

Camden Tenant June 1976
(copies available in office - 2p)

Tolmers

'We believe we can do the scheme with fewer offices and more houses than proposed by the developers, and gain the advantage of owning the property.'

- Frank Dobson, Evening Standard, 5 June 75

The history of Tolmers Square, not so long ago the centre of debate in Camden and the national press, has entered a new phase - previously every development in the saga was closely watched and publicised, it seems that the truth of the council's present intentions has slipped by, largely unnoticed. The latest scheme by the council's architects was passed by the full council, on April 22 without even being debated, no doubt because it was claimed that the scheme was in accord with proposals approved a year and a half ago.

'Considerable public consultation has already been held on the broad principles of the Tolmers Square development, from which the present proposals are no departure'. Council Minute

This is not true. Most significantly there will be 3½ times more office accommodation than in the council's previous proposals, in fact 20% more than even that proposed by Levy and Stock Conversion, and there will be less housing.

Where Stock Conversion once proposed 250,000 sq. ft of offices, and the council countered with 85,000, it is now estimated that more than 300,000 sq ft of offices will be necessary to finance the development. This means no less than a massive 9 storey office block taking up the whole Euston Road frontage and wrapping round to where the entrance to the present Tolmers Square now stands.

Office space

Camden maintains that so much office space is necessary in order that the area pay for itself. Last year the council paid £4 million for six acres of land, owned by Stock Conversion. The Council is paying over £500,000 a year interest on the money it paid to do so. Such a huge office development is it believes the only way to cut its losses. To make way for the office development the following have been omitted.

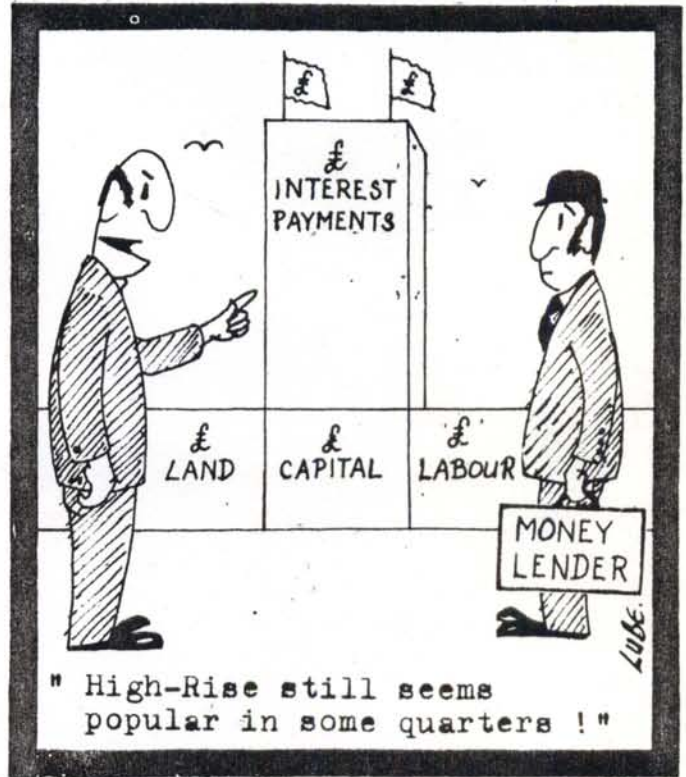
- homes for more than 300 people off Camden's enormous waiting list. The number of people to be housed in the area will be 1350 rather than 1710.
- 60,000 sq ft of public building has been left out law courts etc.
- There will be no provision for light industry, workshop etc on the west of N. Gower Street.
- A proposed cinema has been left out.
- And of course Tolmers Square will be demolished.

The whole scheme has been determined by the need to build a massive amount of office space - to make money. The Council has been forced into the most hypocritical position, forced because it has bowed to political pressure to cut public expenditure, and hypocritical because it has in the recent past gone to great lengths to oppose similar developments by private firms.

Inflated prices

What one wonders were the advantages of public ownership that Frank Dobson envisaged. They are of little and perhaps negative value whilst the Council is forced to buy land at inflated values, and borrow money from the private sector. Forced to do so it must either behave like a property speculator, or else shift the burden on to the rates bill or the national purse.

Lastly there is a good reason why the truth of the council's plans have passed unnoticed not only by the public, but by much of the council itself. The planning committee report to the full council gave no hint of the amount of office space envisaged, that 300,000 sq ft was quietly omitted. It seems that the wool has been passed over the eyes of those who take the decisions. We must make every effort to alert members of the council to that truth behind the scheme that they have agreed to - to build more offices than Levy.



Shorts

Time Out
June 11th 1976

Security checks: Just what is the position of Common Market citizens who go to another country to find work and can't find any? Are they entitled to the same unemployment benefits as the citizens of that country? And do the police keep records of them?

Stella Andrade (above) is a 20-year-old French woman who came to this country two years ago to work as an au pair. She now lives in Albany Street, Camden, and has been drawing unemployment benefit for several months.

Last month, she was visited by officers from the local police station who had a list of names of French and Italian nationals who had been living in Albany Street squats. Her name was not on the list because, she says, she was drawing unemployment benefit, not social security. But the police, having established how long she had been signing on, said 'You are just the sort of people we are looking for. People like you should not be signing on. I'm coming back next

Wednesday and you'd better have a job or we'll arrest you and get you deported.'

Chief Inspector Macintyre of Albany Street police station thinks it 'highly unlikely' that members of his force would go round telling people to get jobs. And a spokesman for the St Pancras branch of the Department of Health and Social Security denied liaising with the police on the issue: 'I can promise you we haven't had a lot of men in blue rifling through this office.'

So what is the position? Sue Shutter of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants explains that there are reciprocal EEC arrangements for living on social security, but that most countries feel that long-term claims should be made at home. The Home Office say that the police enforce the restriction rules and it's up to them how they get the information.