

FRI DEC 4 DEC 1959

MINISTER GETS TOLMERS SQUARE APPEAL

AN appeal has been made directly to the Minister of Housing and Local Government (Mr. Henry Brooke), who is Conservative M.P. for Hampstead, by the Tolmers Square Tenants Association, urging him to prevent the erection of further blocks of offices in the vicinity. In a letter sent this week, the Association point out that office accommodation amounting to thousands of square feet, built in the area recently, is still empty.

Signed by the Secretary, Mrs. R. Gavin, of 12, Tolmers-square, N.W.1, the letter recalls that Mr. Brooke, in a speech made at Kew on November 18, said that he was determined to stop the concentration of new offices in Central London.

24-Storey Block

It also points out that at the present moment planning permission is being sought for office development in the Tolmers-square area including a 24 storey skyscraper. This would result in about 100 families being displaced.

The letter continued; "The London County Council is already buying part of this area for the widening of Euston-road. We hope that you will now suggest that it would have your approval, should they acquire the whole of the site for housing; it would certainly stop the obliteration of a little community of Londoners by more London offices. We do not see the need for these offices here, when the existing space is not used.

Empty Buildings

"The Mayor of St. Pancras (Mr. Harold P. Bastie, J.P.), received a deputation from us at the last Council meeting and heard that thirty new office blocks had been built in the last few years within a quarter mile of Tolmers-square; no less than 390,000 square feet of office space — only two-thirds of the total erected in St. Pancras since 1956 — empty within the same distance.

"Yet another huge scheme of 240,000 square feet is now being built next door and many similar local schemes have received permission recently. Many people live in our square who work awkward hours or when public transport is not available; there is a terrible shortage of housing in St. Pancras, aggravated by the 1957 Rent Act, and the loss of our homes would make it difficult for us to maintain these jobs.

"The St. Pancras Council was impressed by these facts and decided to refer back the item giving planning permission for the proposed offices.

"The Association hopes that you will support its proposals for rehousing the local inhabitants, and probably another hundred families, in Tolmers-square, and for stopping the madness of building these unnecessary offices."

This week an official of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government said that the Association's letter would be studied by the Minister.

Chooses Gaol Instead Of Ireland

Choice of "Go back to Ireland or go to prison" was offered to 42-year-old labourer John Coyne, of Camden-road, N.W.1, at Clerkenwell.

He chose prison. He was gaoled for three months when he appeared on remand having pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing to charges of taking and driving away a car without consent in Camden-road on November 17; using it without insurance; and driving without a licence.

Owner Called Police

Det. Pittendreight had told the court that Coyne was seen by the owner of the car, a Mr. Kingston, to get into the vehicle and start to drive off. Mr. Kingston detained him and called for the police.

Charged, Coyne replied: "My father made me do it."

The officer reported three previous convictions against Coyne, whom, he said, came from County Mayo.

The magistrate (Mr. Frank Powell) asked Coyne: "Would you like to go back to Ireland instead of going to prison? You cannot stay here and commit crime."

Coyne replied: "I would prefer to stay here."

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