed with the idea of a community centre they found it difficult to tolerate the noise that was inevitably generated. So that eventually The Bank had to be abandoned as a community resource.

In many months that have passed several alternatives have been considered as a replacement for this valuable lost asset, but all without success. They were either too small or suffered the same noise problem.

But at last a solution has been discovered by Alex in 19 Tolmers Square. The basements adjacent to his house are vast, clean and completely sound insulated. Moreover, on the sunny south side, they back onto clear open space which could be used as a garden, terrace

or open air cafe.

The rooms themselves are large enough to hold dances, film shows and exhibitions etc. They are relatively clean so that most of the work will consist of installing plumbing, electricity and building a staircase from the ground floor in order to create a public entrance from Tolmers Square.

It has great possibilities and could be ready in time for a grand opening at the Carnival if there is enough help and support in getting it together.

To launch the work programme we are holding a Tolmers Village Work-In on the basements on Saturday 28 May all day.

Please come along and offer what you can - your labour; paint and other materials; your technical expertise; tea and refreshments for the workers or anything else you can think of.

See you there!

WHAT'S ON

Mondays 9pm : Tolmers Village Action Group meetings at 12 Tolmers Square.

Wednesdays 8pm : Camden CACTL meetings at 30 Camden Road.

Thursdays 10am - 2pm : TVAG picket duty at the E.G.A. Hospital.

Friday 27 May 8pm : Central London Squatters Benefit at 27 Shelton Street, WC2. Admission 50p, live band, food, drink.

Saturday 28 May : All day work-in at the basements 19 Tolmers Square.

Sunday 29 May 4pm : Squatters conference follow-up meeting at The Drill Hall, Action Space, Chenies Street, W1.

Saturday 4 June : Fitzrovia Festival. Charlotte Street.

June 17 - 18 : Regents Park Estate Festival.

Sunday 19 June : People's Jubilee at Alexandra Palace, Wood Green, with music, theatre, films, stalls, giant balloons.

Saturday 25 June : Tolmers Carnival

Newsflash : Thursday 19 May, architects were round at 183 North Gower Street this morning to see about renovation. They estimate that work will start in October or December.