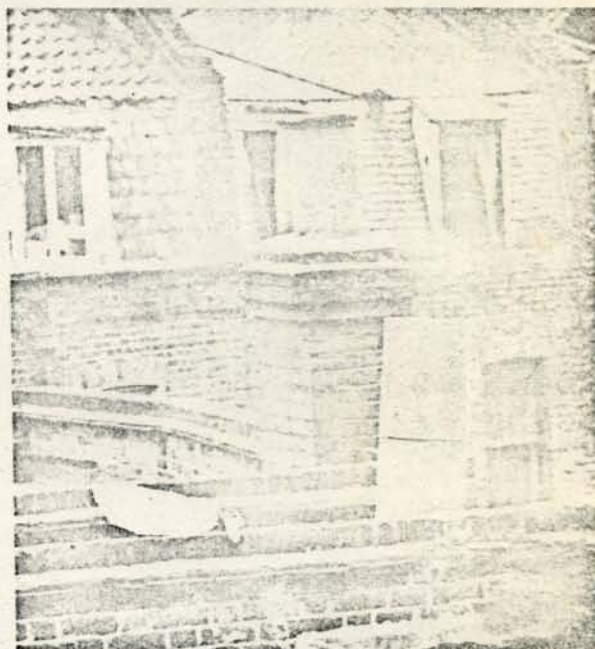


Mrs Philpott and the invasion of the amazing smelly enemy



● Mrs Philpott (left) and Mrs Daniels look out at the flue (right hand picture which carries fumes from the dummy factory into their homes.

IT'S NOT just the smell on the landing which made Mrs Norma Philpott call in the men from the council. "On a hot close day", she told the Journal, "it goes through the whole flat."

It gets so bad, she says, that she literally can't even talk about it.

"Pear drops," says Mrs Philpott. "The air is thick with the smell of them, and it goes for your throat so you can't speak properly." And it's all in the cause of dummies for export.

For right under the nose of Mrs Philpott at her home in Hampstead Road is a factory producing display mannequins, and as the company, Adel Rootstein, has grown over the past few years, the smell of acetate from their sprays has loomed larger in Mrs Philpott's life.

For the past three years, she and her neighbour downstairs, Mrs Rachel Daniels who is in her seventies, have been fighting to either stop the smell or get a move of house away from it.

Fainting

But though both the firm and Camden Council recognise the problem, they say there's nothing they can do about it.

"I'm at the end of my tether," Mrs Philpott said last week. "Since they moved in, my health has suffered. I've taken to fainting, and I've had a lot of trouble with my throat.

"And it isn't only the smell. There are a lot of fires round here, and I can't help thinking that there's more of a chance of the factory going up when they're using inflammable materials. We wouldn't stand a chance."

"Either I go or they go," she says. But it seems that neither of these is a real possibility at the moment.

For though the council have sent round their health inspectors (one who came told Mrs Philpott that he had no sense of smell) and they accept that the smell is a cause of distress, they cannot offer her alternative housing.

Sympathy

Local councillor John Mills, who has been handling the case for more than two years now, told me: "The flat itself is very nice, and though there certainly is a problem having to live slap next to a factory that smells, there are people who have no homes at all in the borough, and we can't very well put the Philpotts above these."

Miss Rootstein of Adel Rootstein told me: "I really do sympathise with the people there. But we are observing every factory regulation there is, and doing more than they require in some cases.

"It is true that people shouldn't have to live next door to factories. If I thought for a minute that closing down would be the answer to all their problems, I would consider doing it, but you know, the smell is only part of it."

Miss Rootstein met Mrs Philpott some time ago, and offered her a job in the factory. "I thought that if she came and worked here, she would get used to the smell and it would take her mind off it," Miss Rootstein told me.

But, says Mrs Philpott: "I couldn't stick it for more than a day."

So at the moment, Mrs Philpott and Mrs Daniels there's plenty of sympathy — but no prospect of a let up.