

# Bid to block Tolmer deal

A MASSIVE campaign to stop the Camden Council — Joe Levy development of Tolmers Square was launched this week by local Labour parties and tenants' associations who are out to collect 50,000 signatures for a "Stop the Levy Deal" petition to the council.

Journalist Mr Nicholas Tomalin has lifted his High Court writ against the council to enable local organisations to campaign to have the decision to go ahead with Levy reversed at next month's full council meeting.

Labour's Shadow Housing Minister, Mr Reg Freeson, and Deputy GLC leader, Mr Illyd Harrington, pledged

their support at Wednesday's launching of the campaign.

Campaigners say the Levy deal will bring a net gain of only 380 homes to the council.

But Mr Levy's profit from the office development part of the scheme would be about £20 million, say the campaign committee — the equivalent of £100 for every person in Camden.

The campaign committee heard from Mr Tomalin that he had had an assurance from the leader of Camden Council, Mr Frank Dobson, that no contract would be signed with Mr Levy until after next month's council meeting.

They believe there is a real chance of reversing the decision made by Mr Dobson's community and planning resources committee two weeks ago.

The committee decided then that the council could not afford the risk of delaying new homes in the present housing shortage by accepting a proposed joint development with Claudius Properties Ltd, a non-profit making organisation, which promised to hand over any profit from the office development scheme back to the council.

The committee were doubtful that the Department of the Environment would sanction the compul-

sory purchase of most of the land in the Development Area owned by Mr Levy's Stock Conversion and Investments Trust Ltd.

Both Hampstead and the St Pancras North Labour Parties have resolved to oppose the scheme, and the campaign committee is to be chaired by Major Sam Waldman of the BAM Tenants' Association. Other supporters of the campaign include trade union leaders Clive Jenkins (ASTMS), Ray Buckton (ASLEF), Fred Howell (T and GWU) and Sir Sydney Greene (NUR) — former Hampstead MP Mr Ben Whittaker

CAMDEN JOURNAL SEPT 28 73

Ham. & High 28 Sept. 73

# TOLMERS GESTURE MUST FAIL

THE frivolous issue of a writ does not in my view preclude me from trying to explain to your readers the real issues in the Stock Conversion/Claudius affair. Indeed I sense your sympathies extend to Mr Tomalin, investing in him some Sir Galahad qualities.

A few facts are necessary:

1. Stock Conversion own over half the Tolmers Square site, in particular that part of the site on which offices may be built regardless of any joint enterprise. Only the amount of the offices can be disputed.
2. On two separate occasions Camden has been told by the relevant Minister that the housing land is too expensive. A compulsory purchase application has been actually refused.
3. The proposed development on the site is exactly the same under the Claudius proposal as the Stock Conversion proposal. Any de-

crease in the office content would require complete recalculation of the cost.

4. Claudius plus Edward Bates, merchant bankers, equals a developer. The chairman of Stock Conversion and his friends own a large share of the equity in Edward Bates. One is hard put to argue that this is a case of St George and the dragon.

5. The Claudius scheme can go ahead if the Minister is prepared to grant a CPO over the Stock Conversion land in order to give it to Claudius. Only a raving idiot could think that a Minister is likely to do this.

6. Incidentally, if such a CPO were granted it would involve paying Stock Conversion about £7 million for doing nothing!

7. While a public inquiry is almost inevitable, if the major landowner objects, the chances are that such inquiry will be even more protracted

than if very small landowners are involved. Hampstead Investments Ltd, own very little in the area and most of the other large landowners, eg. London Transport, Transport and General Workers Union, London Electricity Board, will almost certainly be excluded from the CPO.

In the light of the above facts, my colleagues on the council and Mr Tomalin have to admit that their proposal to go ahead with Claudius can, at best, be only a gesture.

In my view gestures rarely impress and even more rarely succeed. More important, in this particular instance the gesture must fail. The Minister will not confirm the CPO against Stock Conversion, who will go ahead with their proposed commercial development. Even if it is on a reduced scale it will hardly be unprofitable.

But what of the housing, my sole reason for having

anything to do with the scheme? Under the Stock Conversion scheme 1,600 people will be rehoused in conditions fit for the 20th century. With Claudius they will participate in a gesture which will end in their staying in their slums. The gesture will have done them a great deal of good. I wonder if they want to participate in such nice political games organised by well-housed "do-gooders."

When the CPO is refused and Stock Conversion redevelops there may be some housing, but not for people on the housing list. It will be rich mews housing — directors' pieds-a-terre. As a socialist, that is not what I want to achieve.

It may not be what Nicholas Tomalin wants to achieve, but that may be the result if his misguided efforts succeed—I don't think they will. At least I hope not. If they do, 1,600 ordinary people will know what to think.

COUNCILLOR IVOR WALKER,  
Vice-Chairman, Planning Committee,  
Camden Town Hall,  
Euston Road, NW1.