

## Harassment

A summons under Section 30 of the Electric Lighting (Clauses) Act 1899, against the L.E.B., was taken out in May 1973 for their failure to supply electricity in Charrington St, Camden Town. The Greater London Council removed its restriction on L.E.B. workmen and harassment was discontinued so the summons was withdrawn. The same action was successful recently in WALTERTON ROAD, Paddington.

Squatting all over England is increasing dramatically, as more and more desperate families find direct action the only answer to terrible housing conditions whilst public and private property remains empty.

A more detailed legal briefing and other information can be obtained from Family Squatting Advisory Service, 44-47 Nelson Square, London SE1.

Trevor Howell, FSAS.

## SQUATTERS HANDBOOK

A revised and updated handbook (based on the old Islington Squatters Handbook which is now out of print) has been produced by BIT. Full of information on tactics, legal issues, plumbing, electrics etc. Price 5p from BIT, 146 Great Western Road, London W11. (Tel 01-229 8219)

## LONDON TOLMER SQUARE

How a property developer didn't make £20m

Tolmers Square and its surrounding streets is one of the few remaining pockets of underdeveloped land in central London. It is a diverse area containing shops, restaurants, small workshops and businesses, and some run-down housing. The 700 residents in the area include remnants of a low-income working community, a well-established Indian community, a range of other nationalities, and a small number of students and professionals.

Unfortunately, this kind of area is ideal prey for developers, and it attracted the attention of Joe [unclear] of Block Conversion and Investment Trust. Ten years ago he started secretly buying up property in the area, using several subsidiary companies as fronts. Until by 1973 he owned 40% of the area (4 acres). At the same time, by doing the absolute minimum of repairs, he allowed the property to run down,

Underdeveloped land - is land which is not being used in the most profitable way

so creating an atmosphere of despondency and neglect. One house actually collapsed while people were still living in it, and there are several examples of ceilings and balconies crashing down without warning.

For several years Camden council have been trying to buy part of the site for urgently needed housing development. But they have been unsuccessful owing to the phenomenal cost of the land, now approaching £1m. per acre. They were therefore in an extremely vulnerable position when Levy proposed a deal last Spring.

### The Levy deal

The deal was simple: Levy would sell most of his land cheaply to Camden for housing, in exchange for - Camden giving Levy planning permission to build a large office block on one corner of the site which would enable him to make £20m. profit.

A typical deal as has been done all over London. But this time there was strong opposition from two fronts.

### Opposition - the local people

We objected to deals being made and plans being worked out which were only concerned with land values and housing gain. No consideration was taken of the needs of local people. From what we could discover about the plans, it seemed that most of the restaurants, shops and workshops would be displaced, and that few residents would be able to remain unless they were prepared to live in Council blocks. Above all, there had been no participation or consultation whatsoever. We therefore formed the TOLMERS VILLAGE ASSOCIATION (T.V.A.) whose primary aim was to ensure that the interests of local people were considered in any future planning proposals. At present it seems that this can best be achieved by preserving much of the physical fabric and building selectively on derelict sites in a piecemeal fashion.

### Opposition - Claudius Properties

The second line of opposition came from two journalists - Chris Booker and Bennie Gray. They had been specialising in property journalism for a



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couple of years and had noticed many situations where, like Tolmers Square, councils are forced to make deals with developers. In all these deals the council initially appears to gain, but in the end the developers make exorbitant profits which are created by, and therefore should rightfully belong to, the community as a whole. (On Euston Tower, for example, Levy has made £64m.). In an attempt to bring this kind of deal to an end, Booker and Gray set up a non-profit making development company - CLAUDIUS PROPERTIES - and offered to build exactly the same as Levy, the only difference being that the profits would go to Camden Council instead of into Joe Levy's pocket.

The significance of this proposal is that it provides a blueprint which could be used for any development, and if successful could go a long way towards curbing the developers destruction of our cities.

## Council decisions

Unfortunately the Council were not convinced and in September they rejected the Claudius proposal in favour of the Levy deal. Within a few days a massive campaign was launched to persuade the Council to change its mind. This was achieved within a month.

## Successful campaign

There were a number of reasons for the success of the STOP THE LEVY DEAL CAMPAIGN which are worth spelling out.

- ★ It had active support from a wide range of people:
  - local people - the Tolmers Village Association.
  - tenants and residents associations throughout Camden.
  - Journalists.
  - top Labour personalities, i.e. Reg Freeson, Shadow Minister of Housing, and Illyd Harrington, Deputy Leader of the G.L.C.
  - Trade Union personalities.
  - local Labour parties.
- ★ The media was used extremely skilfully with carefully timed press conferences and releases.
- ★ A well worked out and researched alternative scheme was available. The campaign could therefore not be accused of being merely negative.
- ★ The whole campaign was carefully managed and coordinated throughout by a team who met frequently, and for whom the campaign was an almost full-time job.
- ★ Enough money was available to be able to print 50,000 leaflets which were distributed within Camden to obtain signatures, and to inform people of the issues.

As a direct result of this campaign the Council reversed its decision over Levy and agreed to look into alternative solutions.

The T.V.A. in a deputation to the Council meeting offered to produce an alternative scheme in conjunction with those involved with the campaign.

## Community design

We now have another problem which must be common to many groups: How does a community group design its own development scheme which, while satisfying local interests, manages to satisfy the sophisticated legal and financial requirements necessary for any development scheme? At the moment we have a shop which we are squatting in and using as an office. We have



Drummond St.

several students who have been doing surveys and are attempting to draw up a scheme with advice from a number of professionals. But we are faced with several problems:

- 1** We have no money with which to pay people. We therefore depend on voluntary labour, mainly from students who although keen, do not have the expertise necessary to design a scheme worth £40m., with all its legal and financial implications.
- 2** It is extremely difficult for ordinary people to become involved in the planning process. They feel that they cannot understand it and that it is the realm of the professionals. By basing our operations in a shop where everyone is welcome to come and take part, we are trying to break down the barrier between the planners and those planned for, the barrier between experts and laymen. We are attempting to produce a real community designed plan. But as yet we have been unsuccessful in involving more than a few individuals.
- 3** In planning terms it is virtually impossible to design a scheme which satisfies local needs where the value of the land is almost £1m. per acre. In order to compete with the Levy deal we have to generate enough capital to buy the land. This can only be achieved with office development which adds little to the community.

The first of these problems may be solved if we manage to persuade the Council to give us money and assistance. But to solve the other two problems will require a fundamental change of attitudes and a great deal of patience.

We would like to hear from anyone involved in a similar situation who might be able to offer advice.

ello little Joe  
 sittin on yer pile  
 gribby grabby little Joe  
 you'll ave to wait a while

Nick Wates - TOLMERS VILLAGE ASSOCIATION, 102 Drummond Street, London N.W.1. Tel: 01-387-4004.

# NOTTINGHAM UNION OF CLEARANCE AREA ACTION GROUPS

The political strength of action groups in Nottingham has increased significantly with the formation of the Union of Clearance Areas Association (UCAA). It has been started by tenants groups in the Meadows (MATAR), St Annes (SATRA), New Basford (NBAR) and tenants and residents around the Polytechnic (TRAP) at a time when there is a housing crisis in Nottingham and the Labour controlled Council feels threatened by community action.

UCAA has four aims:

- ✱ To exchange information on joint problems and the ways of overcoming these problems. It is hoped to build up information on all the problems which face people in redevelopment area and to pool information on such problems.
- ✱ To present a united front where it is felt that this is necessary. It may also be possible to plan joint campaigns on various problems..
- ✱ To assist any new groups which may come into existence in redevelopment areas.
- ✱ To jointly press for better public participation, which the Council currently pays lip service to.

## More power

The advantages of working together are already evident. MATAR have duplicated information on compensation (from C.A.) and this is being distributed to committee members in all groups. It also means we can be so much more powerful in challenging the Council because they can't play off one group against another. UCAA will meet monthly in a different area each time and have a rotating chairman. Other clearance area groups in Nottingham are likely to join UCAA shortly.

We would like to encourage tenants and residents groups in clearance areas in other cities to form similar unions. We could then establish a network of similar unions to exchange information on tactics etc. on a wider scale.



The Greater London Council intend to ban lorry parking on streets in Inner London. But first a borough has to provide alternative parking places. Islington wants to use land promised for a play park. The Whittington Park Community Association claim that there are other more suitable sites in the borough that ratepayers' money should not be used to provide parking space for haulage companies. And most important they claim that lorries should be removed from Inner London unless they have deliveries to make.

If anyone has been involved in similar action and has useful information etc. please contact Whittington Park C.A. at 5 Dalmeny Rd. London N 19.

This cartoon was adapted from the local community