

VIEWPOINT

SQUATTING—ONE OF TODAY'S BIG HOUSING HEADACHES

SQUATTING has become one of the biggest controversial problems of our day. Leave a property standing empty for too long and it is almost bound to be taken over by squatters.

There have even been cases of people returning from a long holiday and finding squatters have moved in. Some house-owners grumble that they are scared to turn their back for fear that some homeless group will pop in.

Recently there was the heartbreak situation when a couple were allocated the dream flat they had been waiting years for on the housing list. They took time to decorate it before moving in. When they arrived with their furniture they found the place occupied by squatters.

Many folk who have stinted and saved to buy their own homes rate squatters as idle, rent-cheating layabouts who take an easy way to solve their own housing headache.

But what does make a person squat in somebody else's property?

On page four we look at the situation and report on interviews with some of those homeless who have taken the desperate step of barricading themselves in properties they have found empty.

And they are not all irresponsible, "I'm all right, Jack" types.

Some are forced to take to squatting as the only means left to them of putting a roof over their heads, they claim. Others blame too low wages and too high rents.

Among them are professional people — single, separated or divorced for whom there is no place on any housing list, they argue.

Many local authorities have these people in mind and are trying to do something about it . . . but they seem to be a growing band.

In today's "Chronicle" we have given a page to the subject — but the question of squatting is one which requires a great deal of answers.

We don't think an answer is to be found in the practice of some councils of deliberately sabotaging their own empty property to stop it being grabbed by squatting groups. Tipping cement down the loo or ripping up floorboards is no answer.

The number of empty properties in London is staggering. Perhaps the only real way to cut down squatting is not to allow property to stand empty for so long. That way more homes would be available — for the desperate homeless as well as those sweating it out legitimately on the council housing waiting lists.

WHO WILL WIN THE BATTLE OF TOL

REGARDING the recent "C
Village: In June 1975
believe we can do
homes that
ad:

IN our opin
of cars and

The maj
who think
right to p
estate do
London.-

Camden
past, tried
illegal park
but this tact
discourage
action by peop
parking.

The illegal p
to learn and
wish to hav
damaged, they
other people
homes. In an
only damage
you try to

Why shoul
able to get in
homes beca
blocked by

Again v
estates st
services.

- In my op
must be fre
vehicles to ab
for the emerg

How many t
read in your p