

# 1976 & ALL THAT

FOR SQUATTERS 1976 has been a year of great trials and tests - whilst councils and property owners have really toughened up in a concerted way and the press has maintained its attacks, squatters have organized in new and better ways to fight for their rights which are under ever increasing attack.

There have been failures of course, made all the more bitter by wranglings over organisational methods.

But there have been some victories, even if temporary from both we can learn and organize better in the future

## STEPS FORWARD

Some of the most significant actions have revolved around drawing in trade union and labour party support for squatters actions: squatters have initiated community and trade union inquiries into Council plans and put forward alternative plans to councils' demolition schemes as in St Agnes Place, and in Villa Road and Cleveland St; brought about delays in court proceedings - like Hornsey Rise in the Spring and Cleveland Street in the Autumn; built barricades so strong that bailiffs have been repulsed - Vining St Brixton; picketed and occupied council offices to force negotiations in Lambeth and Camden; made important contributions to the campaign against the cuts as a whole; weakened the right wing in some labour parties by joining and developing public campaigns; and made constant appearances in an organized way with banners and pamphlets on demonstrations and actions on many issues taken up by the labour movement.

The state had stepped up its pressure in new ways too early in 1976 a wave of gas and electricity cut - offs hit many squats around the country, backed up by new legal precedents.

The most significant and deadly weapon, the Criminal Trespass Bill was published in March and the police then tried it on as if it was law in some places. The first reading in parliament closed the year after months of vigorous campaigning against the Bill including a national demonstration in February and a week-end conference in November.

## Hoey's Squat On

**THE HOEY family of 11 children was evicted by Southwark Council on Tue 11 Jan and re-squatted that evening.**

The bailiffs came without any warning to their home, 26 Kitson Road, while 9 of the children were at school.

This was despite a promise by Miss Cummings of the Housing Department made to the Hoey's and to Piers Corby at the SAC Office in Rust Sq (of which Kitson Rd is the fourth side) that warning would be given.

### COUNCIL TRICK

The deceitful Southwark Council used another lie to avoid confrontation. The Official at the eviction stated to Mr and Mrs Hoey that they would after all be housed and not just offered a travel warrant to Ireland. On the basis that they and their two youngest children were taken by the Council to the Homeless Families Unit.

There Mr White - Senior Lettings Officer - revealed the lie and said in fact the Council would offer them nothing more than a travel warrant to Ireland. He said he could not help more because of the 'waiting list'. Mrs Hoey sorted him out: "If you used your empty flats and stopped destroying good houses you wouldn't have a waiting list."

On return to Rust Sq area the Hoey's stayed in

**LAND SQUATTING IN MEXICO?** An article on this has been left out of SAC 21 due to lack of space - Apologies. It will be in SAC 22 along with other super things

It has been SAC's first full year of action. SAC meeting and activity have undoubtedly had some important influence and been able to offer practical help. SAC Newsheet has trebled in size and trebled in circulation in one year to 2,000. SAC has also published the Squatting Charter and the pamphlet "Squatting - What's it all about?" in response to the press campaign started in 1975 and prolonged into 1976 with ex-policeman Councillor Tony Judge, Chairman of GLC Housing Management Committee initiating lies and distortions to substantiate the fabrications in his anti-squatting report. SAC's year closed with the first resolutions of support for the Inquiry into anti-squatting media stories from London Trades Councils. Squatting has now more concrete support from the labour movement than ever before.... Now we must make use of this support.

## PROSPECTS - THE CRUNCH

So what are the prospects for squatters in 1977? With the second reading of the Trespass Bill in March things look pretty grim. CACTL has only weeks left to mobilize for the demonstration in March in a last action to beat the bill and be ready to mount effective resistance should any of its 5 proposals become law.

The building of effective local squatting groups organised together into united activity through SAC and SAC Newsheet are an absolute necessity in the crucial struggles and campaigns unfolding.

The SAC pamphlet and Inquiry are an important tool in the campaign, and once again we urge all to sell the pamphlet and raise support for the Inquiry wherever they can. Only by defusing the myths about squatters can we make any progress, beat the Trespass Bill, force Councils to fulfill their responsibilities, and effectively reverse the housing cuts in the fight for implementation of the slogan **Decent Housing For All!**

*Sets of back copies of SAC Newsheet are available at £1.75 inc p+p (and if you have spare back issues please send them in!)... Pamphlet, "Squatting - What's it all about?" 10p p+p Both from SAC 14 Rust Sq SE5 701-7644.*

another house until the evening when No 26 was re-occupied by themselves and others. The matter got favourable TV coverage at 6pm.

### CONTEMPTIBLE

Southwark legal dept on hearing of the re-occupation were furious and totally confused next day.... they blurted "contempt of Court" to the Press but realising any attempt to arrest (???) the family would be both illegal and would meet with public contempt they decided to seek an injunction against the family re-occupying.... Then the family and the squat next door (No 24) swapped legal and on Thursday the Council agreed to start legal proceedings all over again for both houses.

### SOCIAL WORKERS

The Hoey family have become an important case in the fight by many - including Council Social Workers to reverse the brutal and absurd policies of Southwark and other Councils. Social workers, because they have to deal with evicted families could play a significant part in fighting to end the inhuman treatment of the homeless.

*SAC would like to hear from any Social workers (or people in contact with them) who are interested in these ideas and in pushing for Social workers and voluntary agencies to publicly state they support squatting - as a necessity.*

**Southwark Council has just issued summonses against the Hoey's, again, and others in 24 and 26 Kitson Road for eviction Court case Thur 27 Jan. Phone 701-7644 for support.**



Photo: - Pete Lenard

The Council vandals of Vining St are coming to take your home away, away!!

## Tolmers Fights On

IN 1975 Tolmers Village was fighting against Levy and Stock Conversion & Investment Ltd. In 1976 and 1977 it has Camden Council to contend with.

Present Council plans for Tolmers Village will mean 300,000 sq.ft. of office space, with the likelihood of a large lump site, and a reduction in housing potential and in local light industry.

The increase in office space was introduced to offset the high cost of purchasing the land and to make it an attractive proposition for private developers since the Council cannot afford to undertake the commercial development itself.

Levy's asking price for his interests in Tolmers Village was £4m. Since the Council could only raise just under £1m, it reached an agreement with a merchant bank, Morgan Grenfell Ltd., whereby the bank purchased the other two-thirds of the land for £3m. The agreement is to last for five years, during which the Council has to pay £400,000 annually to keep its option open to buy back the land at the same price paid for it. This means that by 1980 the Council has to fork out £3m, plus £400,000 per annum out of the General Rate Fund if they are to gain ownership of the land.

The rest of the plan contains certain commendable elements and includes the rehabilitation or development of housing. Work has already started on four small infill sites and tenants have been decanted BUT eviction orders served on squatters in preparation for further work. However, in the light of the cuts in public expenditure, it seems highly probably that parts of the plan will be deprioritised and that places that have been vacated may be vandalised and left to deteriorate.

The population of Tolmers Village has rapidly declined over the past year. But in view of the proposed Criminal Trespass Law, squatters who decide to leave when they receive eviction orders and open up a new place away from an established area may find it increasingly difficult in the future.

### UNITED ACTION

Tolmers Village Action Group was formed to try and deal with the problems of the area. We want a plan for Tolmers Village dictated by social need: for no office blocks; decent homes for all; for light industrial and craft facilities to provide employment for the local population. We have started work on alternative plans and a petition, and have supported those who wish to resist eviction. Whilst at the moment Camden Council are having some difficulty in implementing their plan because of cuts in housing expenditure and the difficulty in obtaining a commitment from a developer to invest in the office-building, we feel that we must try now to unite with the labour movement in Camden to reach the best possible solution to the problem of Tolmers Square. **MONI SHEEHAN**