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THE BATTLE FOR TOLMERS SQUARE

by Nick Wates (RKP £2.95)

This book tells the story of the struggle which has taken place during the last twenty years over the development of Tolmers Square and a few surrounding streets near Euston station.

It has been a struggle fought by local residents and businessmen, tenants' associations, community groups, squatters, journalists and politicians at local and national level.

And it has been fought against property developers and the interests of finance capital who have consistently tried to demolish the houses, small industries, shops, restaurants and pubs in the area to make way for more profitable offices.

The book illustrates how property companies, accountable only to their shareholders and thus only interested in maxim-

ising their profits, almost inevitably act against the interests of the local community and againsts the interests of the country as a whole.

It shows how, by using a variety of tactics, property companies transform thriving communities into decaying shells. It also shows how local authorities and planners are impotent to protect the community and in fact frequently add to the destruction by the clumsy use of planning powers.

At a time when the loss of manufacturing industry in London is causing considerable concern, the methods by which this actually happens are of particular significance.

The other major issue is the role of community action in combatting the power of finance capital. In Tolmers Square, a wide variety of opposition groups succeeded in drastically altering the outcome of events. The tactics employed by these

groups, and their successes and failures, should be studied closely by others fighting similar struggles.

The battle for Tolmers Square is not yet over. Only last month the government granted Camden Council an Office Development Permit for 300,000 square feet of offices (more than the developers were hoping to build). Many people are opposed to the building of these offices, particularly as it will mean the destruction of Tolmers Square itself.

Nick Wates does not tackle some of the wider implications of the land issue or of the community action movement, but by precisely documenting the history of the struggle in Tolmers Square with the aid of over 200 photographs and maps, 'The Battle for Tolmers Square' is an extremely important book.

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