





Frontispiece:
Aspects of Tower Hamlets.



SQUATTING AT ARBOUR HOUSE

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INTRODUCTION

Empty houses have become a characteristic feature of London, especially the inner areas. The 1971 Greater London Census puts the number of unoccupied dwellings at almost 100,000. This in itself is not a bad thing, indeed conventional planning wisdom advocates there should be a 5% vacancy rate to encourage mobility.¹ But that houses are empty at a time when over 12,000² people are living in temporary accomodation, and approximately 200,000³ are on council waiting lists, indicates that something is wrong with our system of housing management.

Planners, successive governments, and charities have failed to solve this apparant paradox and it is not surprising that ordinary people have taken the initiative by occupying empty properties and squatting. Many people, especially planners and housing officials, assume that squatters have an entirely negative effect on the environment; by holding up the authorities in their work. I challenge this view and in this study show that squatters are a significant force in social change. Not only do they house people in the short-term, but by means of direct action, they achieve greater structural changes in the housing management system than can be achieved using more conventional means.

In order to identify the forces at work in squatting I have made a study of a squat which occurred at Arbour House, Tower Hamlets, in 1969 and 1970. By studying the inter-relationship of events before, during, and after the squat, it is possible to identify fundamental problems in the way that local government in Tower Hamlets manages its environment. It is also possible to evaluate the success of the squatters in altering the situation.

1. SQUATTING BEFORE ARBOUR HOUSE 4

'The current squatting movement was born in 1968, but like all new-born organisms, the seed was sown long before.'⁵ Squatters have appeared throughout history in widely differing circumstances, but the squatters movement following the Second World War was particularly influential for those active in the present campaign. In 1945 the so called 'vigilante movement' took place as a protest against large houses in resorts being left empty for most of the year. As it developed it grew into an attack on the right of landlords to do as they wished with their property. The government was forced to give wider powers to local authorities to requisition empty property for housing, while the threat of further direct action compelled the councils to use those powers. Then came the occupation of disused army camps and in October 1946 the government announced that there were 39,535 people squatting in camps in England and Wales. The government ended this movement by firstly charging five communists with conspiracy to commit trespass and forcible entry to deter further squatting, and secondly, handing over 850 former service camps to the squatters who were thus entirely successful in obtaining homes. 'The spirit and success of the 1945-46 squatting campaigns made them an important influence on those people who initiated the present campaign.'⁶

Another influential strand was a series of successful actions over inhuman rules and conditions in hostels and slums from 1965 onwards in which Ron Bailey was involved. The main lesson learned from these events was that direct action worked where individual complaints failed. As the Observer remarked later regarding the Kings Hill Hostel case, the campaign had achieved in twelve months what twelve years of governmental admonishment to the Kent County Council had failed to achieve.

On 13 November 1968 'Cathy Come Home' was repeated on television for the second time and the next day Ron Bailey and others formed the London Squatters Campaign. As they saw it governments, caring politicians and charities had all consistently failed to solve the housing problem and the only thing left was direct action. The immediate aim of the campaign was simply the rehousing of people from hostels and slums by means of squatting. But there were also wider aims. 'We hoped to start an all out attack on the housing authorities, with ordinary people taking action for themselves.' 'We saw our campaign as having a radicalizing effect on existing movements in the housing field.' 'Squatting should be the movement of ordinary people to challenge the authorities on the whole issue. It must become the living

demonstration that ordinary people will no longer accept intolerable housing shortage. It must become the threat that will compel government, national and local, to change its priorities.⁷ The first squats ^{were} ~~was~~ merely short term publicity events. The first one occurred on 1 December 1968 at a block of luxury flats called the Hollies in Wanstead and lasted for four hours. The second at an old vicarage in Leyton for forty-eight hours. These squats served two purposes: First publicity; the Hollies demonstration was well covered by newspapers, television and radio and started a flood of articles on the housing problem. One of the squatters even recorded an interview for Canadian radio. Second; these token squats gave those taking part a chance to flex their muscles and gain experience. Legally, squatting is a very sophisticated operation. To squat effectively it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of all the laws relating to property and trespass, many of which date back to the fourteenth century. I think it is clear that the growth of the movement would not have happened as it did if a number of pioneers had not undertaken to understand the law precisely and establish precedents for others to follow. The growth of the movement was characterised by squatters out-witting the opposition in court.

Then came Redbridge. The Ilford Council was embarking on its central Ilford Redevelopment Plan and was leaving a considerable number of houses empty, despite the plan not having been formally approved by the Minister. There was considerable local feeling about this and two groups - the Ilford Town Centre Residents Association and the small labour group on the Council - had tried by 'constitutional' methods to get the houses used, but failed. The detailed history of the Redbridge squat provides a fascinating insight into the detailed processes of squatting and the workings of local councils. A number of important things emerged. First; squatting was established as legally viable. The squatters continually outmanouvred the Council in court leading eventually to the Council ignoring the law and using the notorious Barrie Quartermain and his band of evictors, which they were later to regret. Second; the campaign achieved results both in terms of housing people in the short-term, and in creating long-term changes in council policy towards empty houses. Houses that the Council acquire and which are not needed until the second stage of the redevelopment plan in 1976 must now be used for housing purposes. This ^{was} ~~is~~ ensured as the Minister of Housing will not give the Council loan sanction to buy the houses unless they do use them for short-term housing. Also in February 1971 (after the Arbour House squat) the Council finally agreed to hand over short-life property to the Trinity Housing Association for housing homeless families, after having been totally opposed to the idea months before.

Third; it is clear that the campaign only succeeded because of the large amount of favourable publicity it received, which acted to pressurise the Council. The publicity also acted as a catalyst for other groups who were facing similar problems in their own localities. It became a blueprint for action.

Several other squats occurred in 1969, the most significant probably being at Lewisham. Here the tactic of 'ultra-reasonableness' really made progress. Following a series of squats, an agreement was made in November and December between the Council and Lewisham Family Squatters Association whereby the Council agreed to hand short-life property to the Association provided that it was vacated when needed. In addition, any family moving into the Association's houses would have their points frozen on the waiting list, so that they could still be rehoused by the Council when the time came. This agreement was only obtained by pressure and has become a model which is now used in many boroughs.

Within the squatters movement itself there has been a continual confrontation of ideology which on occasions has almost led to disaster. The importance of publicity has already been stressed and from this it follows that the squatters image is vitally important. In the summer of 1969 the London Street Commune occupied 144 Picadilly and a school in Endell Street. This was a completely separate movement with very different objectives, but to the press they were still squatters. Squatting then became associated with hippies and communes and brought out people's most reactionary fears. Also in Brighton some squatters were involved in making bombs, and this again led to bad feeling towards squatters. It is fairly certain that these events tended to hinder the development of a mass squatting campaign among the working class.

Many see squatting as part of a revolutionay movement which to be successful must attack distribution of wealth in society. It is not after all, the individual circumstances of families that make them homeless, but their social property as low wage earners. Existing society must then be attacked at every level. But in the reality of squatting individual families, the more extremist agitation involved, the more difficult an agreement becomes. There is much dispute over the precise point at which principles are sacrificed in order to give a family security.

It is important to appreciate that the squatting movement was not cohesive, but contained people with diverse aims, methods, technical competence and background, and who were only informally inter-related, if at all.

2. HOMELESSNESS, HOUSING, AND PLANNING IN TOWER HAMLETS

'The latest dwelling spot for the squatters must be the place where Orwell was inspired to write 1984. The area stretching back from Commercial Road is a platform for blocks of flats interfering with sky, and their Coronation Street counterparts.'⁸

This is not the place for an analysis of the housing problem, but to understand the squatters' action it is necessary to appreciate that many people were, and still are, living under appalling conditions. Tower Hamlets, in common with other inner London boroughs has a chronic shortage of housing, coupled with an exodus of population and industry and a dwindling base of rate income. It suffered extensive bomb damage during the war and has some of the worst slum conditions in London. Significantly, there is no housing department report, the only published reports being those of the Chief Librarian and the Medical Officer of Health. The following figures, taken from the latter's reports, are an indication of the problem.

	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
Waiting List (units required)	8015	8026	7616	6945	6269	5830
New dwellings	951	1120	2123	1978	1670	1202
Improvement grant applications	36	29	4	16	9	12
Slum clearance orders	272	606	339	208	232	168
Applications for rehousing to larger or smaller accom.	1668	1040	1222	830	1372	1319

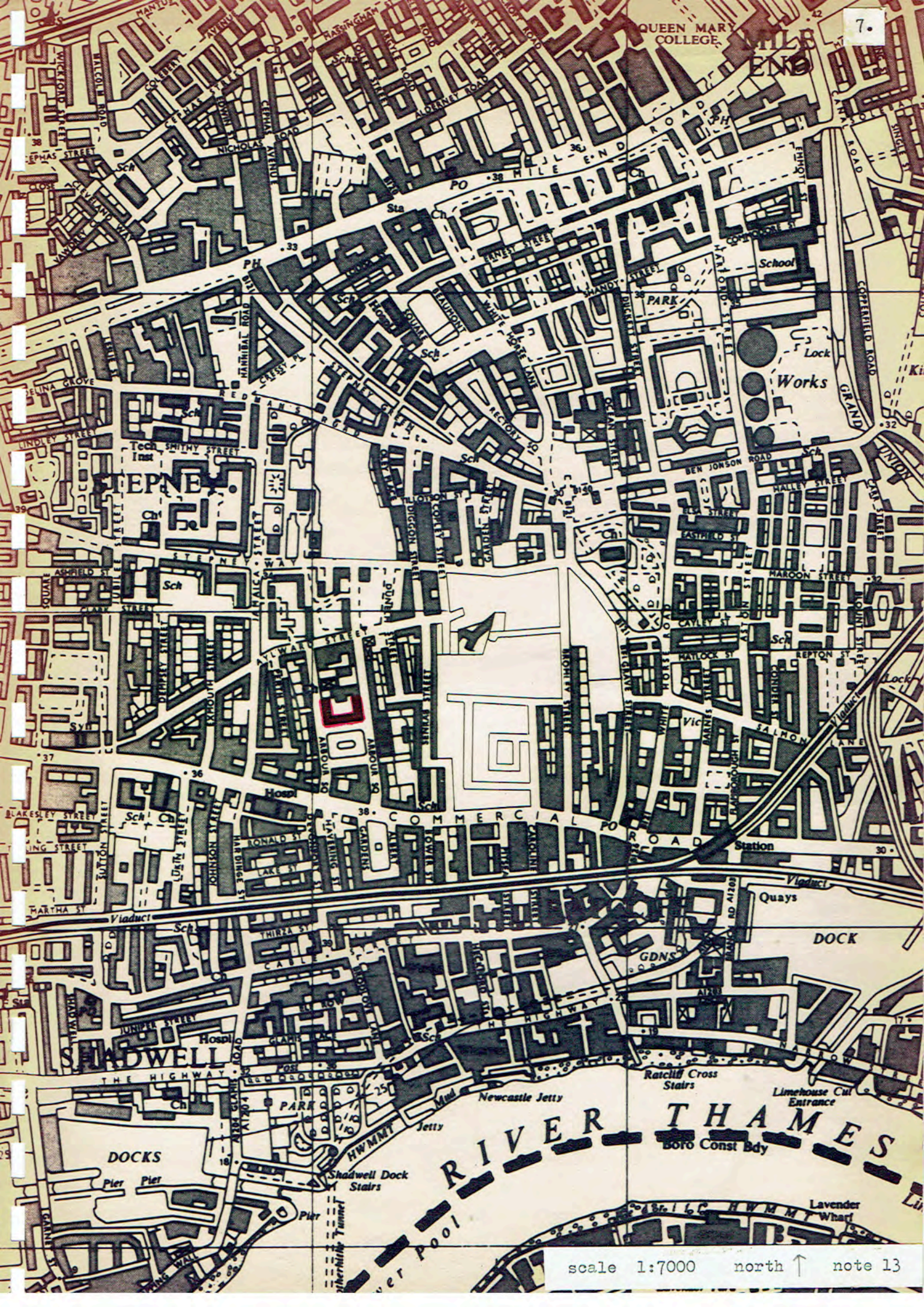
In 1965 he estimated there were 13,800 'unfit' properties.

Apart from its size, the waiting list has other problems. To qualify one must have lived in the Borough for two years. Also, by virtue of the priority system, single people, childless couples, the young and the old have little hope of receiving accommodation. Homelessness proper - no roof over the head - occurs frequently as a result of marital disputes, young couples being thrown out of in-laws' homes, and eviction for rent arrears.

In the Administrative County of London Development Plan, published in 1962, Arbour Square falls within Comprehensive Development Area No. 2 - Stepney and Poplar. The statement published with the plan states 'The area, in the opinion of the Council should be redeveloped as a whole for the purpose of dealing satisfactorily with extensive war damage, bad layout and obsolete development.'⁹ Proposals included are: Redevelopment as a number of residential neighbourhoods, complete with all social services and new open spaces; relocation of industry and commerce which must move during reconstruction but must stay in the area; and improvement of principal traffic road systems and segregation of through traffic from residential areas.

Decanting is a major problem for both planners and housing officials. 'Common to other boroughs, Tower Hamlets has its decanting problem which tends to increase rather than decrease.'¹⁰ This is partially caused by the scale of development which necessitates large areas being emptied of occupants before work can start. Also, in general, densities are being reduced so that there is less accommodation after rebuilding than before. Eventually it is hoped to decrease the population by one third its present level,¹¹ but no provision is made for finding this displaced third alternative accommodation. The current rate of population decline is 3.6%.¹²

Tower Hamlets was seized by planners as a golden opportunity to apply the planning doctrines of zoning and the 'city beautiful'. The failure of these doctrines to solve city problems is becoming universally apparent, and nowhere more so than Tower Hamlets.



QUEEN MARY COLLEGE.

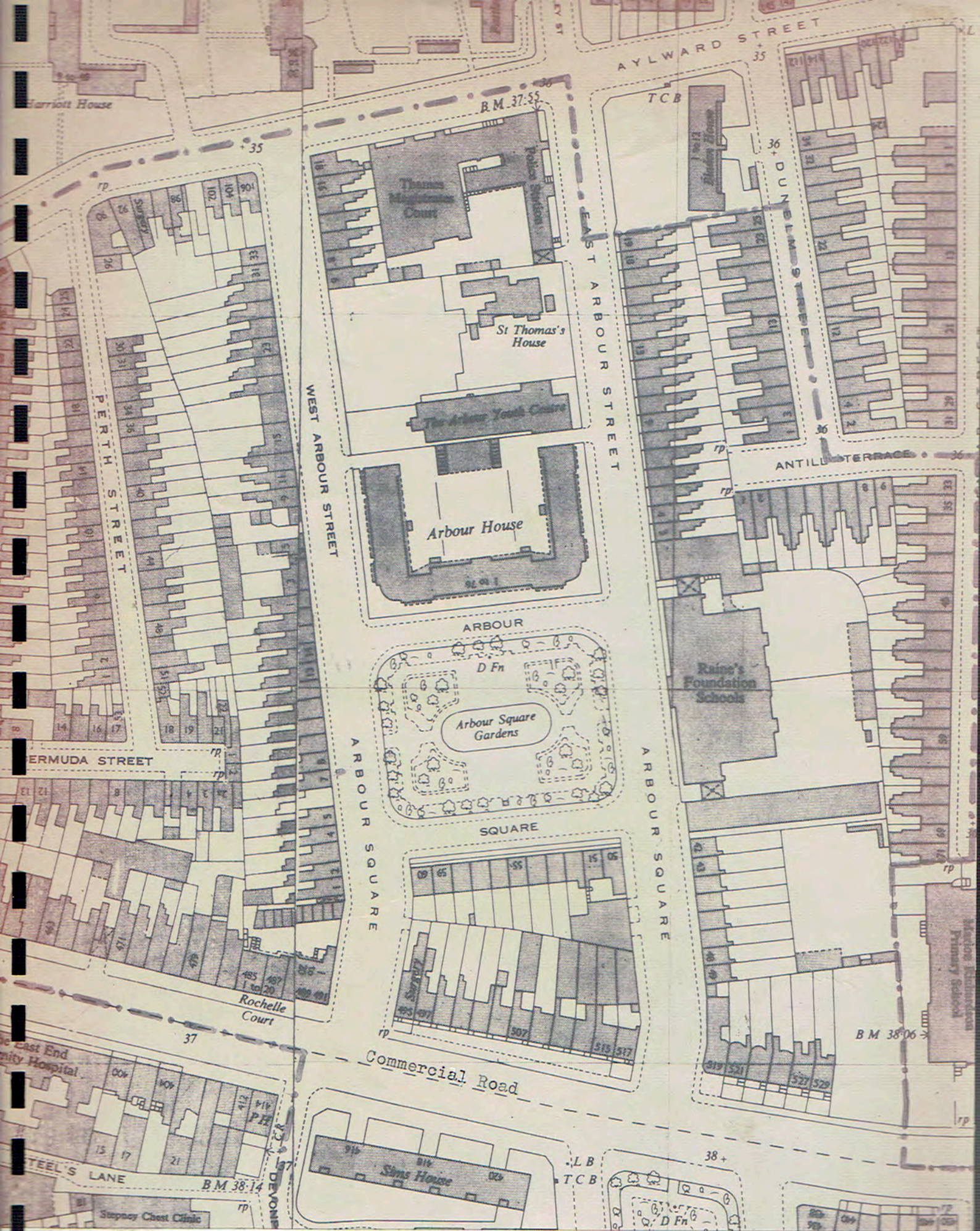
STEPNEY

ALFORD

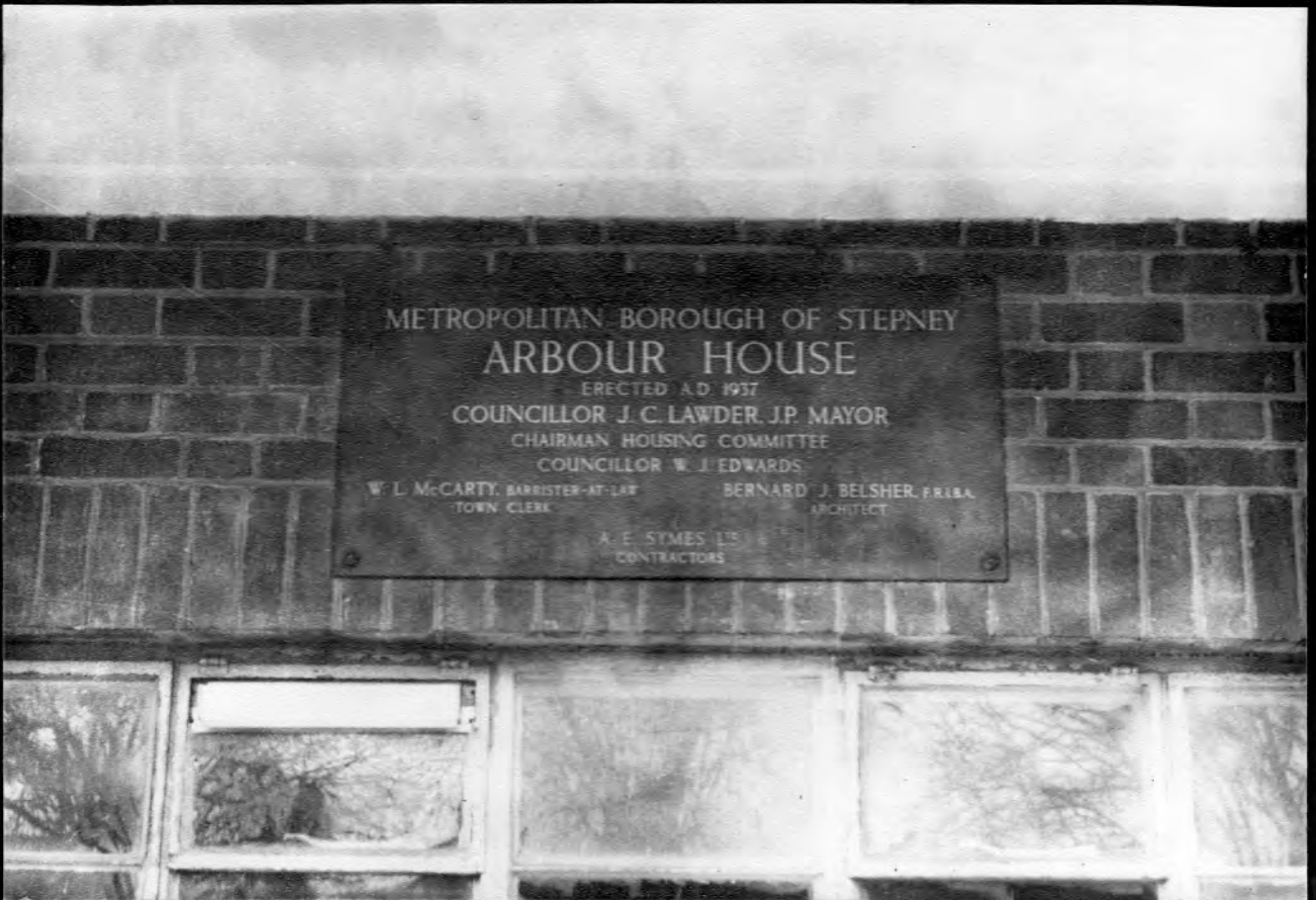
COMMERCIAL ROAD

SHADWELL

RIVER THAMES



Ordnance Survey 1949¹⁴ scale 1:1250 north ↑
 Since 1962 Arbour House has been zoned in a residential area; density
 136 persons to the acre.



3. ARBOUR HOUSE - CONVERSION AND MODERNIZATION

Arbour House was built by the Borough of Stepney, and was completed in 1937.¹⁵ The history of the block does not interest us again until December 1966¹⁶ when the Engineers and Surveyors Department decided to modernize the block. At this time all improvement and conversion work on Council property was the responsibility of the Engineers and Surveyors Department, which worked in a fairly ad hoc way; there being no priority established for work, and no comprehensive survey of the condition of Council property. It is not clear whether the initiative to modernize Arbour House came from the Department or from a tenant's request. Anyway the Department carried out a tenant survey to find out if the occupants as a whole wanted the building converted. No results are available but in similar cases there is generally a 40% return with 60% in favour.¹⁷ The value of this exercise is dubious. There is virtually no chance of occupants returning after the conversion, so they are really voting on whether they want to move. Being part of a clearance programme they have priority over the waiting list, and move straight into new or improved property.

The Engineers and Surveyors Department then prepared an estimate for the work which came to £64,000 and presented it to the Housing (Building and Development) Committee on 21 February 1968 for approval. Approval was given and the Housing Department was asked to decant the occupants. On 26 June 1968 detailed drawings were started, and thirteen months later - 26 July 1969 - these were completed along with contract bills prepared by the quantity surveyor.¹⁸

The logic of the design seems to be as follows: Previously 20 of the 76 flats had been bedsits, and had no bath. The remainder had no basins in the bathrooms. Adding these facilities to existing flats made them too small so changes had to be made in the layout. The resulting mix depended on the constraints of the building fabric although attempts were made to provide different sizes of flat on each floor. It was a case of making 'the best out of a bad job.'¹⁹ The former 76 units were reduced^{to} 61 as shown in Appendix 1. 'Each one will have a living room, a kitchen with a sink, larder, provision for gas or electricity, bathroom and separate WC. Heating and hotwater are provided by combined gas fire and back boiler in each living room serving small bore hot water radiators. Electric emersion heaters are provided for use in summer. The whole block is rewired and a communal TV aerial will be installed. Attention will also be given to refuse chutes, balcony balustrades and pram sores^{at} and ground level. The central area will be landscaped with grassed beds

and shrubs, a drying area and small boundary walls.²⁰ (photographs page 14) It is doubtful whether a conversion of this magnitude was necessary. The squatters, while accepting that some improvements were needed, considered it a palace in comparison with other accommodation in the Borough.

On 6 October 1969,²¹ nine days after the squatters moved in, and almost two and a half months after the drawings and quantities were finalised, the Finance Committee approved authorization of a tender procedure. The Committee report stated; 'In connection with the Improvement and Conversion of the above mentioned property we have, notwithstanding Standing Orders Nos. 59 and 81(b) authorized the Borough Engineer and Surveyor and the Borough Treasurer to negotiate a tender for the necessary works with a suitable firm of contractors selected from the Council's approved list.' Standing Order 59 refers to the need for competitive tendering and is outdated, but Standing Order 81(b) reads: 'No scheme (whether relating to a new service or the extension of an existing service or project) shall proceed save on the submission to the appropriate committee of a conjoint report by the appropriate chief officer, the Town Clerk and the Borough Treasurer, and any such scheme which the committee shall approve shall be submitted for consideration, from the financial aspect, by the Finance Committee.'²³ So it seems the Finance Committee pushed the job ahead by avoiding the normal procedure. This could well have been prompted by the squatters action.

On 25 February 1970²⁴ the Housing (Building and Development) Committee received proposals from the Engineers and Surveyors Department for the conversion. 'The estimated cost, including professional services, is £196,515 and we have recommended the Finance Committee to make an application to the Minister of Housing and Local Government for approval of the scheme for improvement grant purposes.'²⁵ There was no stated explanation for the three-fold rise in cost, but one member of the administration suggested that at that time the Engineers and Surveyors Department had not had much experience of conversion work.

On 3 March 1970²⁶ the Finance Committee received and approved a tender submitted by Leaf Construction Ltd. for £177,405. They recommended that a capital estimate be adopted in the sum of £196,515 made as follows: Improvement £177,405; Fees of Architects and Surveyors £15,966; Lithography etc. £500; Clerk of Works salary £2,250.' This 'subject to the approval of the Minister of Housing and Local Government for improvement grant purposes.'²⁷ This approval was given on 13 May 1970²⁸ for a modernization grant loaned over a period of twenty years.

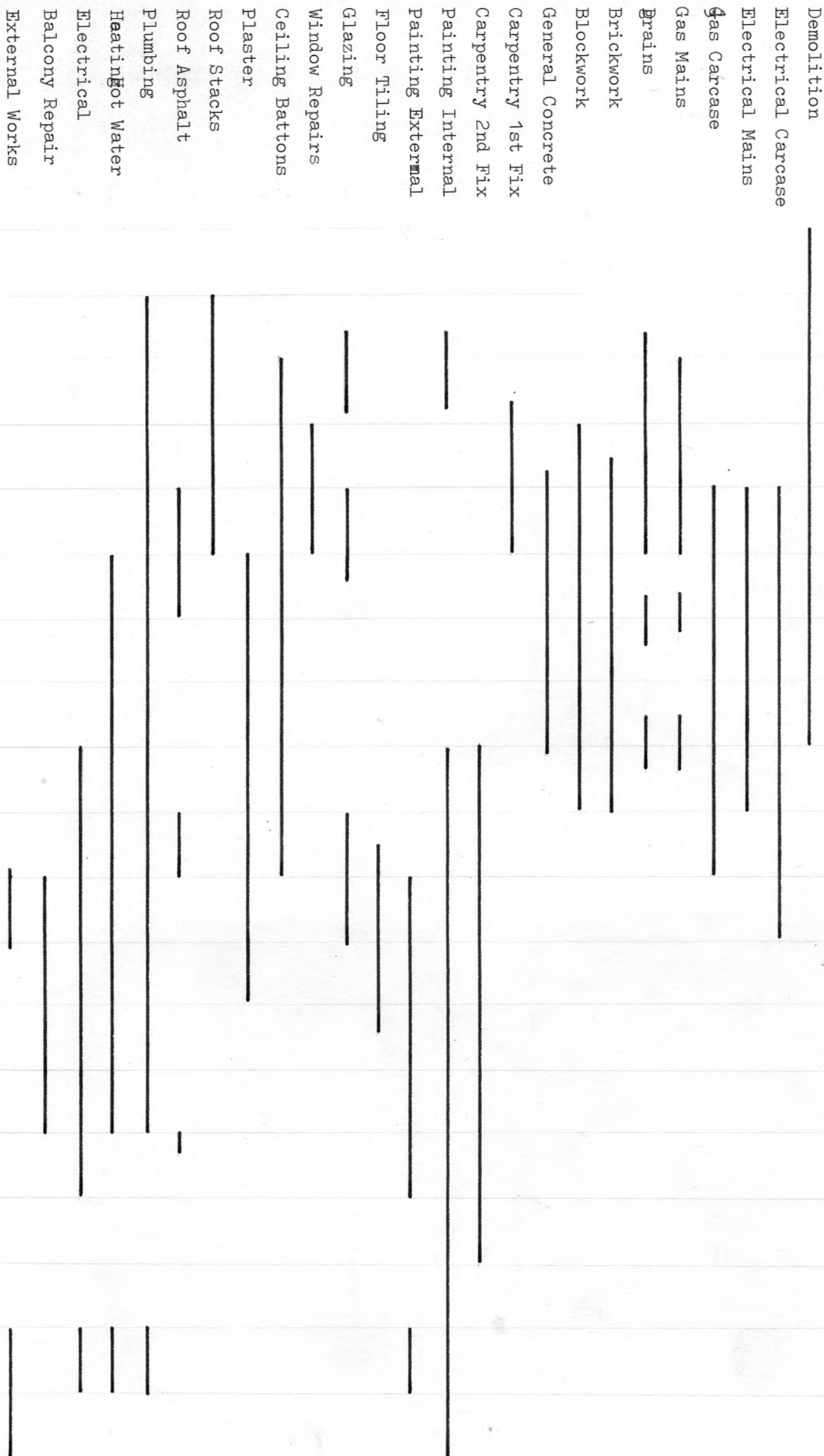
Leaf Construction Ltd. did not actually start on site for fourteen months; one day after the last squatting family moved out. This was the last day they could start before the contract had to be re-negotiated. Owing to several minor problems, plus the building strike in 1972 the work has run late. Half the flats were handed over to the Council in April 1973 while at the time of writing, the remainder are being finished off.

The following photographs²⁹ and bar-line chart indicate the extent and nature of the work. It is significant that the whole block is treated as a single unit for building and scheduling purposes. Leaf Construction did consider doing the job in phases, but thought this would be more 'awkward';³⁰ in other words more expensive. This is why the block had to be completely empty before they could start work.





ARBOUR HOUSE
CONSTRUCTION
PROGRAMME 31



Aug 1971
Sept
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan 1972
Feb
March
April
May
June
July
Aug
Sept
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan 1973
Feb

4. ARBOUR HOUSE SQUAT

(see Appendix 2 p.32 for press cuttings)

During the Redbridge battles, a 'front group' called the Campaign to Clear Hostels and Slums (CCHS) was formed, its aim being to raise money for squatters. Tony Mahoney became its full-time organizer and an office was rented in Osborn Street, E.1. CCHS developed a number of contacts with badly housed families around Stepney, and was involved in the formation of tenants associations in tenement blocks. Three families living in dreadful conditions in Cheshire Street heard about CCHS and asked Tony if he knew of anywhere better they could live. Tony explained that a few days previously he had been travelling in a car with Trevor Huddleston, the Bishop of Stepney, on the way back from a meeting on homelessness. On passing through Arbour Square the Bishop commented that Arbour House had been empty for a long time and that someone should squat there.³²

27 September 1969 - Three families moved into Arbour House 'after squatters' leaders had smashed windows to get in and then removed padlocks from the doors.'³³ In the same article reporting the Arbour House occupation, the Guardian writes about St. Patrick's island being handed over for a 'property-owning hippy commune'; in other words squatter equals hippy.(p.33)

Tony contacted Mr. Wolkind, the Town Clerk, to see if an agreement was possible. Mr. Wolkind was interested, but had no power over the rest of the Council.³⁴ Tony describes the Council as 'right-wing Irish labour people', who gained power in the thirties and held on ever since.

29 September 1969 - The Council announced that it was taking legal action to remove the squatters. 'A Council statement agreed that some of the 75 flats in the 1937 estate had been vacant for more than 18 months, and said that all tenants could not be offered suitable alternative accommodation at once.'³⁵

2 October 1969 - The General Purposes Committee stated 'The Council is in the process of rehousing the tenants of the above mentioned dwelling prior to carrying out conversion and improvement works. Unauthorized persons have entered into occupation of some of the flats from which the tenants had been rehoused and we have approved the action of our Chairman

authorizing the Town Clerk to institute legal proceedings in the High Court with a view ^{to} recovering possession within the framework of the law in order that the Council's programme for the improvement of Arbour House may proceed.' ³⁶

15 October 1969 - Squatters protested at the Council meeting when the above report was received. 'At 10-35pm there being continuous interruptions from the public gallery notwithstanding previous warnings by His Worship the Mayor, the Mayor ordered, In pursuance of Standing Order 11, that the public gallery be cleared, and it was.' ³⁷ The meeting ran out of time.

Two court hearings were heard during the month. The result was that legal proceedings were 'adjourned sine die at the request of the defendants who propose to instruct leading Counsel to represent them.' ³⁸ A temporary injunction preventing others from entering continued in force and the Town Clerk announced that 'Proceedings will be taken against other persons who, notwithstanding the interim injunction, enter into occupation.' ³⁹ This injunction was ignored by the squatters and more families continued to move in. The Council therefore had the choice of ^{either} allowing this to continue or having the squatters imprisoned for contempt of court. This ^{latter} would have caused much adverse publicity and also ^{meant} taking the children into care, which would have cost the Council £15 ⁴⁰ a week per child. They did nothing. There were numerous adjournments of the court. The squatters discovered that the Council might have failed to act in accordance with its own Standing Orders in going to the court without the consent of Council. They sought legal advice and were advised that they might be able to argue 'necessity' ⁴¹ had forced them to squat. They applied for legal aid, were refused, and appealed, so further delaying the case.

11 February 1970 - Harrassment. The London Electricity Board, presumably on instruction from the Council, dug up and disconnected the electricity supply from the whole building. The squatters rang the Lewisham Family Squatters to ask advice. It appeared the LEB act was of dubious legality but that it would take too long to obtain an injunction requiring the LEB to fullfill their responsibilities. So the next day the squatters marched to the Council and threatened to leave their children there unless the electricity was reconnected. After two hours of arguing they were each given £1 and the electricity was reconnected the same day. A neat example of direct action. ⁴²

30 July 1970 - By this time there were 32 families in the block, including 60 children.⁴³ Most of the families were squatting because the alternative was either temporary accomodation or welfare accomodation, which for some meant leaving their children in care. Arbour House was a palace in comparison. In addition there were a collection of young radicals acting as helpers. There had still been no meeting with the Council. 'We have been told time and time again the Council will not meet us unless the block is evacuated. We are prepared to discuss matters.'⁴⁴

13 August 1970 - The Council's application to High Court over the possession of the premises was finally heard in the High Court. The Black Power movement was approached by the East London Squatters to stage a demonstration outside the law courts but this did not prevent Master Bickford Smith making writs of possession suspended for one month.⁴⁵

9 September 1970 - The squatters urged Vic Feather, Peter Shore (MP for Stepney), and Ian Mikardo (MP for Poplar) to intervene. Barbed wire defenses were erected on the stairs of Arbour House in anticipation of an eviction attempt.⁴⁶

10 September 1970 - The eviction orders expired. The squatters invaded Council offices and demanded a meeting with councillors. They refused to leave until a meeting was arranged for 14 September with Tom Mitchell, the chairman of the Social Services committee. 'A Council spokesman said there was no imminent danger of eviction from the flats. "Before we can evict we have to go to the courts again for a writ of execution. No applications will be made to the courts until the Council authorizes them."⁴⁷

11 September 1970 - More Harrassment. Council workmen arrived with a police escort under the guise of mending a water main, and used sledgehammers to smash up toilets and washbasins of three more flats in the block. So adding several hundred pounds to the renovation bill. The Council admitted they could not offer alternative accomodation, apart from welfare accomodation.⁴⁸

14 September 1970 - The talks occurred between six squatters and two Council representatives, the first talks since the squat began. The squatters presented 'Alternatives to Eviction' which set out some proposals for a solution. Before discussion could start, the squatters demanded 'that all evictions and proceedings for possession of the occupied

flats must be halted during the time of negotiations, and that if a solution were found which was agreeable to both parties, that all legal proceedings should be abandoned.'⁴⁹ The Council officials 'had no authority to agree to such a demand',⁵⁰ and so the squatters walked out after only twenty minutes. Tony Mahoney explained that this was a pre-planned tactic as they were confident that the Council would not and could not evict them by force. A strong line was therefore called for.⁵¹

15 September 1970 - Ron Bailey, who had not been involved in the Arbour House squat and was currently running the Lewisham Family Squatters Association, rang the Council leader, William Guy and suggested there might be a possibility of a solution. A meeting was held the same day in which Ron Bailey put his proposal for setting up a Lewisham-type squatting group in Tower Hamlets. The Council seemed interested.⁵²

16 September 1970 - The squatters had planned a demonstration for the Council meeting in the evening but after hearing about Ron Bailey's meeting they sat quietly while William Guy talked about the meeting with the squatters, and how since that meeting an approach had been made by another organization with some proposals. If these proposals materialized, it could lead to a settlement 'without the Council having to resort to eviction procedure and the possibility of violence and hardship which could result.' He could 'not be more precise at this stage.' He re-emphasized that 'the Council has a responsibility to the people of this Borough to regain possession as quickly as possible so that the property can be brought back into normal occupation at the earliest possible date.'⁵³

28 October 1970 - The Housing (Building and Letting) Committee passed the proposals recommending an agreement on the following terms: The Council should offer the squatting association short-life property; No rent should be charged; The association would be responsible for placing therein Tower Hamlets families in dire need of accommodation; they would be vacated if given one months notice; the Council should incur no expenses; and the association should submit to the Council's Housing Officer details of families for approval before moving them in.⁵⁴

27 January 1971 - The above recommendations were accepted by the full Council.⁵⁵

5. THE AGREEMENT (Appendix 3 contains the agreement)

The council-squatters agreement in most boroughs is fairly short. But in Tower Hamlets the Council decided to fix its common seas¹ to an exhaustive legal document. It has taken months to prepare and must have cost the Council a considerable amount of money in solicitors fees. The irony is that it has not yet been signed by the squatters and so in theory is not legally binding anyway. However both sides act as if it was.

The agreement is very similar to the Lewisham agreement and encapsulates the recommendations of the Council. Its main aim seems to be to enable the Family Squatters Association to house a few families, while at the same time ensuring that the Council is immunized, legally, financially and structurally from their actions. To do this the agreement attempts to put the squatters in a straight-jacket. 'The director will offer to loan the Association such short-life property as the Council may in their absolute discretion determine.' The Association 'shall house in an accepted property no persons other than a registered person and his family.' 'The Association shall indemnify the Council and their employees and agents against all actions, claims, damages, and liability which may arise as a consequence of this agreement.'⁵⁶ Nowhere in the document is there any way for the squatters to pressurize the Council to give them houses or in anyway attack the real cause of the problem.

6. SQUATTING IN TOWER HAMLETS SINCE THE AGREEMENT (see also Appendix 4 & 5)

After the Council approved the concept of an agreement with the squatters, Tower Hamlets Family Squatters Association grew steadily, and are currently housing approximately ninety families.

It is run on a cooperative basis. Each family in a house... pay rates to the council and rent to the association. At present (July 1972) this works out at about £3/4 a week per house, but this is changeable since the whole idea of the group is that it is run by the members themselves. They say how much money should go where. And the place to do all this is at the meetings on Thursdays, where anything that is agreed on is carried out. People in houses and people waiting can speak their minds and important issues are voted on.

Everything is out in the open. There are no committees, no meeting behind closed doors, and no bosses or landlord. In a squatter squatter's house you are your own landlord.

The rent

at present goes towards paying 2 people Thurstine and Graham at £10 a week. Their job is to try and get houses from the Council and G.L.C as quickly as possible and make sure they are made habitable and occupied as soon as possible. They do what office work needs to be done. Also, Bert Murphy works at 50p an hour as a handyman. We also occasionally have to employ other skilled workers. The rest of the cash goes on tools, materials for our van, office and other travel expenses. The treasurer lives in one of the houses and the books are always open to inspection. 57

Graham and Thurstine have now given up their part in it. Graham, an ex Architectural Association student, says the political interest is gone as the whole operation has been institutionalised. He is also disappointed at how politically unaware most of the families remain; being content to allow him and Thurstine do everything as long as long as housing is provided.

In many ways the Association has become a miniature version of the Council housing department, with forms to fill in and agreements to sign (pp58-59). Yet the fact that it is small is crucial to its political significance as it enables a greater degree of participatory democracy. It can be seen from a description of a meeting (p60) that the democracy is far from ideal, but it does go some way towards meeting one of the squatters aims: 'Possibly the most important development of the squatting movement is that working people have taken control of their lives to a small extent at least.' 58

The Council is still not very cooperative. Gregg Gibbons, who took over the organizational role from Graham, complains that the Council only give them about two houses every week, although he estimates that one hundred houses must become empty in that time. He has to spend time

finding out where empty houses are and pointing them out to the Council; Apparently the Council does not offer houses without persuasion. Also some of the Association's houses come from the G.L.C. in accordance with an agreement between the Family Squatters Advisory Service (Appendix 6) and the G.L.C. This is because only Tower Hamlets families may be housed in Council property (p43) and many homeless families do not qualify as Tower Hamlets families. Several times Gregg has rung the G.L.C. to ask if they can have a particular house, and the next day workmen arrive and smash the house up. Not the ultimate in cooperation.

In addition to THFS there are now other organizations making use of short-life property, namely; Trinity Housing, Quadrant, and the social services department. This was not happening before the agreement.

By means of the agreement, the Council has tried to contain and institutionalize the movement. In fact it has merely directed the energy elsewhere. In addition to the family squatters there are approximately two hundred⁵⁹ other squatters in the Borough. These people are squatting without making an agreement, by merely walking into a house and taking up residence. Mostly they are unaware of THFS or if they are aware, consider them a sell-out and irrelevant. They are motivated by various ideologies, and in varying degrees of intensity; from those who are trying to smash the system, to those who just want to do their own thing and enjoy squatting life.⁶⁰ The most significant of these squats is that organized by Tony Mahoney (the ringleader at Arbour House) at 20 Myrdle Street and 42 Parfett Street. (Appendix 5) The 'enemy' has changed from being the Council, to the speculation of a property company; Epracet. The tactics are similar to previous squats; careful legal manouvring to create spectacles which appeal to press and television which in turn pressurizes people into action. Backed by legal aid from SHELTER, FSAS, Child Poverty Action Group, and the National Council for Civil Liberties, they have received extremely favourable publicity and succeeded in making Epracet look evil and foolish.

The battle against private speculation is the next step in the evolution of the movement. There is much empty private property in London, from that emotional symbol Centrepoint down to individual landlord's property, and the reason for it being empty is more repugnant than with Council property; namely capitalist greed. That the squatters should initially have made their attack on local councils was fairly logical as councils, being elected bodies, have to pay some attention to public reaction, whereas property companies have little to lose by bad publicity. But having got established, speculation was the obvious target.

CONCLUSIONS

The most blatant factor which emerges from the foregoing analysis is that the conversion and modernization of Arbour House was grossly mismanaged. After the first flats were vacated, five years elapsed before the block could be reinhabited. Clearly this was not entirely due to squatters. After the housing department was instructed to empty the block, there was a period of over two years before a contract was signed, and a further twenty-one months while the work was actually being carried out, neither of which could have been affected by the squatters. Even if the squat had not happened it is likely that flats would have been unoccupied for up to four years, which is absurdly long for a technically simple conversion. It seems even more absurd when one considers the shortage of housing accomodation in Tower Hamlets.

So why did it take so long? It is futile to look for any single cause but a number of contributing factors can be identified.

First; the division of functional duties within the Council's administration. The conversion was first conceived by the Engineers and Surveyors Department who were also responsible for the design and construction procedure. But it was the Housing Department which had the responsibility for removing the occupants and finding them somewhere else to live. The Engineers and Surveyors Department performed the operation as cheaply as they could, but in their budget they did not consider the lost rent or the cost of providing welfare accomodation for an equivalent number of people. These responsibilities belonged to another department. Even the Project Coordinator, who one would expect to have an overview, is unable to do so; 'I'm not allowed to dabble in finance.' Everyone keeps dogmatically to their own little job.

Second; the lack of participation of the occupants in the conversion design, and the resulting reliance on standards. There is no doubt that the block did need attention but had the occupants had some say as to how the resources were to be used - and the resources amounted to £2,620⁶¹ per flat - the result might have been very different. For example; families might have preferred to put up with builders in their flats for a few weeks while minor alterations were made, rather than have to move. As it was the standards and regulations with which the designers and administrators were working, were layed down by remote bodies, and were mostly based on out-dated nineteenth century health morality. No allowance was made for the

existential needs of the people living there. In other words there was a complete alienation of the occupants of the flats from the conversion process.

Third; the actual construction process operated by the contractor was out of touch with the purpose of the construction. This can clearly be seen from the barchart showing the construction programme. The whole block was treated as a single unit by the contractors, who rationalised the building operations in the traditional manner. All demolition throughout the block was carried out first, and all painting last. This again relates to the absence of a comprehensive approach to the whole operation. It might have been justified, even in overall economic terms, to reduce the building unit to one wing, or even to one flat, but it would be unreasonable to expect the construction firm to initiate this. The contractors did apparently consider doing the job in phases but considered it would be more 'awkward'.

Now we turn to look at the effect of squatting on this situation. In the first place the squat at Arbour House had the negative effect of holding up the conversion for about one year. Many people consider this the only effect which is clearly shortsighted.

The first aim of most squatters is simply to house themselves and others. The Tower Hamlets Family Squatters are doing just that for approximately ninety families at present, by means of the agreement with the Council. It is conceivable that this agreement could have been reached without the confrontation at Arbour House, but this is unlikely judging from this case, and from similar situations in other boroughs. It is difficult to understand why councils have such deep-rooted objection to an agreement which is entirely beneficial, but the whole structure of the council bureaucracy works to prevent any change, especially when that change is inherently challenging its efficiency.

The second aim of the movement was to have a radicalising effect on existing movements in the housing field by proving to working class people that they can have some control over their own housing situation. Here only partial success can be claimed. The democratic working of THFS is impressive but it involves only a minority of those families squatting. The ^{squat at} Arbour House, like all successful squats before it, was constantly led by educated professionals. Indeed this is almost inevitable considering the sophisticated nature of squatting. Without expert legal advice, a thorough knowledge of council bureaucracies, and brilliant use of press,

television, and radio, the affair might have ended very differently.

In terms of expanding the movement, Arbour House obtained considerable, very favourable publicity, and played its part along with other squats, of making people more aware of the possibilities of squatting. Also, those who were involved in the squat learned from their successes and failures and have used this experience in later actions; for example Tony Mahoney at Parfett Street and Myrdle Street.

Finally, have the squatters had any effect on the nature of the Council? To answer this properly would require a separate study of the council structure and I have not had time to do this. But there have been some discernable changes worth commenting on. Although it would be rash to attribute their cause solely to squatting, it seems likely that squatting had a partial influence.

At the time of the Arbour House squat, the Finance Committee were concerned about 'housing rent income lost during the time taken to redecorate vacant dwellings before they are re-let.'⁶² As they reported 'there is room for further improvement.'⁶³ I have been unable to trace any action as a result of this statement. But in July 1971 the Council made a major restructuring of its committees. 'As the result of increasing strains on its present structure, the Tower Hamlets Council has embarked on a scheme to streamline its organization.'⁶⁴ The former sixteen committees were reduced to nine. The most significant change was that the two separate housing committees; 'Building and Development' and 'Letting and Management', and the planning committee, were combined into a 'Development Committee' which is responsible for 'town planning, building control, use of land and provision of housing accommodation', 'maintenance and improvement of buildings', and 'the stimulation and control of planning and development for both public and private sector'. Its orders of reference also include 'acquisition and appropriation of land and buildings' and 'slum clearance'.⁶⁴

In 1971 the Surveyors Department carried out a survey^{on} of all tenement blocks and on the basis of this, made a priority list for work. This replaced the previous haphazard situation. Also, the project coordinator is hoping that with additional grants from the government, it may soon be possible to modernize blocks in a piecemeal fashion, and so cause less disruption.

But these are extremely minor changes in terms of the over-all situation, and makes no attempt to reduce the alienation between citizens and local government. The majority of Council officials still consider squatters are a threat and have now learned to take evasive action.

Unoccupied houses are either gutted or heavily boarded up. The contractors at Arbour House have been asked to ensure the block is kept 'squatter proof' until the Council moves people back in. As Tony Mahoney said ruefully; 'They are getting damn clever.'⁶⁵

To conclude: The squatters at Arbour House highlighted a symptom of many underlying problems about the way in which Tower Hamlets Council manages its built environment. By the process of direct action they achieved considerable success; in terms of housing people, in changing the attitudes of local inhabitants, and perhaps in causing structural changes in the council machine. But the fundamental problems are so deep-rooted and entrenched that in terms of the total environment of Tower Hamlets, there is still a long way to go.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

1. Donnison, 'The Government of Housing'.
2. SHELTER statistics
3. SHELTER statistics
4. The notes in this section are obtained almost entirely from Ron Bailey's book 'The Squatters' which appears to be the only book written about the recent movement. While Ron Bailey has undoubtedly been the most influential single person in the initiation and expansion of the movement, it must be appreciated that many squatters disagree with his ideology and would therefore not agree with his analysis.
5. Bailey, 'The Squatters'
6. Bailey, 'The Squatters'
7. Bailey, 'The Squatters'
8. IT/66 Oct 10 - 23 1969
9. Administrative County of London Development Plan 1962
10. Annual report of the Medical Officer of Health 1969
11. Annual report of the Medical Officer of Health 1969
12. Harrison, 'New Society'
13. From a working map for Council Departments, based on Ordnance Survey 1949
14. Many of the row houses have been demolished and replaced with new developments.
15. Plaque on Arbour House, see photograph page
16. Information relating to building design procedure before October 1969 was obtained from a member of the administration, who looked it up in his files. He was extremely helpful but wished to remain anonymous. Much of the information relating to this period is in the committee minutes or the archives, neither of which I was allowed access to. The events at Arbour House are still controversial. To mention 'Arbour House' to anyone in the Council administration immediately puts them on the defensive, and I found it difficult to get information from them. I was constantly referred to someone else, asked to write a letter or told that the information I required was 'not available to the public'. In addition, the turnover rate of local officials is high, and many crucial people had left.
17. See note 16
18. See note 16
19. See note 16
20. Council Minutes 25 February 1970
21. Council Minutes.
22. Council Minutes 6 October 1969

23. Tower Hamlets Council Standing Orders (dictated over the phone by a librarian.
24. Council Minutes.
25. Council Minutes 25 February 1970.
26. Council Minutes.
27. Council Minutes 3 March 1970.
28. Council Minutes.
29. Photographs taken in April 1973
30. Site forman for Leaf Construction Ltd.
31. Copied from the wall of the site clerk's office.
32. Conversation with Tony Mahoney.
33. The Guardian 29 Sept 1969.
34. Bailey, 'The Squatters'.
35. Morning Star 30 September 1969.
36. Council Minutes 2 October 1969.
37. Council Minutes 15 October 1969.
38. Council Minutes 27 October 1969.
39. Council Minutes 27 October 1969.
40. Bailey, 'The Squatters'.
41. Bailey, 'The Squatters'.
42. Times 13 February 1970 and Bailey, 'The Squatters'.
43. Times 30 July 1970.
44. Times 30 July 1970.
45. Times 14 August 1970.
46. Times 10 September 1970.
47. Times 11 September 1970.
48. Guardian 12 September 1970.
49. Council Minutes 16 September 1970.
50. Council Minutes 16 September 1970.
51. Conversation with Tony Mahoney.
52. Bailey, 'The Squatters'.
53. Council Minutes 16 September 1970.
54. Council Minutes 28 October 1970.
55. Council Minutes 27 January 1971.
56. The agreement, see Appendix 3
57. Handout, see p.
58. Bailey, 'The Squatters'.
59. Estimate by Tony Mahoney.
60. Observation and discussion.

61. 196,515 divided by 76. This does not include money spent on welfare accomodation.
62. Council Minutes 17 September 1970.
63. Council Minutes 17 September 1970.
64. Tower Hamlets News July 1971.
65. Conversation with Tony Mahoney.

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- Street Research bulletins nos.1 & 2, 1972.
- Family Squatters Advisory Service, information sheets nos. 1,2,3,5,&7.
- The Agreement between Tower Hamlets Family Squatters and Tower Hamlets Council.
- cuttings file at the Central Library, Tower Hamlets.
- cuttings file at SHELTER.
- The Guardian, recent issues.

In addition the following people have given me information:

- Jenny Radford, FSAS
- Gregg Gibbons, Tim and Graham, THFS
- Mr. Wyatt, Tower Hamlets Housing Department.
- Mr. Davey and Mr. Griffiths, Tower Hamlets Architects Department.
- Mr. Hitchcock, Tower Hamlets Surveyors Department.
- Trev Howard, legal advisor to FSAS.
- Mr. Holgate, Clerk of Works at Arbour House.
- Mr. Ellis, Site Forman at Arbour House.
- Mr. Morley, Project Coordinator at Tower Hamlets.

All photographs were taken in April 1973 apart from the cover photograph which is copyright of the Guardian. It appeared in this paper on 12 September 1970.

APPENDIX 1

CONVERSION OF ARBOUR HOUSE

A break down of the conversion floor by floor. It indicates the extent of layout alteration and increase of space standards, statistically at least. (obtained from Tower Hamlets Project Coordinator.)

	Before Conversion	After Conversion
GROUND	3 x 3b	
	3 x 2b	3 x 2b
	2 x 1b	10 x 1b
	10 x bs	
FIRST	1 x 3b	
	5 x 2b	5 x 2b
	2 x 1b	8 x 1b
	10 x bs	
SECOND	2 x 3b	2 x 3b
	6 x 2b	5 x 2b
	6 x 1b	4 x 1b
THIRD	6 x 3b	2 x 3b
	4 x 2b	5 x 2b
	2 x 1b	4 x 1b
FOURTH	2 x 4b	2 x 4b
	3 x 3b	3
	5 x 2b	3 x 2b
	4 x 1b	8 x 1b
TOTAL	2 x 4b	2 x 4b
	15 x 3b	4 x 3b
	23 x 2b	21 x 2b
	16 x 1b	8 x 1b
	20 x bs	

APPENDIX 2

ARBOUR HOUSE SQUAT

Newspaper articles written at the time of occupation. It is interesting to note both the extent of the coverage, and the pro-squatter, anti-council attitude expressed in all the articles. This is the squatters strongest weapon. (These articles were collected by SHELTER for their records file. It is possible that articles less sympathetic to the squatters were not kept, but judging from coverage of other squats, I think this unlikely.)

Also ~~is~~ included is a copy of a leaflet distributed at a Council meeting by the squatters. (obtained from Tower Hamlets Local History Library cuttings file)

Squatters have 9129/979 police next door

East London squatters are planning to take over a block of unoccupied flats next door to a police station. Last night three homeless families were settling into two of the flats in Arbour House, Arbour Square, Stepney.

They moved into the four-storey block on Saturday—after squatters' leaders had smashed windows to get in and then removed padlocks from the doors.

Mr Ron Bailey, the squatters' leader, said: "I don't think that there is any chance of our being evicted for some time." A police spokesman at Arbour Square police station said "there has been no trouble so far. We are just asking them to keep us informed as families move in."

Buying St Patrick's Island, off the Irish coast, could be the first step towards a property-owning hippie commune, the leader of the London

Street Commune, Mr Sid Rawle, said yesterday.

"Our solicitors are now working out the best legal method for us to own property," he said.

Today Mr Rawle is to discuss the island's purchase with its owner, Mr Herbert Marriott, the Northampton estate agent who has offered it to the hippies for £20,000.

Hippie Geoffrey Daniels, aged 20, saw his bride of two days for 15 minutes yesterday. That was how long his wife, Cornelia, aged 21, was allowed to visit him in Canterbury Prison.

The two were separated on Saturday after their wedding when Geoffrey and other hippies were arrested during disturbances in Folkestone High Street.

Today, Geoffrey and nine others appear before a Folkestone court. Charges against them include threatening behaviour and possessing dangerous drugs.

Guardian 29 Sept 1969

Two families have a home for tonight at least

MS/30/9/69

From PETER AVIS

THE McNallys and the Sheenans have a home to live in tonight.

But for how long they don't dare to think.

On Saturday, the two families were moved by the East London squatters into two of the 63 vacant flats in Arbour House, a Tower Hamlets council estate in Stepney.

Yesterday, the council announced that it was taking legal action to remove the squatters from the block, which was being cleared for a conversion and modernisation scheme.

A council statement agreed that some of the 75 flats in the 1937 estate had been vacant for more than 18 months, and said that all the tenants could not be offered suitable alternative accommodation at once.

Empty property

"The action by the East London Squatters Campaign in occupying these flats can only delay the conversion of the whole block, thus retarding the Tower Hamlets housing programme."

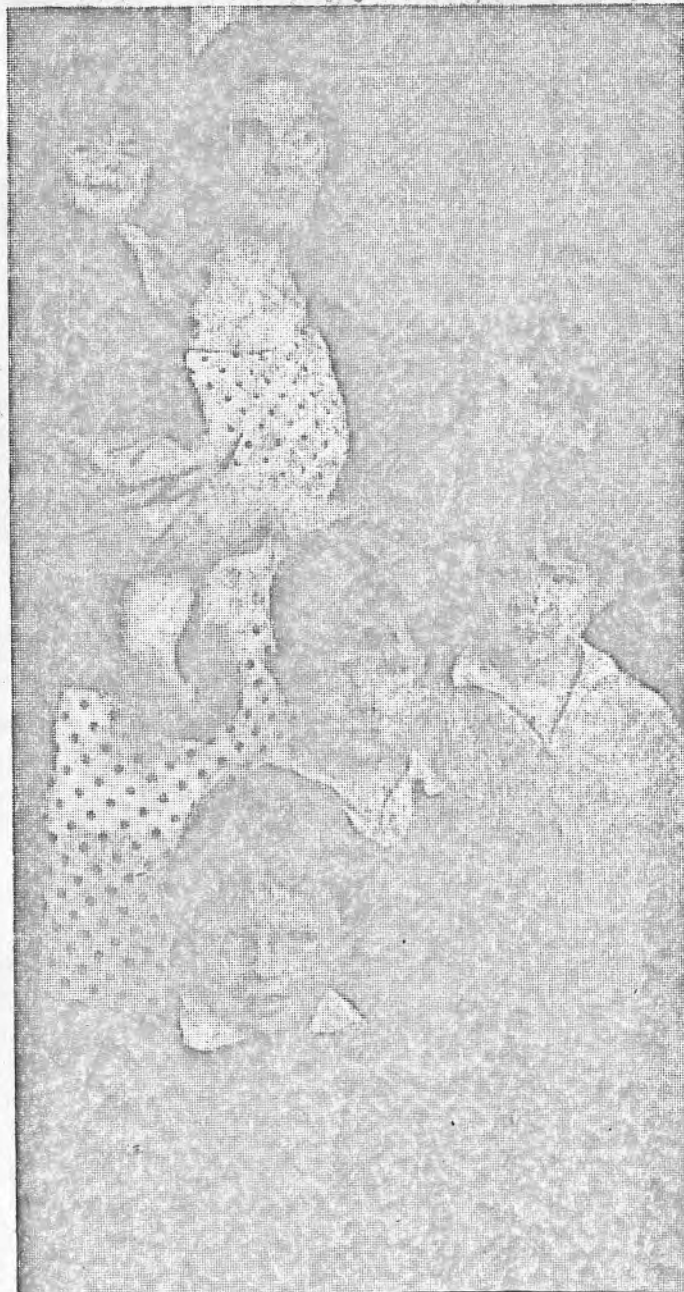
The McNallys have just been evicted from the empty private property they were squatting in for the past six months at Ilford. Before that they lost their Greater London Council home in Poplar because of rent arrears.

"My husband is a building worker and he had an accident. He was disabled for a year and we couldn't pay the rent," said Mrs. McNally. "The national assistance wouldn't pay it because they said it was their policy to encourage men to go back to work."

The mistake

"Later, they admitted that they'd made a mistake as Danny was disabled. But we got turned out just the same."

Mrs. Sheenan, who is separated from her husband, was living until last week with her four children in one room and a kitchen in Cheshire Street, Bethnal Green. The house was crumbling, but the rent was £3 10s.





The squatter parents and the children they threatened to leave at the town hall at Bethnal Green, E., yesterday.

Council helps squatter families

5/13/70

Families squatting in a council block of flats were given cash by town hall officials at Bethnal Green, E., and had their electricity supplies reconnected last night.

The squatters had threatened to leave eight children with the officials after the London Electricity Board had disconnected their electricity the night before.

Five of the mothers who have taken over empty prewar flats scheduled for modernization took eight of their children to the Tower Hamlets council and

were prepared to leave them there. After a two-hour meeting, officials persuaded them not to leave their children behind—and handed the mothers £1 each.

A council spokesman said: "We didn't want to see the families split up. The welfare officer gave the money for food and fuel—for the youngsters' sakes. The council has persuaded the electricity board to reconnect the power to the flats occupied by these squatters and we've

agreed to have communal meters put in."

He said a case concerning the squatters was expected to be heard at the end of the month. The council is seeking High Court injunctions to stop the squatters taking over other flats.

The council also gave a pensioner, aged 80, one of the squatters, a load of coal for her bunker. The mothers later took their children back home to the flats in Arbour Square, Stepney.

Mrs. Carole McNally, aged 32, one of the squatters, said: "I

had to give my baby cold milk after the electricity was cut off because I couldn't heat it up. But now I have been given money. It is very good of them to see our problem."

Squatters sit tight

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Squatter families who have been occupying a block of 78 flats in Arbour Square, Stepney, for 10 months expect to go on living there undisturbed for several months.

"There are 32 families in this block and there is no move by the Tower Hamlets council to do anything about them", the squatters' spokesman, Mr. Tony Mahony, said yesterday. There was nowhere else for the families to go.

Two families had been advised by council officials to move into the block, he said. The council was prepared to endure the squatting if it helped to make some sense of the welfare accommodation in the borough.

He said the council had a waiting list for welfare accommodation, which meant that until it sorted things out the squatters were providing a service for it, he said.

The squatting began in September last year when four families moved in.

"There is a stalemate at the moment", Mr. Mahony said. "The police tried to evict us on the first day we came here but we told them we had not entered forcibly. Since then we have been left alone. We have been told time and again the council will not meet us unless the block is evacuated. We are prepared to discuss matters".

It was an encouraging sign, he said, that the London Electricity Board had agreed to install meters in the occupied flats because the L.E.B. was taking its instructions from the council. It indicated that the families would not be acted against for some time.

Mr. Mahony said there were about 60 children in the block: their average age was about seven. Those of school age had been accepted into local schools, but there were few facilities for younger children.

Tower Hamlets council declined to comment.

Times 14 Aug 1970

Squatters protest at court

Rumours of a "Black Power" demonstration outside the Law Courts in the Strand, London, yesterday led to a strong police guard round the buildings. Just before 1 p.m. coachloads of police arrived and officers were posted at all entrances. The main car park gates were closed.

The "demonstration" was called for on behalf of six squatter families, whom the London borough of Tower Hamlets was seeking to evict from flats in Arbour House and Burrell House, Arbour Square, Stepney.

The council was making an application to a High Court master over possession of the premises.

Mr. Tony Mahoney, of the East London Squatters Association, said before the hearing that the association had approached the Black Power movement to demonstrate on its behalf.

Each family was called in to see Master Bickford Smith separately. Most left in an angry mood. They gathered on the pavement in the Strand and marched up and down carrying posters calling for support.

After the hearings, which lasted just under an hour, Master Bickford Smith confirmed that he had made writs of possession, suspended for a month.

Squatters move

into flats

By our own Reporter

Three families of squatters with nine children yesterday moved into an East London block of flats which is to be demolished to make way for a redevelopment scheme.

The four-storey block, Burrell House in Stepney, had been only partly occupied for the past two months, though at Christmas many of the flats had been redecorated. The block is the property of Tower Hamlets Council.

The occupation, which met with some resistance from the caretaker of the neighbouring housing estate who took out fuses from the building, was organised by the East London Squatters Campaign. The campaign took over another block of uninhabited flats nine months ago and housed 100 people who had been living in slum conditions.

Last night Mr Tony Marney, a campaign member, said that they would install homeless families in all the remaining flats at Burrell House by the weekend.

"Why pull down perfectly good houses to make way for a millionaire's paradise when 60,000 people in the borough of Tower Hamlets are living in slum conditions?" he said.

Guardian 29 July 1970

Labour aid call by squatters

By Our Social Services
Correspondent

Mr. Victor Feather, general secretary of the T.U.C., and two Labour M.P.s were urged yesterday to intervene to prevent three squatting families from being evicted.

They are among 30 who have been squatting over the past 10 months in Arbour House, a block of flats in Stepney which was closed by the local council over two years ago. Most of the families moved in from slum property or from welfare accommodation, and describe the flats as palaces compared with their previous homes.

Tower Hamlets council has obtained eviction orders against three families and these expire today. Last night the families erected barbed wire barricades on staircases at the flats.

Mr. Tony Mahoney, of the East London Squatters Association, said yesterday that if the families were evicted it would be the first time a Labour-controlled council had taken such action. The squatters felt that only intervention by the Labour movement itself could prevent the evictions.

Yesterday they sent telegrams to Mr. Feather at the T.U.C. Congress at Brighton and to Mr. Peter Shore, Labour M.P. for Stepney, and Mr. Ian Mikardo, Labour M.P. for Poplar.

The telegram to Mr. Feather urged him to do all in his power "to awaken conscience of Labour movement to housing crisis in East End", and said that a delegation would go to Brighton today to seek an urgent meeting with him.

Mr. Mahoney said yesterday that the squatters did not want a violent confrontation if the council tried to evict the families but they were determined to defend women and children.

A woman threatened with eviction with her son, aged 9, said: "All I want is a rent book. I will not leave unless they drag me out". She has been offered welfare accommodation but having already experienced it she refuses to go back because she thinks it is not fit for human habitation.

Squatters are to meet council

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Squatters under threat of eviction invaded London borough council offices yesterday and demanded a meeting with councillors. They agreed to leave the offices of Tower Hamlets Council after Mr. P. Marritt, deputy town clerk, promised them a meeting with Mr. Tom Mitchell, chairman of the council's social services committee, on Monday.

The squatters, among 30 families who have been occupying Arbour House, a block of flats in Stepney, for the past 10 months, were assured there would be no evictions before the meeting. After the demonstration they began dismantling barricades of corrugated iron sheets and doors which they had used to block entrances and stairs at the flats.

The squatters, many of them mothers with young children, marched on the council offices because they feared they would be removed from Arbour House when eviction orders the council had obtained against several families expired yesterday. They sat down in one of the committee rooms and refused to move until councillors came to speak to them.

Mr. Tony Mahoney, of the east London squatters association, said they had been trying for 10 months to get a meeting with Tower Hamlets councillors.

A council official said there was no imminent danger of evictions from the flats. "Before we can evict we have to go to the courts again for writs of execution. No applications will be made to the court until the council authorizes them."

Arbour House had been closed because it was in need of modernization. The conversion scheme could not take place unless the block was completely empty, and the squatters were jeopardizing the chances of 70

families having a modern dwelling, the official said.

Rebate granted: Two and a half years after they first asked for it, 155 tenants of Westminster City Council flats alongside the Westway elevated motorway have learnt that they are to get rate rebates to compensate for disturbance and loss of amenity. The rebates, which have been backdated to April 1, 1967, appear to be from £24 to £70.

Mrs. Mary Ward, a widow who organized a petition for rate reductions in December, 1968, said: "I am very pleased at this, especially for the people at the front, because they have really had something to put up with, and still have." Her ratable value has been reduced from £162 to £146.

The Greater London Council yesterday made the first offers of alternative accommodation to families affected by the Westway motorway. The offers have been put to families living in Acklam Road. The council did not say how many families would be rehoused.



Above: Squatters at Arbour Square. Below: Ground-level view

G 12/9/70

Squatters seize more homes

SQUATTERS—already facing a High Court order in Stepney, London—seized empty houses yesterday in another borough, Southwark.

They moved two families into Harders Road, Peckham, which is unoccupied and not due for redevelopment until 1973. Mr Ron Bailey, a Squatters' leader, said more fam-

ilies would be moved into nearby houses next week. Southwark Council said it was seeking a possession order.

In Brighton, Mr Vic Feather, Trades Union Congress general secretary, refused to listen to a squatters' delegation which asked him to advise the Labour-controlled Tower Hamlets

council not to execute an eviction order against families at Arbour Square, Stepney.

The delegation said that Mr Feather expressed anger because it interrupted a television interview he was giving on Brighton seafront. He said he could not intervene "at this eleventh hour."

In both boroughs, squatters

claim to be using property which councils are wasting. Lewisham Council accepted this argument and gave squatters 30 "short life" houses to use legally. But in Stepney and Southwark they are braced for possibly their biggest confrontation since they repelled bailiffs at Redbridge in a battle in June, 1969.

John Ezard reports on a growing confrontation



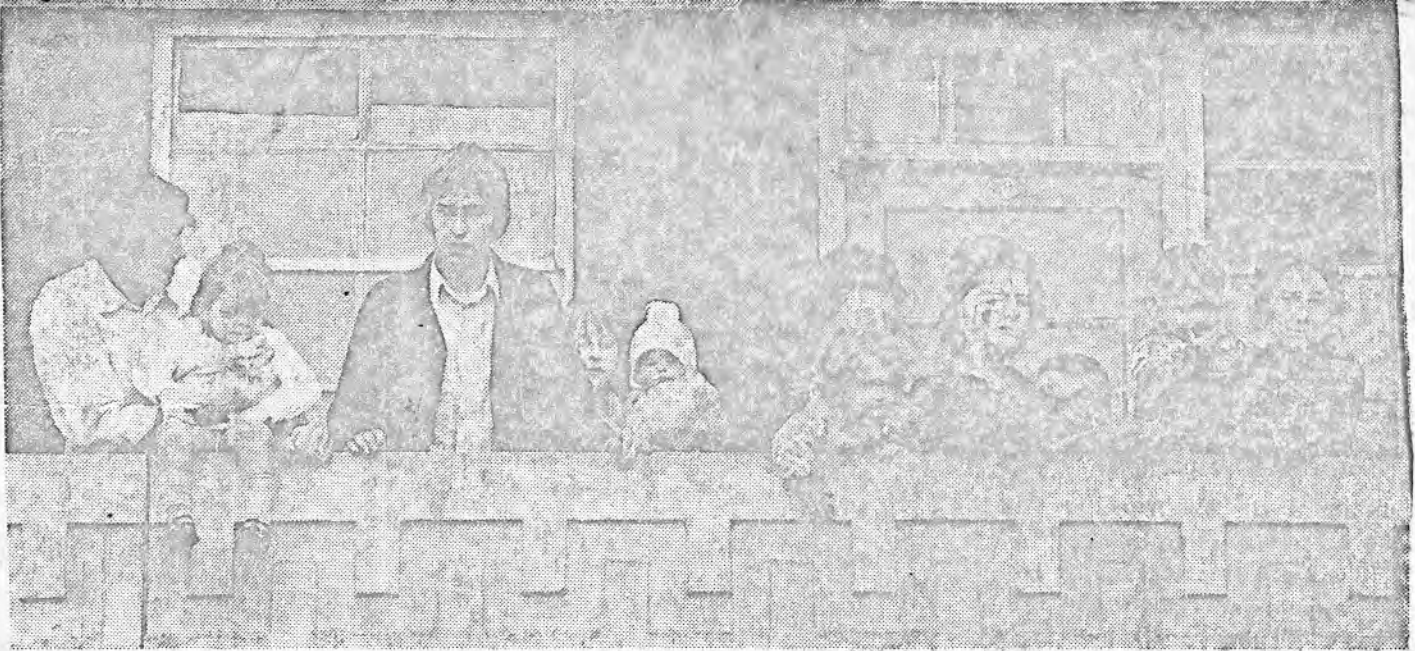
THE coming of the police to Arbour Square was signalled by a frenzied alert beaten out on corrugated iron by a six-year-old sentry called Arthur. Until then the 32 high balconies had been empty. But by Arthur's third drumbeat 23 people were manning railings, children by their sides.

"You sods, that Inspector Grest said no eviction today," shrieked down a woman as eight policemen filed into the courtyard led by a man in a blue suit. Four women shakily began to sing "We shall overcome." Children playing out-

ness in starting renovations that gave the squatters their moral opening. Tower Hamlets decided that it would be cheapest to renovate the block when it was empty. But rehousing the sitting tenants proved difficult.

And so last October the first four squatting families moved into flats which, the council admits, had been empty for up to two years. Subsequently, 21 other families moved in. Meanwhile, the remaining legal tenants were gradually moved out.

Now about 40 flats are empty and barricaded against



Above: Squatters at Arbour Square. Below: Ground-level view

G 12/9/70

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ilies would be moved into nearby houses next week. Southwark Council said it was seeking a possession order.

In Brighton, Mr Vic Feather, Trades Union Congress general secretary, refused to listen to a squatters' delegation which asked him to advise the Labour-controlled Tower Hamlets

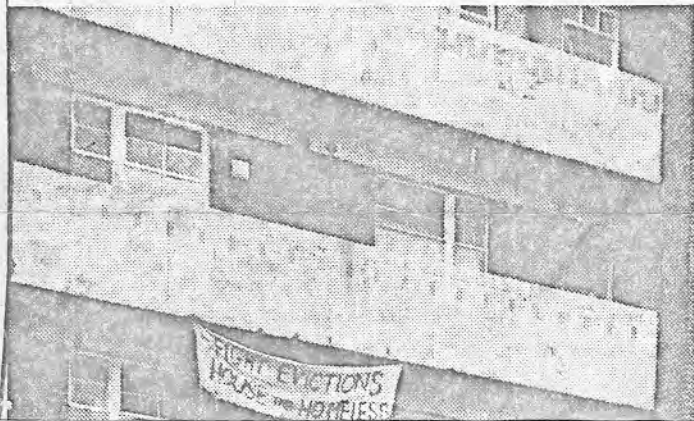
council not to execute an eviction order against families at Arbour Square, Stepney.

The delegation said that Mr Feather expressed anger because it interrupted a television interview he was giving on Brighton seafront. He said he could not intervene "at this eleventh hour."

In both boroughs, squatters

claim to be using property which councils are wasting. Lewisham Council accepted this argument and gave squatters 30 "short life" houses to use legally. But in Stepney and Southwark they are braced for possibly their biggest confrontation since they repelled bailiffs at Redbridge in a battle in June, 1969.

John Ezard reports on a growing confrontation



THE coming of the police to Arbour Square was signalled by a frenzied alert beaten out on corrugated iron by a six-year-old senny called Arthur. Until then the 32 high balconies had been empty. But by Arthur's third drum-beat 23 people were manning railings, children by their sides.

"You sods, that Inspector Grest said no eviction today," shrieked down a woman as eight policemen filed into the courtyard led by a man in a blue suit. Four women shakily began to sing "We shall overcome." Children playing out-

ness in starting renovations that gave the squatters their moral opening. Tower Hamlets decided that it would be cheapest to renovate the block when it was empty. But rehousing the sitting tenants proved difficult.

And so last October the first four squatting families moved into flats which the council admits had been empty for up to two years. Subsequently, 21 other families moved in. Meanwhile, the remaining legal tenants were gradually moved out.

Now about 40 flats are empty and barricaded against

Squatters ready to 'dig in'

By our own Reporter
Sept 15 9 70

Talks to find a peaceful solution over the squat by 30 families in flats at Arbour Square, Stepney, London, broke down last night.

The flats are owned by the borough of Tower Hamlets. Six delegates from the East London Family Squatters' Association walked out after Tower Hamlets Council refused to suspend eviction proceedings. One squatter, Mr Tony Mahoney, said the families would now "dig-in" against eviction. They have been in the flats for 11 months.

The council leader, Councillor Bill Guy, and his deputy, Alderman Tom Mitchell, said the squatters had distributed copies of their four-point demands to the press before giving them to the council. The statement said Councillor Guy had offered to pass the demands to the full council.

Last night's meeting was the first held between squatters and council representatives. Mr Mahoney said: "We wanted to talk rationally, but it's clear that the council sees squatters as monsters." A council spokesman said that before evictions started, the council would offer temporary accommodation to eligible families.

Guardian 15 Sept 70

London News

Middleman helps to bring squatters' peace talks closer

Talks are to take place between leaders of Tower Hamlets Council and representatives of squatters' organizations in an attempt to reach a settlement on families squatting in the borough.

Mr. Ron Bailey, leader of Lewisham Squatters' Association, intervened in a peace-keeping role last week in the dispute between the council and the East London Squatters' Association. The association maintains several families in Arbour House, Arbour Square.

East London Squatters met leaders of the council last week but walked out when they failed to get an undertaking that threatened evictions would not take place.

Mr. Bailey, who has achieved an amicable arrangement with the borough of Lewisham and the G.L.C., told Tower Hamlets Council that he was prepared to make some of the accommodation at his disposal in the borough available to Arbour House residents.

This offer broke the stalemate which was fast leading to a confrontation between the East London squatters' group and Tower Hamlets Council. The council has welcomed Mr. Bailey's initiative, and after preliminary discussions has called a meeting with him today. Meanwhile, the council has assured the families in Arbour

House that there will be no evictions while the talks take place.

Lewisham Squatters' Association has at least five empty properties at its disposal in Tower Hamlets, although they belong to the G.L.C. The G.L.C. is one of several housing authorities in London which has done a deal with Mr. Bailey in an attempt to stem the flood of squatting which reached a climax last year.

The Lewisham association agrees under these arrangements to be responsible for housing families in properties awaiting demolition. The east London group last week sought a similar agreement with Tower Hamlets Council, and the possibility remains open.

Mr. Bailey's participation in this settlement has healed a split in the ranks of squatters' organizations. The Lewisham, East London, and Southwark squatters agreed at a meeting on Friday to work together in future, adopting a common policy where possible while each retains its own independence. The groups had previously been divided over the question of reaching agreements with local authorities in the way that Mr. Bailey had done in Lewisham.

Mr. Tony Mahoney, East London squatters' leader, said: "We have decided to work together from now onwards and we have buried the differences that we have had for some time."

WHY WE ARE SQUATTING.

THE LONDON COMMITTEE OF HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENTS YOU SOME FACTS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN BRITAIN TODAY:

THERE ARE 8,000 FAMILIES ON THE WAITING LIST IN TOWER HAMLETS.
THERE ARE 60,000 LIVING IN SLUM ACCOMODATION.
ALL NEW ACCOMODATION IS USED TO HOUSE PEOPLE IN SLUM CLEARANCE PROJECTS.NO NEW HOUSES ARE BUILT TO HOUSE PEOPLE ON THE WAITING LIST.

THE HOMELESS ARE HOUSED IN SO-CALLED "WELFARE ACCOMODATION" - TENEMENT SLUMS SUCH AS BEACHCROFT BUILDINGS AND RAYNE STREET LODGE . THESE BUILDINGS ARE DAMP,DIRTY AND DARK.THEY ARE RAT-INRESTED AND LACKING IN BASIC FACILITIES SUCH AS BATHROOMS AND HOT WATER.THE FAMILIES STRUGGLING TO KEEP SOME SORT OF FAMILY LIFE GOING IN THESE PLACES ARE ALSO SUBJECT TO RESTRICTIONS AND HARRASSMENT FROM PETTY OFFICIALS.IN SOME CASES HUSBANDS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO LIVE WITH THEIR WIVES.

OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS THE HOMELESS HAVE BEEN ORGANISING THEMSELVES TO FIGHT THESE CONDITIONS,AS THE G.L.C. TENANTS HAVE BEEN ORGANISING TO FIGHT THE RENT INCREASES.

THE ARBOUR SQUARE SQUAT IS PART OF A STRUGGLE TO ORGANISE A FIGHT FOR THE 3,000,000, PEOPLE WHOM SHELTER ESTIMATES ARE HOMELESS IN BRITAIN.

OVER TWO YEARS AGO,TENANTS IN THE 75 FLATS IN ARBOUR HOUSE WERE EVICTED AND ARBOUR HOUSE WAS CLOSED.THE REASON GIVEN FOR THIS WAS THAT THE FLATS NEEDED RENOVATING.BUT THE BUILDING REMAINED EMPTY AND UNTOUCHED FOR TWO YEARS.

THESE FLATS ARE IN EXCELLENT CONDITION. THEY HAVE HOT AND COLD WATER AND A BATHROOM AND TOILET IN EVERY FLAT.
THE COUNCIL SAY THESE FLATS NEED RENOVATING ,WHILE THEY LEAVE THOUSANDS OF SLUMS UNTOUCHED - BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T COPE WITH THE RE-HOUSING PROBLEM OF PULLING DOWN THE WORST SLUMS.
THESE ARE THE REASONS FOR THE OCCUPATION OF ARBOUR SQUARE.

SINCE THE SQUATTERS MOVED IN,THE COUNCIL HAVE BEEN SPENDING RATE-PAYERS MONEY TO PAY ITS EMPLOYEES TO SMASH UP THE REMAINING EMPTY FLATS IN ARBOUR HOUSE,IN ORDER TO PREVENT MORE FAMILIES MOVING IN. WINDOWS HAVE BEEN SMASHED,PLUMBING HAS BEEN WRECKED, HOLES HAVE BEEN BASHED THROUGH 8" CONCRETE FLOORS.

THE COUNCIL ARE NOW THREATENING TO CUT OFF WATER AND ELECTRICITY TO THE BUILDING AND TO TAKE THE CHILDREN INTO CARE. THIRTY CHILDREN IN CARE AT £16 p.wk. EACH WOULD MEAN AN ESTIMATEE £480 p.wk. OF RATE-PAYERS MONEY SPENT TO KEEP FAMILIES SPLIT UP.

THE ARBOUR HOUSE SQUATTERS ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN PREVENTING THIS FROM HAPPENING, BECAUSE WE STAND FOR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE.

THE COUNCIL WANTS TO SWEEP THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS UNDER THE CARPET. TO SUPPORT THE ARBOUR HOUSE SQUATTERS IS TO GIVE YOUR SUPPORT TO A MOVEMENT WHICH WANTS TO SE A REAL HOUSING POLICY WHICH WILL ENSURE THAT ALL FAMILJES IN ENGLAND ARE PROPERLY HOUSED.

p.p. The London Committee of
Homeless Families.
Chairman,Arbour House Committee: Jim Pagot
57 Arbour House.
Enquiries ring 790 4964.

APPENDIX 3

A COPY OF THE COUNCIL-SQUATTERS AGREEMENT

This is a copy of the agreement kept at THFS office. It is not complete as there are a few pages missing. It has still not been signed though a new draft is almost complete.

1. (10.11.71)

1595
691
1603

FAMILY SQUATTING AGREEMENT

A. DATED

B. PARTIES

1. THE MAYOR ALDERMEN AND BURGESSES OF THE LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

2. RONALD EDWARD BAILEY
128 Hainault Road, London E.11.

Full name + occupations

D FITZGERALD
26 Farrance Street, London E.14.

Mrs. G FISHER
43 Lawrence Road, London, E.3.

~~Timothy~~ HOPKINS
20 Farrance Street, London E.14.

R HATLAND
Dame Colet House, Ben Jonson Road, London E.1.

The Rev. D MOORE
2b Westport Street, London E.1.

G MORGAN
17 Eric Street, London E.3.

Members of its Committee on behalf of the
TOWER HAMLETS FAMILY SQUATTING ASSOCIATION

Don't have a committee who are members.

C. DEFINITIONS

1. In this agreement, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions have the meanings hereby respectively assigned to them, namely -

"Accepted Property"

(a) Short-term property or expected short-term property whose acceptance the Association has communicated to the Director under Article 1(5), and (b) property described in column (1) of the Schedule to this agreement; not being (in either case) a property which has ceased to be an accepted

Arts. 1(7)(2), 2(1),
3(1), 4(3)(3), 4(2),
5, 6(1)(3), 7(1), 11(2),
14

Art. 1(2)	"Architect or Engineer"	property by virtue of Article 6(3)
		The Council's Borough Architect and Planning Officer or Borough Engineer and Surveyor for the time being.
<u>Passia</u>	"Association"	The Tower Hamlets Family Squatting Association of Dame Collet House, Ben Johnson Road, London, E.1.
Arts. 15,15	"Communication"	includes notice
Arts. 3(5), 12(2)	"Chief Executive"	The Council's Chief Executive and Town Clerk for the time being.
<u>Passia</u>	"Council"	The Mayor Aldermen and Burgesses of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets of the Town Hall, Cambridge Heath Road, London, E2 9LN
Arts. 1(3)(4), 6(2),7(1)	"Demolish" and "demolition"	Demolish completely or partially, or (as the case may be) complete or partial demolition
Art.12(2)	"Designation"	Title of an officer of the Council
Arts. 1(1)-(5), 4(2), 6(1)(5), 9, 10(1), 14, 16(2)	"Director"	The Council's Director of Social Services for the time being
Arts. 1(1)(2) (7), 10(1), 13	"Expected short-term property"	Empty building expected to come into the Council's possession which they plan to demolish or rehabilitate not less than twelve months after the date when the building is expected to come into the Council's possession and which they do not expect to receive for any other purposes before that demolition or rehabilitation.

Arts. 3(4), 4(3)
(4), 15(2)

"Financial Adviser"

The Council's Borough Treasurer or Financial Adviser and Director for the time being.

Art. 2(1)

"Housing Officer"

The Council's Housing Officer for the time being

Art.2(1)(2)

"Housing waiting list"

The register, maintained by the Housing Officer on behalf of the Council under section 22(3) of the London Government Act 1963, of applications for housing accommodation maintained by the Council made to the Council under subsection (2)(a) or transmitted to them under subsection (2)(b) of that section

Art. 1(3)

"Inventory"

back wait.

Inventory of fixtures and fittings submitted under Article 1(3)(a)

Arts. 3(2)(4)(6)
(7), 4(1)(3)(4),
6(4)(5), 7(1)(2),
8, 9, 11(2)

"Licensee"

Person who has signed a subsisting licence under article 3(4), or who is deemed to be a licensee by virtue of article 3(5).

Art.1(3)

"Projects Co-ordinator"

The Council's Projects Co-ordinator for the time being.

Art.16

"Referee"

Referee nominated under article 16(1).

4. (10.11.71)

Arts. 2(2), 3(1),
10(1)

"Registered person"

Person whom the ~~Director of~~
Housing Officer
~~Committee~~ has registered
on the housing waiting list.

Art. 1(3)

"Schedule of condition"

Schedule of condition submitted
under article 1(3)(a).

Arts. 1(1)-(3),
10(1), 11(2), 13

"Short-term property"

Empty building in the Council's
possession which they plan to
demolish or rehabilitate not less
than twelve months after the date
when ~~the building~~ comes into the
Council's possession or the date
of this agreement (whichever is
the later) and which they do not
expect to require for any other
purpose before that rehabilitation
or demolition.

Arts. 6(1)-(3)(6),
7

"Specified property"

(i) In connection with a notice
given under article 6(1), property
specified in that notice; or
(ii) In connection with a notice
given under article 14, any
accepted property; or
(iii) In any other case, property
specified in a notice given or
deemed by virtue of article 14 to
have been given under article 6(1).

2. Unless the context otherwise requires, any reference in this agreement to a specified article, is a reference to that article of Part 2 (Operative Part) of this agreement and any reference to a specified paragraph or sub-paragraph is a reference to that paragraph of the article, or, or that sub-paragraph of the

5. (14.10.71)

paragraph, in which the reference occurs.

D. INTRODUCTORY PART

1. The Association is an association of voluntary and paid workers, squatters, and prospective squatters whose chief aim is to sponsor and encourage families in desperate need of housing in combining and co-operating to use for short-term accommodation empty houses loaned or given to the Association.

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0

2. The Council have agreed to loan to the Association their short-life properties for housing Tower Hamlets families who are in desperate need of accommodation, and the Association has agreed to use those properties for housing such families, in accordance with this agreement.

3. This agreement regulates the loan of short-life properties to the Association and its use of them

4. This agreement further regulates the Association's use of certain properties loaned to it before the date of this agreement.

5. The National Campaign for the Homeless (SHelter) has agreed to assist the parties in the settlement of questions and disputes arising out of this agreement.

E. OPERATIVE PART

1. (Offer and acceptance of properties)

(1) The Director will offer to loan the Association such short-term properties or expected short-term properties as the Council may in their absolute discretion determine.

What if there too many empty + decide not to give us any? No come back

6. (10.11.73)

(2) Notwithstanding the definitions respectively assigned by this agreement to the expressions "short-term property" and "expected short-term property", any property which the Director offers to loan the Association under paragraph (1) shall for the purposes of this agreement be conclusively deemed if it is in the Council's possession to be a short-term property and if it is not in the Council's possession to be an expected short-term property.

(3) The Director shall as soon as possible after his offer to loan the Association any short-term property under article 1(1) and at any time upon the Association's application, tell the Association the date when in the Projects Co-ordinator's estimate the Council will require the property for demolition or rehabilitation and shall keep the Association informed of any subsequent change in that estimated date.

Should be allowed to keep up current topics of programme.

(4) The Director will permit the Association by arrangement with him to view each property which he offers it, for enabling the Association to decide whether to accept the offer.

(5) The Association will communicate to the Director its acceptance or refusal of each offer which he makes to it.

(6) The Association may, with the permission of the Director, enter any property which he has offered it (Before accepting or refusing that offer), for the purpose of making the property fit for human habitation, for such period as the Director may fix or, at the expiration of it, extend. Subject to article 14(a), the Council shall not during the period so fixed or extended withdraw the offer made by the Director.

(7) The offer and acceptance of the loan of an expected short-term property shall be conditional upon its coming into the Council's possession, and no accepted property shall be used by the Association unless and until it has come into the Council's

7. (10.11.71)

possession.

(3) (a) The Council may at any time before the date of the acceptance of the property by the Association under this agreement submit to the Association a schedule of condition or an inventory of fixtures and fittings, or both, for any accepted property other than a property described in column (1) of the Schedule to this agreement.

(b) An inventory shall contain an estimate of the value of each item listed in it.

(c) A schedule of condition or inventory shall, after such consultation between the Association and the Architect or Engineer as the Association may desire for the purposes of securing his agreement to amend it, be signed as being accurate on behalf of the Association, who shall in any event be deemed to have agreed its accuracy upon the acceptance of the property to which it relates.

*Don't see the
need of
especially if*

(d) If any item listed in a schedule of condition suffers any deterioration during the period when the property to which it relates is an accepted property, the Association shall, unless the Architect or Engineer releases the Association from its obligations under this sub-paragraph, restore that item to its condition in accordance with the schedule of condition or shall unless it is so released compensate the Council for the deterioration.

(e) The Association shall, unless the Architect or Engineer releases the Association from its obligations under this sub-paragraph, replace, repair, reinstate or compensate the Council for any items listed in an inventory which are found upon the return to the Council of the property to which it relates to be lost, removed, damaged or destroyed without the consent of the Architect or Engineer.

(f) The Association shall not question in any arbitration or other legal proceedings whatsoever the estimate contained in an inventory of the value of any item listed in that inventory, for the purpose of disputing the amount of compensation to be paid by the Association in default of the replacement, repair or reinstatement of that item.

2. (Distribution on leaving written list)

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(1) The Association may on behalf of any person whose family it wishes to house in an accepted property apply to the Housing Officer for a tenancy of the house. *How the person... How far... the*

8. (10.11.74.)

(2) Neither the housing of a registered person by the Association nor any other thing done under this agreement shall prejudice that person's position on the housing waiting list or prevent him from improving his position on that list as he might have done apart from this agreement.

3. (Housing of registered persons)

(1) The Association may, subject to articles 1(7), 6(1) and 15(c) house in an accepted property any registered person and his family, and shall house in an accepted property no person other than a registered person and his family.

(2) The Association shall in exercising its functions under this agreement apply the principle that families in greatest need of housing (other than those whose behaviour as licensees or members of the Association has not contributed or has been detrimental to the aims of the Association) should be housed first; and the Association shall not use any accepted property to house persons not in need of housing.

(3) The Association shall before housing any family in an accepted property ensure that the property is made fit for human habitation and shall while the property is under the Association's control ensure that it remains fit for human habitation and that the requirements of all laws governing the condition of the property and the manner of its occupation, are complied with.

*? eg the council
heads.*

(4) The Association will before housing a family in an accepted property require the head of the family to sign on behalf of himself and the members of his family a form of licence under which -

*can you
make chairmanist*

(a) The Association permits the licensee and his family to use the accepted property until the Council require it for demolition or rehabilitation or for any other purposes;

*is possible
both*

- (b) The Association recognises the licensee as a member of the Association, and the licensee acknowledges that he is a member of the Association and undertake to be bound by the provisions of this agreement;
- (c) The licensee agrees to be responsible for general and water rates in addition to any fee payable to the Association in consideration of the licence;
- (d) The licensee authorises the Association to receive as his agent all general rate demands for the property, and agrees to pay to the Association as the Council's agent all general rates so demanded; subject to the licensee's right (which shall be expressed in the form of licence) to revoke that authorisation ~~and~~ by written notice given to the Association (which shall forthwith notify the Financial Adviser of the revocation), and to pay the general rates direct to the Financial Adviser instead of to the Association;
- (e) The licensee agrees not to use the property for any purpose other than the residential accommodation of members of his own family;
- (f) The licensee agrees not to assign his interest in the property; and
- (g) The licensee agrees to leave the property with his family at four weeks' notice from the Association.

(5) The Association will at the request of the Chief Executive send him a copy of the form of licence which it is free time to time using or proposing to use for the purposes of paragraph (4) and article 10(2).

*Hand on now
copy*

(6) A member of a family which the Association has (before or after the date of this agreement) housed in an accepted property who has reached the age of eighteen years shall be deemed for the purposes of this agreement to be a licensee during his occupation of the property, notwithstanding that he has not signed a licence under paragraph (4) or article 10(2).

(7) Every licensee shall be a member of the Association. *John*

(8) The Association shall notify the Director, by not later than twelve o'clock noon on the day following the day on which it houses any family in

an accepted property, of the name of the family, the address of the property, the date on which the family was housed in the property, and such other particulars as he may from time to time in general or particular cases reasonably require.

4. (Rates)

(1) The Council will hold the licensee responsible for the payment of general rates for the property he occupies.

(2) (a) The Association is entitled by virtue of this agreement to possession of all accepted properties and is the owner of those properties for the purposes of section 17 of and Schedule 1 to the General Rate Act 1967.

(b) Neither the Association nor any member of it shall resist the enforcement (whether under Part VI of that Act or by bankruptcy proceedings) of the payment of any sum legally assessed on and due from him for rates under section 17 of and Schedule 1 to that Act in respect of any accepted property which is unoccupied for a continuous period exceeding three months on the ground that the Association or that member is not the owner of that property for the purposes of that section and schedule.

(c) The Association is not entitled to possession of any property (other than an accepted property) which the Director has permitted it to enter under article 1(4), and is not the owner of that property for the purposes of section 17 of and Schedule 1 to the General Rate Act 1967.

(3) The Financial Adviser will send all general rate demands to the Association, who shall forthwith collect the rates due from the licensee and on the last Friday in each month pay the amounts so collected to the Financial Adviser with a written statement identifying the licensee and the property to which each amount relates: Provided that if the licensee has given notice under article 3(4)(d) the Financial Adviser will send general rate demands direct to the licensee.

11. (14.10.71)

(4) The Association shall when delivering to the Financial Adviser the statement required by paragraph (3) give him in writing such particulars as he may from time to time in general or particular cases reasonably require of any licensee who has fallen into arrears of rates.

5. (Nuisances, etc.)

The Association shall not do or permit or suffer anything to be done in upon or around any accepted property or other property offered to the Association under this agreement which may be or become a tort actionable at the suit or relation of the Council or the owners or occupiers of other property in the neighbourhood or any other person whosever.

? 20 20's kids.

6. (Return of accepted properties to the Council)

(1) The Association shall upon the Director giving it notice in writing under this paragraph specifying any accepted property -

Why only 8 weeks.
long history of going
to move

- (a) return vacant to the Council within eight weeks of the date upon which the notice is received by the Association any specified property in which it has housed any family; or
- (b) return immediately to the Council any specified property of which it has taken possession but in which it has not housed any family; or
- (c) refrain from taking possession of or housing any family in any specified property which the Association is not required to return to the Council under subparagraphs (a) or (b).

is accept'd by law
not the possessor's

(2) The Association shall not be entitled to fail to comply with a notice given under paragraph (1) on the grounds that the Council do not require the specified property for demolition or rehabilitation

12. (14.10.71)

or any other purpose or on any other grounds.

- (3) A specified property shall cease to be an accepted property -
- (a) if the Association has taken possession of or housed any family in the property, on the date when the property is returned to the Council; and
 - (b) in any other case, on the date when the notice is given.

(4) The Association shall before returning any property to the Council use its best endeavours to rehouse the licensee of it and his family (unless the Council intend themselves in the near future to rehouse them or nominate them for housing accommodation) and shall cause the property to be vacant of all persons and chattels; provided that the Association shall be under no obligation to endeavour to rehouse any licensee or his family who have persistently failed to comply with the terms of the licence. The Council shall be responsible for no loss or damage occasioned to any chattels left in the property in contravention of this paragraph.

(5) The Association shall inform the Director as soon as possible of the date and time when it plans to rehouse any licensee's family in order to return the property to the Council, and shall co-operate with the Council to ensure that the property vacated or to be vacated by that family is secured to prevent it from being occupied by any other person.

(6) The Council may at any time after the date when the Association is required by virtue of paragraph (1)(a) or (b) to return the property to the Council institute legal proceedings for the recovery of possession of any specified property other than a property to which article 7 applies.

7. (Legal proceedings for recovery of possession of certain specified properties)

(1) This article shall apply to -

13. (14.10.71)

- (a) any property in which the Association has housed any family being a property specified in a notice given under article 6(1), not being a notice deemed to have been given in respect of that property by virtue of article 14(c); and
- (b) any accepted property in which the Association has housed any family being a property specified in a notice deemed to have been given under article 6(1) in respect of that property by virtue of article 14(c):

Provided that this article shall not apply to -

- (i) a property described in sub-paragraph (a) unless the notice specifying that property was given on the grounds (which shall be presumed unless otherwise proved) that the Council required the property for demolition or rehabilitation or some other purpose connected with the property; or
- (ii) a property described in sub-paragraph (b) unless the notice given under article 14, whereupon notice under article 6(1) was deemed to have been given in respect of that property by virtue of article 14(c), was given for good cause (which shall be presumed unless otherwise proved), having regard to the conduct of the parties to this agreement and the licensees, to events outside the control of the parties, and to all other relevant circumstances.

(2) The Association shall before the date when it is required by virtue of article 6(1)(a) to return the property vacant to the Council institute legal proceedings for the recovery of possession of any property to which this article applies which has not been vacated by the licensee or any other unauthorised person, and shall prosecute such proceedings with reasonable diligence.

(3) If the Association fails in respect of any property to which this article applies to institute legal proceedings in

14. (14.10.71)

accordance with paragraph (2), or fails to prosecute any legal proceedings instituted under that paragraph with reasonable diligence, the Council may themselves institute legal proceedings for the recovery of possession of that property, and the Association shall reimburse the Council all the costs of the action not recovered from the defendant.

8. (Voluntary rehousing of licensee)

Where the Association rehouses the licensee of any property and his family and is not required or does not intend to return the property to the Council, it shall use its best endeavours to ensure that no unauthorised person enters the property before its occupation by a new family, and shall allow the property to stand vacant for as little time as possible before housing a new family in it in accordance with this agreement.

9. (Social Services Department)

If in the Association's opinion the services of the Council's Social Services Department are required to support any licensee or his family, the Association shall, unless the licensee or his family are already being served by that Department, so notify the Director.

10. (Transitional provisions)

(1) This agreement shall so far as practicable, apply to each property described in column (1) of the Schedule to this agreement as if -

- (a) this agreement had been made on the date mentioned in column (2) of that Schedule opposite that property; and
- (b) the property were a short-term property or expected

15. (14.10.71)

short-term property, which, immediately after this agreement had been deemed to have been made by virtue of sub-paragraph (a), had been offered by the Director to the Association under article 1(1) and accepted by the Association under article 1(5); and

(c) any persons housed in the property before this agreement was in fact made were a registered person and his family.

(2) The Association shall before the fifteenth day after the date of this agreement require the head of each family housed in any property described in column (1) of the schedule to this agreement to sign a licence in the form prescribed under article 3(4) expressed to have retrospective effect from the date mentioned in column (2) of that schedule opposite that property: provided that this paragraph shall not apply to a person who has before the date of this agreement signed a licence in the form prescribed under article 3(4) dated with the date mentioned in that column opposite the property the subject of the licence.

11. (Indemnity, etc)

how can we

What's the council's block insurance meant?

(1) The Association shall indemnify the Council and their employees and agents against all actions, claims, demands, and liability which may arise as a consequence of this agreement.

(2) The Association shall not hold either the Council or any of their employees or agents responsible for any loss damage or injury of any nature whatsoever which the Association or any of its officers members employees or agents or any licensee or members of his family or any other persons may suffer and which may occur from any cause on in or about any accepted property or other short-term property or in any way arising as a consequence of this agreement.

12. (Miscellaneous powers of the Council)

(1) The Council or any of their officers may from time to time prescribe reasonable forms and procedures for giving effect to this agreement, and the Association will use any such forms and conform with any such procedures so prescribed and communicated to it. All forms and procedures prescribed under this paragraph shall be submitted for consideration to the first meeting of the working party constituted under article 13 which is held after those forms or procedures have been so prescribed.

(2) For the administrative convenience of the Council or for reflecting any changes which the Council may make in their departmental structure (including the creation of new posts or the re-naming of existing posts), the Chief Executive may at any time by written notice to the Association amend this agreement by substituting for any designation appearing in it (or in such part of it as may be specified in the notice) any other designation, and may substitute for the same designation which may appear in different parts of this agreement such different designations as may be specified in the notice.

13. (Working party)

The Council and the Association shall nominate to serve upon a working party such representatives as they may respectively decide. The duties of the working party shall be: to review the operation of this agreement and seek ways of solving any problems which may arise in consequence of it; to consider requests by the Association for the loan of particular short-term or expected short-term properties; and to consider any forms or procedures submitted to it under article 12(1). The representatives of either party may use the meetings of the working party for making communications for the purposes of this agreement under article 15(2).

14. (Termination of agreement)

subject to this article

Either party may terminate immediately this agreement upon giving notice in writing to the other, whereupon (whichever party may have given the notice and without prejudice to the other legal consequences of the termination of this agreement) -

- (a) The Director shall, notwithstanding article 1(6), be deemed to have withdrawn any offer made under article 1(1) and not accepted by the Association; and
- (b) ^{this article and} articles 2(2), 3(6) and (7), 4(1), 6, 7, 10(1), 11, 15(1), 16(3) and 17 shall continue to have effect so far as those provisions are applicable; and
- (c) the Director shall be deemed to have given notice under article 5(1) in respect of all accepted properties.

15. (Communications)

(1) Subject to any requirement of this agreement or of any forms or procedures prescribed under article 12(1) for a communication to be in writing or to be made in any particular way, any oral or written communication made by the Council directly to any of the officers for the time being of the committee of the Association (including its Secretary and its Adviser) shall for the purposes of this agreement be deemed to be a communication to the Association.

(2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1) any oral or written communication made by either party's representatives at the working party constituted under article 13 to the other party's representatives at the working party at any of its meetings shall for the purposes of this agreement be deemed to be a communication to the Association.

16. (References)

(1) Either party may refer any question to which this article

13. (11.11.70)

applies to an independent referee to be nominated for the purposes of this article by the Director of the National Campaign for the Homeless (SHELTER).

(2) The questions to which this article applies are the questions following, that is to say -

- (a) whether any particulars required by the Director under article 3(3) are reasonable; and
- (b) whether any particulars required by the Financial Adviser under article 4(4) are reasonable; and
- (c) whether any forms or procedures prescribed under article 12(1) are reasonable; and
- (d) any other question arising out of this agreement which the parties agree shall be referred to the referee.

(3) Neither party shall question in any arbitration or other legal proceedings whatsoever the referee's determination of any question referred to him under this article.

17. (Arbitration)

Any dispute under or arising out of this agreement (not being a question to which article 16 applies) shall be referred to a single Arbitrator to be agreed upon by the parties hereto or in default of agreement to be nominated by the Director of the National Campaign for the Homeless (SHELTER) in accordance with the provisions of the Arbitration Act 1950 or any statutory modification or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force.

F. SCHEDULE

(1)	(2)
17 Eric Street, E.3.	1st March 1971
3 Lacey Street, E.3.	1st March 1971

APPENDIX 4

TOWER HAMLETS FAMILY SQUATTERS

Contains: A leaflet written by THFS describing what they do.

A copy of the documents which families have to fill in before becoming members of the association.

A description of a weekly meeting.

Photograph of a house occupied by squatters.

Newspaper article describing Lord Avebury's visit to THFS.

T.H.F.S.A.

June-July 72

Who are they?

They are a group of families living in Tower Hamlets in houses, which are eventually going to be demolished. Houses if not used which could stand empty for anything between 6 months to 10 years

The Association has a legal agreement with both the G.L.C. and the L.B.T.H. to use these houses.

If you want a house.

Come to us at our meetings, held every ~~Thursday~~ ^{TUESDAY} at 8 o'clock p.m. at Oxford House, Derbyshire St, E.2. and once you come to a meeting you are on the list. The waiting list operates on a first come first served basis, but allowance can always be made for people in dire need

How the Association works.

It is run on a cooperative basis. Each family in a house (at present we have 53 houses) pay rates to the council and rent to the association. At present this works out at about £3/4 a week per house, but this is changeable since the whole idea of the group is that it is run by the members themselves. They say how much rent they should pay and they say how much money should go where. And the place to do all this is at the meetings on Thursdays, where anything that is agreed on is carried out. People in houses and people waiting can speak their minds and important issues are voted on.

Everything is out in the open. There are no committees, no meeting behind closed doors, and no bosses or landlord. In a squatter's house you are your own landlord.

The rent money where does it go?

This money at present goes towards paying 2 people Thurstone and Graham at £10 a week. Their job is to try and get houses from the Council and G.L.C. as quickly as possible and make sure they are made habitable and occupied as soon as possible. They do what office work needs to be done. Also, Bert Murphy works at 50p an hour as a handyman. We also occasionally have to employ other skilled workers. The rest of the cash goes on tools, materials, derv for our van, office and other travel expenses. The treasurer lives in one of the houses and the books are always open to inspection.

The Houses.

The houses we get are often in a bad state and that is why the council won't use them. Therefore it is vital that people help themselves and others by clearing up and decorating and doing small jobs in the houses. The association can afford some things (i.e. electricians and plumbing) but the more that is done by members for nothing the better. This is how we manage to o.k. houses which would cost the council from £200-£1,000 to do up. It's surprising what can be done with a bit of effort from everyone.

When the houses come down.

You may have to move to another and then to another and of course it is not always possible to say how long a life a house will have as the bureaucrats keep changing their minds. You may be lucky and get a very long life or you may not and have to move quite soon. It is very important that you move when the council wants a house back, because if you don't, they may stop giving us houses.

Tower Hamlets List.

We have negotiated with the T.M. Housing Dept that any family on their list will have their points frozen when they move into a squat house. Thus your position on the list will not be lost by taking a squat house.

you will be rehoused in the normal course of time (whatever that is with the dreaded T.H. Housed Dept)

Because of their agreement it is very important that everybody who takes a squat house should be on the T.H. Housing list. If you are not on it now. If you wait till you are in a squat house, you will get very few points, as your accommodation will be quite reasonable and it will be that much longer before the T.H.H.D. permanently rehouse you. Anyway by getting on the T.H. List you ensure that eventually you will be permanently rehoused, and not have to move from one squat house to another.

AN AGREEMENT made the day of 197
between the Tower Hamlets Family Squatting Association, of
Dame Colet House, Ben Jonson Road, E1 (the Association) acting by its
Secretary Thurstine Basset, and

_____ of _____ (the Member(s))

- 1. The Association is a body set up to provide in cooperation with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the Greater London Council low cost housing for families in dire need of accommodation.
- 2. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the Greater London Council have granted to the Association the right by licence to use certain properties in the Borough of Tower Hamlets for the Association's purposes (and of which the property described in the schedule is one) on the Association undertaking to secure vacant possession of the property when required to do so by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets or the Greater London Council. It is of vital importance to the Association to be able to give vacant possession when required to by the local authority so that the local authority may make further properties available to the Association and so that the local authority may be permitted to continue with the housing and/or redevelopment programme in the Borough.
- 3. The Association will permit the Member(s) as a Member(s) of the Association to occupy the property described in the Schedule so long as the property is available to the Association and provided that the Member(s) observes the rules of the Association and the terms of this Agreement.

IT IS AGREED :

- 1. The Association grants the the Member(s) the licence to occupy the property described in the Schedule for as long as the Member(s) observes the following conditions :
 - a) the Member(s) shall pay the Association the weekly sum of :
 - b) the Member(s) shall discharge general and water rates immediately upon the same becoming due, and the Member(s) hereby authorises the Association to receive as his/her/their agent all general rate demands for the property and agrees to pay to the Association acting for the purpose as the agent of the rating authority all general rates so demanded.
 - c) the Member(s) shall not permit any part of the premises to be used or occupied in any way or for any purpose which would cause annoyance to the occupiers of any neighbouring property.
 - d) the Member(s) shall not permit any person other than members of his/her/their own direct family to reside at the property without the

written consent of the Association and the Member(s) shall not permit the property to be used for any other purpose than that of private residence for himself/herself/themselves and his/her/their family.

2. The Association has no legal property rights in the property described in the Schedule and nothing in this agreement shall be taken to be a demise or the grant of a tenancy in any form.

3. The Member(s) shall not assign the benefit of this agreement nor purport to enter into any sub-letting of the whole or any part of the property.

4. This agreement may be terminated :

a) by the Member(s) (or either of them) giving one week's notice to the Association whereupon the Member(s) shall give up possession of the property forthwith.

b) by the Association giving the Member(s) (or either of them) four weeks' notice which notice shall not be given unless and until the property is required by the local authority to be returned to it. At the end of this four weeks the Member(s) shall vacate the property immediately.

c) on the Member(s) (or either of them) ceasing to be a Member(s) of the Association or failing to comply with the terms of this agreement when the Member(s) shall be required to vacate the property within four weeks of ceasing to be a Member(s) or comply.

5. The Association shall not be responsible for carrying out any repairs or redecorating at the property and neither the Association nor its officers shall be liable for any loss or injury caused by any disrepair at the property or caused by negligence or any other way.

6. The Member(s) undertakes to be bound by the provisions of the Family Squatting Agreement made between the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the Association on behalf of its members. A copy of the Family Squatting Agreement may be inspected at the office of the Secretary of the Association or at the office of the Town Clerk of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Town Hall, Cambridge Heath Road, E2 9LN.

THE SCHEDULE :

Signed for the Association by :

witnessed by :

address :

Signed by the Member(s) :

witnessed by :

address :

SQUATTING QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete this side clearly and return to:
 Tower Hamlets Family Squatting Association
 c/o Dame Colet House, Ben Jonson Road, E.1. tel 790 1694

Full name :

Address :

How many adults in family :

What is the relationship :

How many children living with you :

What are their ages and sex :

Are there any children away from home :

How many rooms do you occupy. . . . furnished/unfurnished
 (excluding kitchen)

Are they basement/ground/1st/2nd/3rd/4th/ /floor.

Which floor is the kitchen on :

Do you share kitchen. . . with how many adults. . . .

Do you share cooker . . . with how many adults. . . .

Do you have a bath . . . do you share it. . . with how many adults..

Do you share lavatory. . .inside/outside . . . with how many adults..

Do you suffer from pests. . . .

Damp walls/leaking ceilings/rotten floors/other disrepairs. . . .

What is your rent. . . have you had any difficulty paying this. . .

Do you have a rent book . . . have you been to Rent Officer/
 Rent Tribunal..

If so, what date. . . .what result. . . .

Have you had verbal/written notice to quit/or a possession order ...

If so, what date received. . . .what date of expiry. . . .

Any trouble with landlodd. . . .if so describe. . . .

How long have you been living here. . . .

How long have you lived in Tower Hamlets. . . .

How long have you lived in the Greater London area. . . .

Are you on Tower Hamlets Council housing list . . .reg.no. . .date..

Are you on any other housing list

Have you been in touch with any of these, please give name of contact:

Children's Dept.

Welfare Dept.

Public Health.

Probation.

An other.

Any medical considerations .

Name and address of doctor.

Who told you about the Squatting Association

Do you understand the Association can only help families on a short
 term basis and that family must agree to move out when the house is
 required .

If we help you, are you prepared to pay rent weekly, to take part in
 the Association's work, and to help others get their houses ready.

will you or your partner be able to come to the Thurs evening
 meetings of the group

Do you wish to be considered for squatting on the conditions stated

Signature

Date

Comments on accomodation and housing needs:

Referred to us by:

Visited at home by, and date:

Coming to meetings:

Any work skills:

Housing position:

Decisions

Allocated :

Agreement signed :

Moved in :

Date house required by :

To be rehoused by :

Moved to :

WEEKLY MEETING

On 21 Jan 1973 I attended one of the weekly meetings of the THFS held at Oxford House. There were about 30 people present; regular families, four prospective families, Gregg, Graham, Tim, and a legal advisor from the Family Squatters Advisory Service. Gregg chaired the meeting and had prepared an agenda on a scrap of paper. The first item was the disposal of two houses offered by the council during the previous week. The four families present had precedence over anyone else on the waiting list by virtue of being present, and the meeting discussed the relative needs of each until an amicable agreement was reached. The discussion included consideration of room sizes, ages and numbers of children, and the characteristics of neighbours. Then came a debate about a problem all democratic bodies have to contend with: Certain members of the association were not paying their rent, which of course the other members objected to. Naturally none of the offenders were present and initially a hard line was adopted; 'take them to court' or 'evict them'. Others said this would be cruel. The argument rambled on until the legal advisor from FSAS put forward a solution based on the experience of the Lewisham Family Squatters in a similar situation. His suggestion was agreed upon as it sounded reasonable and no-one could understand the legal complexities anyway. There then followed an announcement of a demonstration being held in support of the 'unlawful' squatters of Myrdle St. and Parfett St. who were threatened with eviction. A leaflet was handed round. No-one expressed much interest. Next someone suggested the Association should hold a jumble sale, and a date was fixed. Finally Bert asked if anyone had any repairs needing doing, and everyone went upstairs for a drink.



Matlock Street E 14. Number 15 (on right) is occupied by THFS, while number 14 (on left) is still occupied by Council tenants. Although over half of this row has been emptied, prior to development, only one house has so far been given to THFS. The remainder have been smashed up and boarded over.

LIBERAL LEADER BACKS "SQUATTING SCHEME"

Lead to other Boroughs, he says

BY ANDREW WILLIS

MR. ERIC LUBBOCK (Lord Avebury), President of the London Liberal Party, pledged his support for the squatting scheme being carried out in Tower Hamlets with Council approval when he visited the borough on Thursday.

He viewed short-life properties taken over and redecorated by the squatters since the agreement was made with the Council six months ago, and said: "The Labour leaders in Tower Hamlets have been prepared to look at the squatting movement dispassionately and have decided it has a useful role to play in helping to ease the plight of the badly-housed."

Mr. Lubbock and the London Liberals are urging co-operation between all the boroughs and the Shelter-backed Family Squatting Advisory Service. He is to see how such schemes worked out in practice.

He toured both good and bad properties with local squatters' leader, Ron Bailey. "We could just look at the best houses," said Mr. Bailey. "But I want to show how the scheme is working, and it would be dishonest to suggest there were no problems."

He explained that under the agreement made in February, the squatters promised to move out all the families which had been illegally squatting in Arbour-square since September 1969. The Council had got a court order for their eviction in September 1970, but held off taking action while the negotiations were in progress.

ARBOUR SQ. SQUAT ENDS

"We offered the Council a carrot in saying that we would clear Arbour-square voluntarily without the trouble of eviction. This we have done over the months since the agreement — the 15 families which were there are being moved out into the other Council and GLC properties which are empty but not yet wanted for demolition."

Mr. Bailey disclosed that the Arbour-square squat — the longest one in London — would end this weekend when the last family was moved into other squatter accommodation. And he also explored some fallacies about "legalised squatting."

"Our families are not jumping the housing queue as no-one else wants the houses they move into. Neither do they get away rent-free, they pay rent to us. Our families stay in the same position on the Council housing lists — they're just being given temporary accommodation until they get a proper home."

The first house Mr. Lubbock visited, at 17 Eric-street, Stepney, was occupied by two families on two storeys, but Mr. Bailey said that one would move out over the next few days. Mrs. Marion

Grimes, who lived upstairs with her husband and two-years-old girl, said: "The house was in an awful state when we moved in, but we've done a lot of work on it and it's now quite pleasant."

"This house is not due to come down until 1974, and it was ludicrous to leave it empty," said Mr. Bailey. "I wouldn't mind living here myself," commented Mr. Lubbock.

WHAT "SQUATTERS" SAY

The next house, at 20 Farrance-street, had been the home of Tim and Carol Hopkins and their young baby for just a few days, and decorating was well under way.

"This house needs the electrical wiring done and the guttering repaired, so at the next meeting we hold we'll appeal for someone who knows about these things to come along and help Tim and Carol — that's how it's done," said Mr. Bailey.

Mrs. Sheila Cox and her family had found their house at 28 Ashton-street in a good state when they moved in, but they had to face hostility from neighbours at first. "Once they found out we were just like them it was all right though," she said.

Summed up Mr. Lubbock: "The agreement between Tower Hamlets and the squatters is working well. Other boroughs should follow their lead."

APPENDIX 5

THE MYRDLE ST. AND PARFETT ST. SQUAT - an indication of the nature of the campaign.

Contains: Newspaper articles.

Description of a demonstration held on 19 Jan 73 in support of
the squatters.

Two handouts.

~~USE THE EMPTY HOUSES~~

STOP EVICTIONS

We are marching today to Tower Hamlets Town Hall and to the office of Epracent, a property company, in Brick Lane. The demonstration is to support the demands of squatters in two houses in Myrdle Street and Parfett Street, E.1 that their eviction next friday should be stopped, and to ask that empty property in the Borough should be used to house all the homeless.

We have been squatting in these houses for nine months. Before we started living in them they had been empty for months. The same company, Epracent, owns other houses in the area which have also been left empty for about a year now. Some of them have been sold to other property companies who have not done anything with them. They are still empty, and are now being resold. We don't believe there is any intention to use them for housing.

The Officers of Tower Hamlets Council have said they will try to prevent this eviction. To do this, first of all they need the agreement of the elected Councillors of this Borough. So we are asking all Councillors for their support. We also ask that the Council take over other empty privately owned property in this Borough and use it for housing.

This Borough, as everybody knows, has a huge number of homeless people. All kinds of people are being forced to squat because they can find no place to live.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR DEMONSTRATION

1 PM THIS FRIDAY 19th JANUARY (1973)
FROM MYRDLE STREET JUNCTION
WITH FIELDGATE STREET (E.1)

S T O P E V I C T I O N S

O P E N E M P T Y H O U S E S

(1973)

On Friday 26th January two households, at present squatting in Stepney, are faced with eviction. The houses are 20 Myrdle Street and 42 Parfett Street. They are owned by a company called Epracent. The area in which the houses stand is scheduled for slum clearance and redevelopment by the Council. As with other property owned by Epracent in the area, the houses we occupy as squatters will in all probability remain empty after they are sold. (Epracent wish to auction the two houses on the 14th February.) Epracent and other property companies are selling and reselling the houses with no intention of letting them. This means that by the time the Council issues Compulsory Purchase Orders they have to pay an astronomical price for the property with Tower Hamlets people footing the bill.

There are ~~60,000~~ homeless people in London including 22,000 homeless families. In Tower Hamlets there is a waiting list of 6,500 families. There is no housing available in Tower Hamlets for single people. This means that single people and homeless families, including unsupported mothers, have nowhere to live.

Meanwhile, speculators take advantage of the boom in housing prices to raise their profits.

We are demanding that the Council take over the properties immediately by issuing Management Orders on the houses in which we live, and on other empty property owned by Epracent in the area. These houses may then be opened up for the use of homeless people in the Borough.

There will be a demonstration to put these two demands to the Council on Friday 19th January, assembling 1 pm at the Fieldgate Street end of Myrdle Street and Parfett Street (behind London Hospital). The demonstration will march to the Town Hall. We ask for your support in this action.

We demand that the Council use its powers to prevent the evictions at 20 Myrdle Street and 42 Parfett Street taking place.

If you would like to help with this campaign, or want more information, ring 247 3139.

TOWER HAMLETS ACTION ON HOUSING

The number of people in this country with a "housing problem" is growing every day. The authorities offer no solutions, they only try to pass the blame. We must solve our own housing problems by fighting. In Tower Hamlets there are many groups and organisations involved in fighting for their housing rights. There has already been a national campaign started to fight on this issue.

But a campaign will have its strength nowhere but in the local groups that are fighting their day-to-day housing problems. To do this more effectively the squatters in Parfett St, in Bow and in other parts of the borough have arranged for a meeting at Dame Colet House on Tuesday, April 17, ⁽¹⁹⁷³⁾ at 7:30 p.m. We think coordination between the different housing groups in Tower Hamlets and people looking for housing will lead to us having a far greater influence on the authorities that are controlling our housing situation.

We invite all the people and groups in the borough who are fighting for housing to attend this meeting.

BEN JOHNSON RD.
E.I.

Dame Colet House 7:30 Tuesday April 17
Ben Johnson Rd.

Demonstration 19 Jan 73

The most surprising aspect of the demonstration was the amount of support given by the general public on the streets. I was at first sceptical of the demonstration as it consisted almost entirely of young, long-haired untidily-dressed people. By all appearances the usual demo crowd, guaranteed, I thought, to alienate the people in the streets of Stepney on a Friday afternoon. The procession was led by a landrover with a piano on it which provided the accompaniment for 'Rachman's body lies a moldring in the grave but his soul goes marching on.' (tune - 'John Brown's Body'), and 'All I want is a room somewhere' (tune - 'Lots of chocolates for me to eat' from 'My Fair Lady') interspersed with chants of 'We're going to smash the profiteers', 'Epracet we're going to get you' and 'Don't let empty houses rot - squat'. Yet seems that most of the people in the streets were not put off by the carnival appearance, and actively encouraged the demonstrators in their mission. Handing out leaflets was a lengthy process as I got involved in the life histories of people's housing treatment from the Council. In two hours I met several people who were facing eviction in the near future. One old couple had lived in the same building for thirty-five years, and had one week left before having to move. The Council could not offer them anywhere nearer than Greenwich, and they were too old to complain. I mention this only to emphasize that the squatters are not seen merely as radical extremists making a fuss, but as a group expressing a common grievance, even if in an unconventional way.

On the march



Squatters and supporters march on the Town Hall during last week's demonstration.

Photo: Tower Hamlets Studios

Eviction row at Council meeting

TOWER HAMLETS Council say they are determined to evict squatters from being occupying empty houses in Stepney.

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Orient 0, Hull 0

unimpressed.

the net. Hull keeper Ian N

East London Advertiser
26 Jan 1973

Street battle as squatters repel bailiffs and police

Police wrestled with protesters yesterday while helping bailiffs in an unsuccessful attempt to evict 10 squatters from a house in the East End of London. One man—a Hungarian artist of 41—was charged with using threatening behaviour.

A month ago, Judge Willis said at Shoreditch county court that he regretted he was obliged to grant an eviction warrant to Eprecent Properties, owners of two houses in Myrdle Street and Parfett Street, Tower Hamlets, occupied by the squatters.

Attempts by the squatters and social workers to persuade Tower Hamlets council to bring forward compulsory purchase orders on the properties—scheduled for acquisition in 1975 as part of a slum clearance scheme—failed. And yesterday police were on duty when bailiffs and a representative of the property company arrived for the evictions.

The scene could have been mistaken for the film set of a slice-of-life East End drama. There were the camera crews—television as it happened—and a crowd of onlookers grouped round the quaintly poverty-stricken terrace which is Myrdle Street.

The men from Gay Lib, wearing lipstick and skirts, added a theatrical touch. But the bailiffs were real enough, and so were the timber barricades which eventually foiled them.

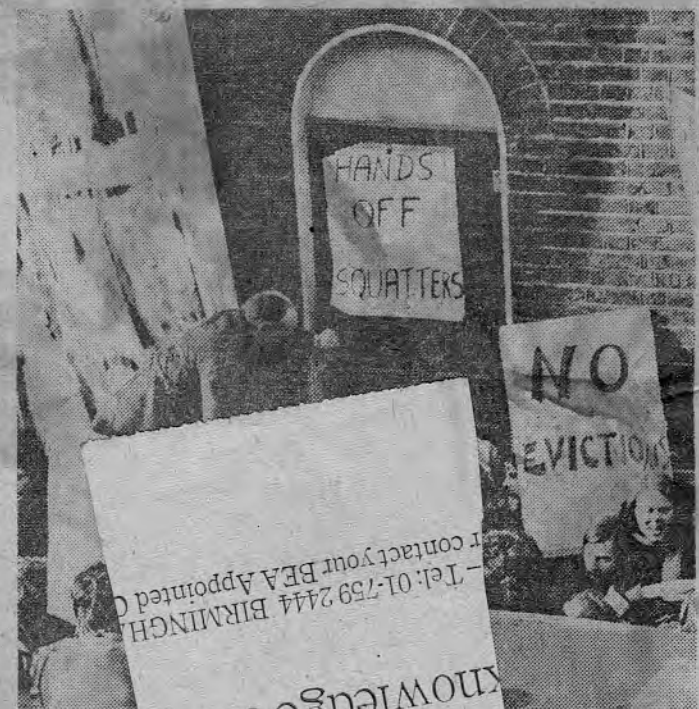
About 30 of the squatters' supporters sat in a tight group on the pavement, barring access to 20 Myrdle Street. Mr George Finch, the county court bailiff, waded among them towards the door, but was thrown off balance before he could reach it. The two policemen who were on duty coaxed him back.

Shortly afterwards, the number of police rose to nearly 20. Taking the initiative, they pushed their way into the crowd of protesters, lifting some on to the pavement, allowing another bailiff to reach the window.

Several helmets were sent flying as police and protesters struggled together. The protesters kept up a barrage of taunts: "You're working for the rich! Hypocrites! Take off your uniforms! Do you enjoy throwing people out of houses?"

There were crashes and thuds as the bailiff's hammer broke through the window panes and met a wall of heavy boards concealed behind the curtain. Laughs and jeers from the protesters. The police and the bailiff withdrew.

Mr Tony Mahoney, a com-



Report: John
Pictures: E. Han

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Squatters angry at action by the police

By JOHN WINDSOR

Up to 50 squatters from the Parfett Street area of Tower Hamlets, London, marched by torchlight last night to Leman Street police station and sang songs to protest about police activity during an eviction on Tuesday.

Earlier yesterday, four of the five people evicted from 42 Parfett Street on Tuesday re-entered the house through a window and continued squatting. They claim that the county court and private bailiffs had no lawful warrant and that the police therefore acted unlawfully by helping them.

The protesters submitted a petition addressed to the commander of "H" division which stated their intention of summoning the police involved and asked for an assurance that the police would not assist at "illegal" evictions. The police should have stopped the bailiffs from acting unlawfully, said the petition.

The Child Poverty Action Group, the Family Squatting Advisory Service, Shelter and the National Council for Civil Liberties have all given legal help to the squatters.

The squatters who regained entry are two couples: Mr John Scott, aged 27, a building worker, and his wife, June, also 27, and Mr Tony Silvario, aged 25, and his wife, also named June, aged 20. Mrs Scott said yesterday that she had been slapped in the face by a bailiff during the eviction. She had subsequently miscarried.

The squatters said that the bailiffs had forced the front door and the living room door. They had been closely followed by a policewoman. Mrs Scott said that the policewoman had ordered her to turn off her radio or it would be broken, had grasped her by the wrist, and had supported the bailiffs in evicting her. Mr Scott had been at work at the time.

The four said that they had first entered the house nine days previously. The Scotts had been staying with a relative in Newham but had to leave because the accommodation was council-owned. The Silvarios said that they had been evicted from a squat in Kentish Town after living in Maidstone.

The Siege of Parfett Street,
page 15



WAITING for the bailiffs: a whistle at the window is more welcome than a knock at the door at 20 Myrdle Street, Tower Hamlets, London, where 10 squatters staved off bailiffs on Tuesday.

Bailiffs at Shoreditch county court said yesterday that they still intended to use their

THE Parfett Street eviction affair on Tuesday has raised difficult questions about the involvement of the police in civil disputes. Without a stricter code of conduct the rôle of the police, particularly during evictions, could fall into disrepute.

Police cordoned off Parfett, Street in Tower Hamlets, London, allowing county court bailiffs and a team of private bailiffs to evict two couples and a single man from number 42.

The squatters, backed by legal advice from four prominent action groups, are now challenging the lawfulness of the bailiffs' eviction warrant. It is possible that named police and bailiffs will face prosecution by squatters under the Forcible Entry Act and the common law of riot, or affray. The Quatermain affair in Lewisham four years ago, and subsequent cases, have shown that such charges on behalf of squatters are no longer automatically regarded as vexatious by the courts.

The official Scotland Yard attitude to police attendance at evictions is that the police are there to ensure that no breach of the peace occurs. The squatters in Tower Ham-

JOHN WINDSOR on a legal dilemma in Tower Hamlets

The seige of Parfett

lets claim that over the past three weeks the police have not interpreted their peace-keeping rôle as passive vigilance, but have given active support to the bailiffs.

At 20 Myrdle Street in the same block, 19 days ago, a squad of nearly 20 police took the initiative by clearing sit-down protesters from the path of bailiffs who were enabled to reach a ground floor window and smash it. After the police cordon had been set up on Tuesday, no residents were allowed into Parfett Street while the bailiffs and police were at work.

A policewoman entered number 42 hard on the heels of bailiffs, who had forced an entry, and questioned the occupants who were then evicted. One of them, Mrs June Scott, aged 27, claimed to have been struck in the face by a bailiff and said yesterday that she had had a

miscarriage during the night.

Clearly, if the bailiffs' eviction warrant is held to be invalid, the police who took part in the episode will be in an unenviable position. But whatever the legal aspect, many senior police officers seem unhappy at finding themselves involved in the highly political battle between property developers and the homeless. The sight of 50 police supporting private bailiffs in evicting homeless couples from run-down properties owned and still dealt in by property companies, although they are due for demolition in three years time, is not edifying.

What precautions did the police take on Tuesday to ensure that the bailiffs were legally entitled to evict? The squatters say that the officers in charge, from "H" division, based at Leman Street, asked the bailiffs to produce a warrant for eviction from

number 42, and after some bailiffs had driven off and returned with one, telephoned the registrar of Shoreditch county court, Mr E. A. Everett to check that it was in order. Scotland Yard also says that the registrar—who was not available for comment yesterday—gave his opinion that it was legal.

What is the basis of the squatters' claim that the warrant was unlawful? Simply that it was the same warrant—against two named people, Judit Kenyeres, Guy Sprung and others—which had already been lawfully executed at number 42 eighteen days previously and that five different people—Mr Tony Silvario, his wife June, John Scott, his wife also named June and John Connolly—had since begun a new squat in the house only eight days previously. And that the warrant, having already been lawfully exe-

cuted, could be resurrected.

The ex-work council when new houses were subject of court action against them had since they were start all Parfett Street that this given to are prepared has now both bailiffs.

The name legally signed Stamp duty 1969 that orders—the unnamed law. In some courts have property against grounds taken end out their

There is a world of difference between moving homeless families into empty properties and the sort of undisciplined hippy movement that gave squatting a bad name. Today's squatters make agreements with councils and pay rent and rates.

JEREMY HARRISON reports:

Winning the fight

YESTERDAY a group of families and single people were still sitting tight in their battle to remain in No. 20 Myrtle Street and No. 42 Parfett Street, E.1. Their situation has attracted a good deal of public sympathy. This despite the fact that they are squatters, and unlawful squatters at that—and despite the fact that the owners have been granted possession orders against them.

Why the sympathy for squatters? Two reasons. Firstly, squatters are no longer seen as the bogey they once were. Their meticulous attention to the letter of the law (there is a great difference between "unlawful" and "illegal" and squatting is only "unlawful"), and their clever publicity management over the past three years have been successful: a great many people now realise that there is all the difference in the world between homeless families and the sort of undisciplined hippy movement that very nearly wrecked everything for the family squatters in the 144 Piccadilly fiasco.

And, secondly, the owners of these two properties are a firm of speculators, Epracent Properties.

Whatever the outcome of this particular squat these two considerations may well signal a sizeable expansion in the organised squatters' campaign, which has already made London the most intensively squatted city in Britain by placing more than 2,000 people in local authority-owned short-life property.

Approval

Now the squatters believe that there is a great deal of empty private property, from that emotive symbol Centre Point down to places like Myrtle Street and Parfett Street. They also believe that if they put families into it they will attract public sympathy and at least the tacit approval of the local authorities.

The present incident seems to be bearing that out. The council in this case Tower Hamlets, is known to be sympathetic to the squatters. Indeed, there is talk of a possible council move to help them stay where they are.

Local authorities, after all, have no overpowering reason to love property developers and every reason to be delighted if some of the rubbish that can be shifted off themselves for a while.

The power base of the London squatting movement is the Family Squatting Advisory Service, which is receiving a grant of £10,000 from Shelter this year—and this week employs its fourth full-time field worker.

Affiliated to FNAS is a loose federation of independent groups, mostly with agreements

to
move
in
and
make
a
home

with their own local authorities for the lawful use of properties bought up ahead of demolition and redevelopment plans.

This is all very different from the beginnings of the movement in 1968 and 1969 when the East London Squatters were formed, then changed their name to the London Squatters and embarked on their first and most traumatic campaign, in Redbridge.

This period is described with furious intensity in a book called *The Squatters*, published today by Penguin at 50p and written by Ron Bailey the self-taught legal brain behind the squatters' brilliant avoidance of most of the accepted forms of eviction and their regular moral victories when they were forced into court.

"Possibly the most important development of the squatting movement," Bailey writes in his history-action-manual "is that working people have taken control of their own lives, to a small extent at least."

Inside the squatting movement that means democratic control of the individual groups by the families themselves. In some cases, families have not wanted that responsibility but it has been pointed out to them that they cannot avoid it.

Bailey explains how all the current agreements are modelled on the one reached between a squatting group and Lewisham Council in 1969. Briefly, the

council agrees to offer the group short-life properties it cannot use itself, and to freeze the housing points of the families who occupy them so that no one loses priority because of a temporary improvement in circumstances.

The squatters agree to house only families on the council's housing list, to pay the council rates on the houses, and to ensure that they are emptied again when they are wanted for demolition.

The families agree to pay rent and rates. The average rent, which goes towards running the group, is £3 a week. Some of the groups now have enough money coming in to employ a full-time field worker. Others can run to a handyman as well. But the maximum loan from FNAS to a new group is still only £100. The rest is a matter of improving houses and collecting the rents.

From that Lewisham beginning the squatters now have groups in more than half the London boroughs, the number of families each has housed reflecting the availability of property and the strength of the group.

Student Community Housing in Camden has the largest number of units: 600. About a third are occupied by families, a third by students, and a third by other single people. At Crystal Palace a group with a special agreement with the GLC has 35 people in five houses.

In Brent a group has 14 families housed, the Ealing Group has 15 families housed, and in Hounslow there is an agreement with the council but so far no houses have been completed.

Haringey, where an agreement was signed last autumn, has four families housed; Islington has 19, Waltham Forest nine, and Redbridge, the old battleground, four.

In south and east London, Greenwich has 46 families in houses, Lambeth 90, Tower Hamlets 79, Southwark 22, Wandsworth 17, and Lewisham have stabilised at 75.

An agreement is almost complete in Bromley, where a family is already housed, and a group in Hammersmith is pressing the council hard.

The only immediate problem with a local authority is in Westminster, where now that an agreement in principle has been reached, it is proving difficult to resolve a final matter of principle.

Victory

At the moment there is no formal connection between the FNAS affiliated groups and the new Tower Hamlets squatters, but Ron Bailey—still very much involved with squatting though he is now Shelter's Homeless Families Officer—is helping out and makes no secret of the fact that he is devoting a lot of his thought to the campaign against the speculators.

FNAS field workers say that the established groups are getting more and more concerned with it too.

And, whatever finally happens in Myrtle Street and Parfett Street, there is one strong precedent for success. In November a group of squatters moved into an empty street in Richmond owned by Buxi, the giant building firm. Buxi capitulated almost immediately and handed the houses over on the basis of a responsible agreement.

But if some of the hope for future expansion in the groups also lie with speculative property it is partly because the very success of the squatting movement has led to a far smaller supply of local authority properties. In 1970 they estimated that there were as many as 10,000 empty council houses at their disposal for local authority



Leading the fight: Ronald Bailey (bottom) and squatters move into empty house in Ilford.

ties, and at least 5000 of them capable of easy rehabilitation.

There is nothing like that number today. Most boroughs would freely admit to having been fooled by the squatting campaigns, and some of them have been shamed by them too. Very few would now dare to leave the vast empty acreages that Southwark, for instance, permitted until quite recently.

Newly-weds

Some are using up their short-life property by placing homeless families into it, and so emptying their hotels. Others allow newly-weds to live in it for limited

periods on condition they save for a home of their own at the same time.

The last word should be with the councils who have gone freely into agreements with squatting groups. Mr Jeff Jeffrey, chairman of the Greenwich Housing Committee, said yesterday: "The squatters have been extremely helpful in Greenwich, and a very happy relationship exists."

A number of families have received shelter through this arrangement which it would have been difficult for the borough council to deal with otherwise. "It's a first class way of helping people who sometimes unfortunately fall between stalls."

APPENDIX 6

FAMILY SQUATTERS ADVISORY SERVICE

The formation of this organization was an important factor in the consolidation of the family squatting movement.

This appendix contains a number of information sheets issued by FSAS. Information sheet no. 5 (p.71) explains what FSAS is, and the others indicate the amount of information necessary to squat effectively and show why an information service is essential to the growth of the movement.

FAMILY SQUATTING ADVISORY SERVICE

INFORMATION SHEET NO. 5.

A brief outline of F.S.A.S. for the benefit of new members of local squatting groups.

WHAT IS F.S.A.S?

The FAMILY SQUATTING ADVISORY SERVICE, is an organisation that was set up in December 1970 to help start new groups in as many boroughs as possible: to provide information, advice and support to developing groups, and to keep them in contact with each other, so that they can discuss and decide general policies for the squatting movement as a whole. F.S.A.S. does not control the local groups. They are independent. But the groups do control F.S.A.S.

HOW DOES F.S.A.S. WORK?

F.S.A.S. employs three full time field workers and a part time secretary. These workers research new areas, they bring people together to form groups and help to negotiate agreements with the councils. They keep in touch with all groups and circulate information on matters of interest and importance to squatters. A loan scheme enables F.S.A.S. to help new groups with up to £100. This is repaid by the group at 50p per week per family squatting, so that the money can be lent again as new groups need it.

WHO RUNS F.S.A.S?

The policy of F.S.A.S. is decided by the 'MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE' which is made up of elected representatives from each of the squatting groups, plus two representatives from SHELTER (F.S.A.S. is financed by a SHELTER grant) and one of the three F.S.A.S. field workers. The Management Committee meets monthly. Observers from squatting groups are welcome to attend but only members of the committee may vote.

To assist and support the field workers and direct the day to day business of F.S.A.S. there is also a smaller Working Group which meets at least once a week. This consists of the workers, who can co-opt up to 3 other people and representatives nominated by the Management Committee.

WHAT DOES F.S.A.S. EXPECT FROM YOU?

F.S.A.S. is important, because it represents the combined strength and influence of the Family Squatting movement, and we believe that every group member will want to keep it effective and democratic. To do this, it is essential that you elect a representative who is fully informed about, and useful to, his or her own group, and who can be relied upon to report back to you regularly on the discussions and decisions taken by F.S.A.S.

F.S.A.S. The Albany, Creek Road, Deptford SE8 Phone 691 1603.

LEGAL WARNING

This property has been occupied by Squatters. We are in possession and we intend to stay. If you dispute our right to do so, we are prepared to discuss the matter, but if you want to get us out, think twice and take advice before you act, or you may find yourself facing serious charges.

READ THIS CAREFULLY.

YOU MAY NOT EVICT US FORCIBLY

The statute of Forcible Entry Act 1381 states "...None from henceforth make any entry into any lands and tenements but in case where entry is given by law: and in such case not with strong hand nor with multitude of people, but only in peaceable and easy manner. And if any man from henceforth do to the contrary and thereof be duly convict, he shall be punished by imprisonment....." Yes, it is an old statute, but it is still in existence. In fact it has been restated on a number of occasions (1391, 1429, 1588, 1623) and has been used at least twick in recent years.

So, if you think you have a right to evict us forcibly THEN THINK AGAIN. The Act was designed to stop this - because if you have a just claim to possession of the property, then you can go through the courts to get your land back, but you MUST NOT ATTEMPT AN IMMEDIATE EVICTION.

YOU WILL BE COMMITTING A CRIMINAL OFFENCE IF YOU EVICT US FORCIBLY

"The Forcible Entry Acts...make a landlord who takes forcible possession of the premises liable criminally..." Megarry & Wade - 'The Law of Real Property 3rd Ed. 1966, page 687. And just in case you think this does not apply to 'mere squatters' then heed the words on page 997 of this book which say "If S (Squatter) wrongfully takes possession of land belonging to O (Owner), O immediately acquires a right of action against S for recovery of land...O may re-enter, but if resisted will be subject to the Statutes of Forcible Entry 1381-1623. O will therefore be put to an action if S refuses to give up possession."

(And remember that Megarry in 'Megarry and Wade' is Mr. Justice Megarry - High Court Judge: so he ought to know what he is talking about!)

This point is reaffirmed in Kenny's 'Outline of Criminal Law' 18th Ed. p. 199 para 155 which states that although one may use force to recover moveable property"...In the case of real property this right to recover by force certainly does not exist. Under an act of Richard II a landlord commits an indictable offence by forcibly entering a house although it is his own, if any full (though unlawful) possessor is excluding him." The cases of Newton and Harland (1840) 1 Scott N.R.44: cf 17 Ch.D.p.188 support this.

IT IS NO DEFENCE THAT YOU ARE ENTITLED TO POSSESSION

In Halsbury's Laws of England 3rd Ed. Vol 10 p.592 para 1103 "It is no defence to a person who has forcibly entered on land in the possession of another that he was entitled to possession or had a legal right of entry." Several cases are quoted in the footnote to support this.

Archbold's Criminal Pleading 36th Ed. p. 1307 para 3603 states "But it is immaterial whether the estate proved is an estate by 'right or by wrong', for even if the defendant has a right of entry still his asserting that right 'with strong hand or multitude of people' is equally an offence within the statute as if he had no right...."

As squatters we have no immediate title to the land but this does not give anyone the right to evict us forcibly. Page 1308 Archbold "Absence of title in the prosecutor is no defence, the gist of the offence being the force." R v Williams 4 Man and Ry 471 and R v Studd 14 L.T. (N.S.) 623 are quoted in support of this. So heed Lord Salmon's remarks in the Court of Appeal on 12.3.68. "THE STORM MAY ENTER, THE RAIN MAY ENTER, BUT THE KING OF ENGLAND MAY NOT ENTER....(OR)....DARE CROSS THE THRESHOLD."

Lord Denning repeated the position in the Court of Appeal. "Ever since the time of Richard II it has been forbidden by law that a person shall take possession 'with strong hand or multitude of people'. If the true owner is to take possession peaceably, entitled to it or otherwise, he must have recourse to the courts of law."

WE HAVE TAKEN POSSESSION

But you say, surely one can evict a trespasser. Yes, but there is a world of difference between a trespasser and someone who takes possession of and actually claims land as we are doing here. How is possession defined? Bramwell L J in Leigh v Jack (1879) 5 Ex D. 264 defines it: "In order to defeat a title by dispossessing a former owner, acts must be done which are inconsistent..with the enjoyment of the soil." This was approved in Williams v Raftery (1958) 1Q.B.159. So that is possession and we have certainly done acts inconsistent with the owner's enjoyment of this property, and we have taken possession.

A few years ago, one owner did try to enter and 'cross the threshold' A few words on what happened then might be of interest to you. You'll maybe remember the pitched battles between squatters and bailiffs in Ilford in June 1969. That was when Redbridge Council employed a firm of 'professional bailiffs' under the leadership of a Mr. Barrie Quartermain to evict squatters without a Court Order. What you may not know is the outcome of those events. The police did nothing - so the squatters acted. They laid information before Barking Magistrates Court seeking summonses against Mr. Quartermain alledging riotous assembly and forcible entry. When the Magistrates initially refused to grant summonses the squatters took the matter to the Queens Bench Divisional Court and obtained an Order of Mandamus, compelling the Justices to do their duty properly. The final outcome was that Mr. Quartermain ended up at the old Bailey where he pleaded guilty to causing an affray. In return for this plea, no evidence was offered on the other charges - a common practice.

That is what happened to the last person who tried to evict squatters forcibly without a court order. Do you want it to happen to you?

SO DON'T TRY TO EVICT US WITHOUT A COURT ORDER OR WE WILL PROSECUTE YOU.

LEGAL BRIEFING FOR UNLAWFUL SQUATTING

How to get installed If you are going to squat unlawfully, it is essential you know how to do it and so avoid committing any criminal offence.

Squatting is NOT a criminal offence. The signs 'Trespassers will be prosecuted' are meaningless. Squatting is a civil matter and you cannot be prosecuted; but there are pitfalls if you aren't careful.

Forcible Entry Act 1381 You must not force an entry into the building in which you squat. If you do so, you render yourselves liable to prosecution under this Act, and probably also under the Malicious Damage Act. But it is not forcible entry to enter by means of an open window or by a door already opened by someone else.

Once you are in, get furniture moved in quickly. It is vital that you do this. If the police arrive and find you standing around in an empty house they can summarily throw you out as being mere trespassers. But if you have got furniture there and preferably children, and have clearly taken possession of the premises (as distinct from giving the impression of being mere dossers) you cannot be evicted without a court order.

If the police arrive, emphasise to them that squatting is a civil matter between you and the landlord, and that you are not committing any offence. Show them a legal warning (have one pinned on the door anyway).

No one has any right to enter once you are claiming possession. You can use reasonable force to prevent them or to remove them. If they try to enter forcibly, they are liable to, up to 2 years in jail, under the 1381 Forcible Entry Statute. The police can enter without a search warrant only if a) a breach of the peace is taking place, or b) they are in pursuit of a criminal.

Forcible Entry Act 1429 Precautions: You can change the locks and use reasonable force, but if you use 'strong hand or a multitude of people' you may be guilty of 'forcible detainer' (statute of 1429) e.g. use of weapons or barricading or even having an unusually large number of people hanging around.

The police may also threaten to prosecute under the Malicious Damage Act or under Section 9 (b) of the 1968 Theft Act for burglary. Section 9 (b) makes it an offence to enter a house with intent to commit unlawful damage. Point out that you are not damaging the premises, but if anything repairing them. If he still threatens to do you under Section 9 (b) you can quote the fact that on the 22nd June 1969, two of the Ilford squatters were prosecuted under this Act, but in January 1970 they were acquitted at North East London Quarter Sessions as it was held in law that the act committed was at the very least unlawful repairs and not unlawful damage, so a prosecution against you either under the Malicious Damage Act or under Section 9 (b) of the Theft Act is unlikely to be successful.

In order to do you for breaking and entering, they have to prove intent to steal, and as you haven't entered with such intent you should be O.K.

Do not be disorderly, abusive etc. and be sure that your cars are taxed and insured, that your tyres are satisfactory and that your brakes are working. It is not a very good idea to have any dangerous drugs on the premises, because apart from the fact that

detection will thoroughly discredit anything you do, if word gets around, or a general aura of drug taking gets about, the police will be able to get a warrant to search the premises. They can then arrest everybody, or take everybody in for questioning, and this in effect can get you out of the house.

Services Water: if it is turned off take along a turnkey for the stopcock outside the house and turn it on. If the pipes are broken you can mend them quite legally but do immediately write to the Water Board (by recorded delivery and keep a copy) asking what water rates are payable so that you can pay them.

Regarding electricity: you should take a meter reading of any meters in the house and record them. Then when you put the fuses back write immediately (again by recorded delivery and keep a copy) to the local Electricity Board offering to pay for any units consumed and any fixed charges. If there is no meter, get somebody to join up the wires, but again write to the Electricity Board requesting a meter and telling them that you will keep a record of all appliances used and how long they are used for, before the meter is installed, so that they will know how much you owe them.

During the Ilford squat people were charged under Section 16 of the Theft Act with dishonestly using electricity. The fact that they had sent a letter to the Electricity Board offering to pay any charges required, lead the court to hold in law that there was no dishonesty.

Gas: it is illegal to join up meters yourself or to fit pipes or to turn on the supply. If you need any of the various boards to reconnect services for you, contact the local office. There should be no difficulty, they are all legally obliged to supply an owner or occupier. A squatter is an occupier obviously, so there shouldn't be a problem. They may ask for a deposit, but they are entitled to do this.

If the boards do attempt to cut services off under the instruction of the owners you can quote the Acts under which they are required to supply you:

Electricity: Electric Lighting Act 1899 Section 27
(failure to supply is punishable by fines - Section 30)

Water: Water Act 1945 Schedule 3 Part VII para 30

Gas: Gas Act Schedule 3, para 8.

Rates: You should write to the local authority asking them what rates are payable and offering to pay them. They cannot prosecute for not paying but they can sue you and anyway it is a good policy to pay rates as it is an answer to those who say that you are living off the rates. Anyway it might give you a legal point to argue when the Council tries to get a court order against you.

Possession Orders

A) Normal Possession Order in County or High Court This is the traditional remedy to remove people from property but it takes quite a few months to come up in court usually. The Council has to take a writ against you seeking possession and then there must be an open hearing at which both sides call evidence. Following this the Court can issue an Order, but as stated, this is very long and tedious.

B) Quick method of obtaining possession orders. One of the last acts of the last labour government was to make it easier and quicker to get such orders. Under High Court Order 113, and County Court Order 26, an owner can get a Possession Order without a full trial, and can do so against unnamed persons. Under Order 113, the owner files papers in the Chancery division of the High Court and then about a week later both the Council and the Squatters are summonsed to appear before a Chancery Master. His job is simply to see that papers are in order and if they are, he arranges for a hearing before a Chancery Judge. At this hearing, again about a week later, which is not a full trial, the Council presents affidavits - i.e. sworn statements of evidence, that they are the rightful owners and possessors of the property and that you have no right to be there, and have no possible legal defence. The onus is then on you, again by means of affidavit evidence and/or by means of showing there is a possible defence. If you fail to do so, the judge can there and then issue a Possession Order to expire within 3 weeks of your taking occupation. The County Court Order 26 is similar - again the onus is on you to show that you have a legal defence at a hearing.

In fact it has proved quite tricky for owners to use this procedure; several cases have been dismissed because the owner failed to take reasonable steps to get names before applying for the order. So it is worth being evasive about the names of the occupiers.

There are other possible delaying tactics and defences which may help drag it out. In any case, an essential point is to gain the judge's sympathy, even if an order is granted, the amount of time you are given to leave will be at his discretion.

Evasion Under the 'normal' procedure, with an order against named persons, when the 'named' people have moved out, someone else can move in straight away. Under the new orders, it is more difficult. They are effective against all people in the property, but you can move out into another property. Tell the owner officially in writing that you have done so and then someone else may move in. The Court and the Press should also be told that the premises have been vacated. In other words it should be made as public as possible that the Order has been complied with, before another family, quite independently, moves into the premises.

For further information or clarification, especially on how to fight court cases, contact:

Family Squatting Advisory Service,
44 Nelson Square, London, S.E.1.
Tel: 01 928 9521.

FAMILY SQUATTING ADVISORY SERVICE
 INFORMATION SHEET No 1
 - - - - -

The Albany,
 Creek Road,
 Deptford, SE3
 Tel. 01 691 1603

BASIC ADVICE LEAFLET

1. INTRODUCTION

As reported and requested by the Squatting Conference on the 14th November, we are circulating to all groups and interested individuals, a number of advice and information leaflets on problems, methods and organisation. By this circulation of information it is hoped that groups will see how other groups have tackled things, and so learn from each other's mistakes. It is obviously silly for each group to make the same mistakes, when with a little information this can be avoided.

This first circular is a very basic one, answering such questions as "How do we form a group", "How do we organise the occupation of houses" and other initial questions. It is NOT a detailed advice sheet on group organisational methods.

2. SO YOU WANT TO FORM A SQUATTING GROUP

The first thing is to get together a group of people who will commit themselves to devoting some time to help. Call a meeting to discuss what you need to do and to share out the jobs listed in this document. Also everyone should try to contact families in need of accommodation and so involve them from as early as possible. The families you should aim to help are those in appalling housing conditions, who will have to wait some time before obtaining a council house. Families actually homeless are the responsibility of the Council's Social Services or Welfare Departments, and have to be provided with temporary accommodation by the Council, so normally you should not set out to re-house these, but should require the Council to carry out its obligations.

Now, set out to find the empty houses. At the moment, squatting groups are concerned mainly with houses in the Greater London Council, local boroughs or Department of the Environment re-development areas, that are awaiting demolition in some years time, so the best thing is to find out where all the re-development is in your Borough. You can do this by going to your local Planning Department and asking about all the sites. Then ask when the Council is going to demolish the site. Ask also if a Compulsory Purchase Order has been issued, if there has been a Public Enquiry and if the Secretary of State for the Environment has approved the C.P.O. The reason for asking this latter question is that often the Planning Department will give you a widely optimistic and premature date about when demolition will commence, and you can prove this by obtaining the answers to the other questions. For instance, we have known a Council to claim that a site was due to be demolished in three months time, but on further enquiry, we discovered that no C.P.O. had been issued, no enquiry held etc. As this process, plus the eventual clearing of the site after the C.P.O. is approved, can take up to 2 years or more, the demolition date was ridiculously premature.

Once you have got all this, write down the roads in each site, and then list all the empty houses in each road. The best way to do this is really to walk or drive round and see which houses are empty. If a house is boarded or tinned up, that means it is owned by the Council. If it is empty, but not tinned up, it might mean that the Council are still in the process of acquiring it, so make a separate note of it. It will also be useful to note whether there are any recent diggings in the road or on the pavement outside the house, or whether the words "L.E.B. Off" are painted or chalked near the front door.

It will also be worthwhile finding out the housing situation in the Borough - how many on the housing list, how many priority cases, how many over-crowded etc., also how many people in homeless families accommodation, how much landlord harassment etc. Ask your Housing Department for this.

- 2 -

One person should take on the role of co-ordinator, and he or she, should chase people up to ensure that they are doing their jobs. He should also convene meetings to discuss progress. Don't simply converse with your friends over a pint or over the 'phone. This is the best way to form a clique of closely knit friends, but the worst way to expand and develop a group. Clearly you will be in regular contact, but meetings should be held to receive progress reports and make decisions.

3. NEXT APPROACH THE COUNCIL

When you have got all this information, write to the Leader of the Council, asking for an official meeting with him, the Housing Chairman, Social Services Chairman and Senior Officers. You can get all councillors names and addresses from the Municipal Year Book, in any reference library. DON'T write to the officers - write direct to the elected leader, as it is a policy decision you want, but do send copies to all the other people mentioned. If you have any contact among chief officers, by all means develop this and try to obtain sympathy, but be careful about this, at this stage, as if you contact a hostile officer, who decides to take a stand against you, he might try to influence councillors behind the scenes. But if you do have an "in" with an officer, whom you think will be sympathetic, by all means develop this to your advantage.

Decide on 3 or 4 people to represent you. Briefly inform the Leader that you want to discuss the following points:

- a) The Council should hand to your association, all empty houses awaiting demolition that it does not propose to use.
- b) Your association will utilise these until they are required for demolition by placing in them families from the local housing waiting list.
- c) The cost of repairs and all other costs will be borne by your association, and will cost the Council nothing.
- d) The association will pay rates for the houses, so the Council will benefit.
- e) The association will vacate the houses when they are required for demolition and all families will sign a legal agreement to this effect.
- f) Families should have their housing points frozen at the pre-squatting level, so they do not get permanently pushed down the housing list.

There are a number of other concessions you will need to achieve, but they would take too long here. (We have a model agreement, which you can see) In addition, there are various objections, criticisms etc., that the councillors may make. These can all be answered, but again to do so here would take too long. We will be producing further documents which should be of assistance, but you are strongly advised to contact the Family Squatting Advisory Service for advice. Indeed, you might find it very helpful to have a FSAS representative on your negotiating committee.

4. SO YOU GET THE HOUSES

If the Council agrees to hand over houses to you, the first thing is to inspect them. Don't expect them to look good - wallpaper may be peeling, they will be dusty and possibly damp. Don't worry, most things can be remedied by a group of volunteers. Things to check are:-

- a) Toilet. Is it in, is it concreted up.
- b) Pipes to cistern and taps. Are they in. Is the waste pipe under the sink in.
- c) What does the wiring look like
- d) What cooking facilities are there.
- e) Are there damp patches on the ceiling, indicating roof or gutter damage.
- f) Note down anything else that is clearly wrong.

Also, it is vital to know whether or not the services are "off at the road". If they are, you will have to pay the Board to have them reconnected outside the house, and that costs between £30 and £50. The best way to obtain this

- 3 -

information is to ring up the Electricity, Gas or Water Boards, explain that you have been given the house and ask if the services have been disconnected at the Road. If the answer is 'Yes', get an estimate for reconnection. It is vital that you get this information before starting work on the house, because it could prove expensive and you could not do it yourself - so this is an important factor for a new group when considering whether to accept or reject a house.

If the services are "On" at the road, you are O.K., because if they are simply chopped off inside the house, your group can repair pipes or wiring. One more point - if the services are on in the road, ask the relevant board to put it in writing, in case their files are wrong. If they are, you will then have a good lever to insist, at a later date, that they pay for reconnection. Also, they may say services are off, when they are on. Always hope this happens, and check if you can.

It is important to stop the Boards disconnecting services in future on houses, so write to them about this, but also contact the Council and persuade them to withdraw disconnection notices to the Boards.

5. UNCO-OPERATIVE COUNCILS

If the Council does not agree to hand over houses, or even to meet you, DO NOT GET DESPONDENT. Your next step is crucial however, and we strongly advise you to contact us for advice, if you have not already done so. Because all eventualities cannot be documented in this leaflet, the rest of the information given assumes that you have obtained an agreement. However, we repeat, if the Council will not play, please contact us.

6. FAMILIES

By this time, you should have obtained local publicity - always be looking for this. You should have contacted more families by leafleting bad housing areas, contacting local social work or housing advice agencies, even the Council's Social Services Department. As they come along involve them: have regular meetings; always stress the self help participatory nature of things; always explain and repeat that in a squatting group there are no landlords - everybody is an equal member with equal rights and equal duties. This is a vital point (and can be but mentioned here) but is of the utmost importance.

Practical things regarding families who want to squat are:-

- a) Check with the Council that they are on the housing list.
- b) Ensure that they have been visited and "pointed" before squatting.
- c) Try to get an idea when the Council are likely to re-house a family, and squat them accordingly. (E.G. If they are going to get an offer soon, don't squat them: if they are likely to get an offer within a year, squat them in a house with 15 months life rather than with 3 years life, providing, of course, that this is possible and the house is suitable.
- d) If the family's accommodation is very bad, get the Public Health Inspector round to see if he can give them additional housing points.

Some of these things will require you to strike up a working relationship, probably with the Councils Letting Officer or his assistant; you should mention that you will need this when you meet the Council.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This is merely a basic leaflet. It does NOT answer all questions in detail, particularly intricate negotiating points and problems of participation. Rely on it for sound, procedural advice re formation, research, houses and getting families on housing lists. Don't treat it as comprehensive on anything else. As stated, we will be producing further leaflets, but in addition, you should contact FCAS for advice at the above 'phone number; or in emergency any of the 3 workers at their home numbers.

Ron Bailey 01 539 8059 Anne Gross 01 852 6164 Beryl Steele 01 850 4996

FAMILY SQUATTING ADVISORY SERVICE

INFORMATION SHEET No.3

JANUARY 1972

LOCAL AUTHORITIES' POWERS TO REQUISITION EMPTY HOUSES

1. INTRODUCTION

Everyone is aware that local councils issue compulsory purchase orders (C.P.O.'s) to buy up houses in redevelopment areas, so that they can demolish them and build new houses. Squatting groups have been utilising such houses now for some time.

However, we have been asked by some groups, Camden in particular, whether local councils have the power to compulsorily buy up houses that landlords have left empty for years in order to bring them into use.

2. POWERS AND DUTIES OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Under section 91 of the 1957 Housing Act all housing authorities have a duty to consider the needs of their district with a view 'to the provision of further housing accommodation'. Section 92 of the Act lays down four ways in which they can do this:

- a) by building houses on land acquired by them
- b) by conversion of buildings into houses
- c) by acquiring houses
- d) by 'altering, enlarging, repairing or improving any houses or buildings' that they have acquired.

Section 96 of the 1957 Housing Act gives the local authority power to acquire land, houses or buildings so that they can do these things and provide further housing accommodation.

3. POWERS OF LOCAL COUNCILS TO ACQUIRE DELAPIDATED HOUSES

There are many houses dotted about, falling into rack and ruin, that landlords have allowed to remain empty for years for various reasons - (e.g. inability to sell or obtain planning permission etc.)

These places are often eyesores: sometimes dangerous or health risks, and the fact that they are empty and falling into disrepair is an affront to the homeless and badly housed.

Quite clearly under the 1957 Housing Act, the Council has the power to buy up these houses (by compulsory purchase order, if necessary) to 'repair or improve' them and let them to families on the housing waiting list. Get them to use it. The squatting movement has an obvious interest in any method of bringing empty houses into use. We should use our voice and influence at local level to make Councils act.

4. POWERS OF COUNCILS TO ACQUIRE HOUSES RECENTLY BUILT AND IN GOOD CONDITION, BUT LEFT EMPTY

Sometimes, private developers build good houses which are also left empty for years. Perhaps the developer is asking an unreasonable rent or price, or perhaps he keeps them empty to obtain a higher lease or price later: many other reasons can be thought of.

The point is, that such houses could, if they were acquired by the council, provide immediate housing for families in need without the council having to repair or improve them in any way. Can the council acquire compulsorily such houses?

The answer is definitely yes as was clearly established in a recent test case heard in the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court.

5. The Case of Moore v The Ministry of Housing

Mr. Moore had built and owned some houses in Coulsdon Surrey, which he had allowed to remain empty for some years. When threatened with a C.P.O. by Coulsdon and Purley Urban Council, he finally found some tenants, but these soon left because they could not afford the rent, and he made no effort to replace them.

In November 1962, the Council issued a C.P.O. and in spite of the inspector's opinion that the rents were not exorbitant, having regard to the capital value, the Ministry confirmed the C.P.O.

Mr. Moore appealed to the High Court on the grounds that under the 1957 Act the Council had no power to compel him to sell - since this would neither add to the quantity or quality of houses in the borough, and therefore they could not legitimately claim that their action was necessary to 'provide further housing accommodation'.

The appeal was rejected. The Court ruled a) that the Council's power was not limited to acquiring houses intended to be altered or repaired; and b) that even if they were limited to acquiring houses 'to provide further housing accommodation' - on the facts of the case that was what they were doing - since 'A house which is unoccupied provides NO housing accommodation'.

This High Court decision means that the Council can acquire houses - whether old and ramshackle, or new and well maintained - if they are being left empty for an unreasonable length of time and whatever the reason. Even if, (as in the Moore case) it is only because those in housing need cannot afford the rents, which need not be unreasonable in relation to the basic value.

6. LOCAL ACTION

This information is not a substitute for action - but it can be a valuable tool and a weapon with which to hit developers and speculators. Most councillors will probably not know that they have these powers. They will need to be informed. They will need to be made to think about the actual houses and they will need to be pushed into initiating action.

If there are empty private or company houses in your borough - do some homework on them - who owns them? (get this from the rating list); how long empty? (get this from neighbours) etc. Then start the ball rolling, by presenting a written case for compulsory purchase to the Housing Committee. Followed, if necessary, by more pressure, publicity, demos etc. Persistence has always been our most effective tactic. If they try to claim or pretend that they do not have the power quote sections 92 and 96 of the 1957 Housing Act and cite the Moore case to prove them wrong.

The Council will have the Act, but if you want to show them the legal precedent you should be able to get a photostat copy of the Moore case from your central reference library, who will either have the relevant law report or tell you where to get it.

The full title of the case is Moore v The Minister of Housing, and it can be found in two law reporting books:-
 a) Volume 2 of Queen's Bench Reports for 1966 at page 602 (1966 2 QB 602 in legal abbreviations) or
 b) Volume 2 of the All England Law Reports for 1965 at page 367 (1965 All E.R.367 in legal abbreviations.)

Don't hesitate to contact us if you need further advice. And please let us know about any action or results.

7. C.P.O.'s UNDER THE NATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT

All groups will know that the local authority has obligations to provide temporary accommodation for homeless families. This duty stems from Part III S 21 (1) (b) of the 1948 National Assistance Act. Groups will probably know also that most Councils fall down on their duty - many homeless families are turned away by Welfare of Social Service Departments, or dumped in other boroughs, or have their children taken into care etc. This happens (and if you know of any examples please let us know as we are compiling a dossier on this,) because the amount of temporary accommodation local authorities have is thoroughly inadequate. They need more, but claim they can't get more. Again they are wrong. Under Part 4 Section 58 (1) of the 1948 National Assistance Act the Council has the power to compulsorily acquire property so that they can carry out their duties towards homeless families.

Make them use this power also. In addition to compiling lists of empty houses and submitting a case to the Council why they should buy them up, also get information on the inadequate provision of temporary accommodation. Show that the Council should issue C.P.O.'s under this Act to enable it to carry out its duty. Again you'll need to be persistent and hold demonstrations to publicise your case. Try to produce families in overcrowded temporary accommodation, or better still any that have been refused temporary accommodation. And please let us know the results.

MODEL AGREEMENT BETWEEN COUNCILS AND FAMILY
SQUATTING ASSOCIATIONS
Information Sheet No.7

Many Councils have now reached agreements with local squatting groups. These agreements are basically very similar, although there may be differences on minor points. Often a local Council will be guided by the experience and practices of other Boroughs, when drawing up an agreement. We outline here, therefore, the basic points that have been agreed and proved to work in other Boroughs. We add a few words of explanation to some of the points, but stress that we do not pretend these are exhaustive: queries can be considered in more detail over the negotiating table.

Here then is the model.

1. "The Council of the London Borough of ----- (The Council) will offer to the ----- Family Squatting Association (The Association) all properties in the Council's ownership with a minimum life of nine months and which the Council does not propose to use themselves."

This gets as many houses as possible into use. We would suggest that the Council gives the Association the right to use all properties and not just the ones the Council thinks are suitable, because some groups, particularly after they've been in operation for a while and have some money, have done wonders with properties that everybody thought would never be got back into use. (There are, under the 1957 Housing Act, perfectly valid legal ways in which even properties with closure orders or clearance orders can be used to provide temporary accommodation - Some of these can be utilised)

2. "Such properties shall be offered to the Association without charge"

If the houses stood empty the Council would get no revenue on them. By letting the Association have them the Council gets rates - and maybe children taken out of care. A squatting group won't be able to afford to pay for the houses as all revenue will go towards getting the very worst houses habitable.

3. "The Association will decide whether to accept or reject properties offered to it. Before officially accepting a property the Association shall be permitted to enter the property for the purpose of repairing it."

This is to enable the Association to work on getting houses ready without paying half rates.

4. "Anyone rehoused in the properties by the Association shall be liable to pay general rates and water rates."

The group's families, like all other people in the borough, ought to pay rates.

2.

5. "No expense shall fall upon the Council in respect of any works, repair or maintenance needed at any of the properties."

The scheme costs the Council nothing.

6. "The Association will ensure that the properties are only used for the benefit of people registered with the Council for housing accommodation and in exceptional cases for any other families, provided that in such exceptional cases the Association shall obtain an alternative rehousing commitment for the families involved."

The Association appreciates that this scheme must not add to the Council's housing burden and any families not the responsibility of the Council must be permanently rehoused by some other body or Council.

7. "The Association will give the Council vacant possession of any of the properties when they are required by the Council for demolition or rehabilitation and the Council will give the Association at least three months notice to vacate."

The Association has no desire to delay any of the Council's own plans. In no Borough have similar Associations done this.

8. "The Association undertakes to use its best endeavours to rehouse the occupiers of any of the properties when they are so required, unless

- (a) the occupiers qualify for Council accommodation, or
- (b) the occupiers have persistently failed in a material respect to comply with the terms of the licence granted to them by the Association.

As regards (a), in assessing eligibility under the Council's points scheme, the occupiers shall be deemed to have remained in continuous occupation of the accommodation they occupied immediately before they were first rehoused by the Association."

So that families do not become 'perpetual squatters' it is important that rehousing by the Association does not cause them to lose their place on the Council's housing waiting list.

9. "The Council and the Association shall each nominate four people to serve on a Working Group to discuss this agreement, its workings, any disputes or any other matters which may arise. The Working Group shall meet whenever either party decides there is a need for such a meeting."

This idea has proved very useful in Tower Hamlets and Lambeth.

EXPLANATORY NOTES TO MODEL AGREEMENT (Information Sheet No.7)

The Model you can show to Councillors and Council Officers, and is in fact directed at them: the following notes are for the Association only and explain the more subtle reasons for the wording of some points. They also explain why other points have been omitted so as not to draw the Council's attention to them. If the Council wants to include other points you may have to argue strongly against them. The Model commits the Council to as much as possible and the group to as little as possible. This gives the group greater freedom to make its own internal arrangements, and renders it less likely to break the agreement by mistake or oversight.

Explanations: Point 1.

This is ideal - it commits them to offer you all houses - not just a chosen few, and not just 'fit' properties. They may want to limit the agreement to a few, with possibilities for future increases, or to any properties they wish to offer 'at their discretion'. Try and avoid this. Argue that it is easier administratively for them to give you all houses and better for you, because the more houses you have, the quicker will you get a regular income and so be able to use even the very worst houses - with services disconnected at the road. Thus more families can be helped, more children saved from going into care etc. Argue that the more houses you have the better can you plan this.

They may also be unkeen to offer you properties classified as 'unfit' or with 'closure orders', but some of these properties are quite usable temporarily. They may claim that they cannot legally let you use such properties. This is nonsense - contact us for details of the law on this. In fact, we will be producing an information sheet on this shortly.

Remember - you may not want to use all properties, that is your choice, but commit them to offer them if you can.

You may think that 9 months is too short, but again you don't have to use an offered property. It's worthwhile getting 'nine month' properties for three reasons:

- i) An excellent property with nine months life can be occupied perhaps as quickly as a grotty one with one year's life
- ii) The Council is often behind its redevelopment dates, so they may have longer.
- iii) You may get a family that the Council will commit themselves to rehouse within nine months.

They may be committed already to giving a Housing Association first choice and may wish to insert words putting your claim after theirs. There's probably not much you can do about that, but if you can avoid it all the better.

Point 2

It is unlikely that this will cause serious difficulty. No Council has yet seriously contended that we should pay them. If they do all the other benefits of the scheme to them can be explained - e.g.

2.

- (a) they will get rates
- (b) children out of care
- (c) families will be squatted who would have become homeless and therefore their responsibility
- (d) general benefit to the inhabitants of their borough.

However, occasionally, a Council may want to insist on a 'peppercorn rent' of £1 per year. Obviously you should not let negotiations break down over such a sum - but argue against it. Argue that your objection to it is not the money so much as the status it could bring about. If the Association pays a rent, however small, it becomes a tenant. This makes it difficult for the group to sign a mere licence with its families as the group has tenant status. The group must sign a licence with its families otherwise they will be protected by the Rent Acts, and the group will not be able to get any stubborn ones out when the houses are wanted back by the Council. If the group itself is only a licensee it can sign a licence with the families.

If the Council insists on the £1 per year, pay it - but don't let them call it a peppercorn rent: get it described as an annual licence fee.

Point 3

You should not make the group liable to pay half rates on empty property otherwise you'll find yourself running up a bill whilst you are repairing them. The detailed arguments on this point are set out in FSAS Information Paper No. 2 - Rates. This shows how you can argue that it is in the Council's interest not to charge you half rates.

Point 4

This is deliberately worded to make the family not the Group liable. Hopefully, the Council will go along with this. If, either by accident or design, they reword any draft-agreement to make the group liable, you must not accept this, otherwise if a family does not pay the group will get an enormous bill. So it must be the family that is liable to pay - the group cannot underwrite people's debts. The group can, of course, agree to use its influence to ensure that families pay regularly.

Point 5

Again, this is deliberately worded this way, to make the Council not liable, rather than to make the group positively liable. This is important for the following reasons:

- (a) At any given time, the amount of repairs the group can do will depend upon its funds. But if it commits itself legally to doing them it could find itself on the receiving end of all kinds of legal claims
- (b) You probably will - and should - by resolution in the group, decide to do certain repairs. That is up to the group to decide internally. The less the group is committed to the freer its hand to make such decisions.
- (c) As stated, by resolutions the group may - and indeed should - agree to do major repairs, but if in the formal agreement with the Council and in the agreement families

sign with the group, the group is committed to nothing you may be able to get Social Security to pay for repairs in the future, and even more possibly for decoration for families who are receiving Supplementary Benefit. Certainly an Appeal would be worthwhile, but if the group is committed to do repairs, it will probably fail.

Point 6

Hopefully, your Council will agree to this clause being worded so as to allow you to rehouse families from outside the borough, although only one Council - Greenwich - has done so far. Your only hope of getting this concession is to state quite clearly that non-borough families do not become their responsibility. If possible, you should obtain a rehousing commitment from their previous borough; if not contact a housing association. You can stress that this has worked quite satisfactorily in Greenwich.

However, the Council may wish to insert a claim limiting you to helping only families from their borough. Most Councils insist on this and if they do, make sure that the people you are allowed to help are those 'registered for housing with the Council' and not simply those 'on the Council's Waiting list'. This is because in some Boroughs, the term 'waiting list' has a narrow definition including only those people registered who have satisfied the residential qualification. But you will often want to rehouse just those people who have not satisfied this - so make sure that if you are limited to people living in the borough it means those people 'registered for housing'. Any family can become so registered by merely filling in a form.

The Council may also want to insert clauses limiting you to using the houses 'as living accommodation'. We've left it vague so that you can use a house for storage or as an office without having to ask special permission. You can argue, if they raise the matter, that this is simpler for them, but if they insist you should concede that point. It is very minor and a concession here may enable you to push harder elsewhere.

Point 7

This is very fundamental. If they want to know how you will arrange this, explain that the fact that the families are involved in the group means that they understand the need to vacate. Point out that squatting groups have never held up Council plans. Add that if a family was awkward, in a rare case, that you could go to court and get them out. Explain that Lewisham Group did this successfully, simply to establish the precedent that it could be done.

Point 8

As regards point (a) you will probably not have much difficulty. Point out that the scheme is unworkable if families get pushed down the housing list.

If they query point (b) you must explain that if a family persistently failed to comply with the terms of its licence

you must have the right to refuse to continue to assist them. Any housing association or local authority has a similar right. If they get worried about families clogging up their welfare accommodation explain that it will only be a rare occurrence, and that the experience of all other groups has been that families that would have become homeless have been squatted - thus easing the load on their welfare accommodation.

Point 9

This is a good way to iron things out and to improve the working arrangements you will develop. It also stops one Council officer hindering the development of the group, if the officer you most deal with is reluctantly co-operating. When people have to answer for their actions they are likely to be far more reasonable.

GENERAL POINTS

Different Councils tend to have different quirks. Some will be tough on one point, others on another. It may be that the Council will want to add points not mentioned here: to some extent you will have to play them by ear - and you might find it useful to have an FSAS representative on your negotiating committee.

A fairly common point that crops up is insurance. Some Councils want you to indemnify them against possible claims from third parties arising out of the use of the properties. (e.g. if a slate falls on the postman, he might sue the Council as owners of the property) Don't let this worry you too much as for £2 per year you can insure each house you occupy with the Municipal and Mutual, against such third party claims. FSAS will help with this. But be careful, don't agree to insure for anything else. For instance, you cannot insure the house itself against, say fire. The Council really have a weak case if they try to insist on this - as it is going to be demolished anyway. (In the case of improvement area houses, things may be slightly different - but still don't agree to indemnify the Council against damage to the house) If the Council are worried about a fire spreading and claims resulting from this, your third party insurance cover that.

CONCLUSION

This is the best agreement we can think of at the moment. If you can think of improvements - or negotiate different terms, please let us know, so we can advise future groups accordingly. Contact Family Squatting Advisory Service at 01 691 1603.

APPENDIX 7

CHART SHOWING CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF EVENTS - (fold out)

SQUATTING EVENTSARBOUR HOUSE CONVERSION

	1967	D J F M A M J J A S O N	first consideration of modernization
	1968	D J F M A M J J A S O N	proposals submitted to Council, housing dept. start decanting
London Squatters Campaign forms	1969	D J	
Redbridge squat begins		F M A M J J A S O N	
Redbridge agreement signed	1970	D J	design and quantities completed
Arbour House squat starts		F M A M J J A S O N	Council authorizes tender procedure
LFSA formed (Lewisham FSA)	1970	D J	tender concluded
		F M A M J J A S O N	approval of improvement grant
court grants possession orders	1971	D J	
FSAS formed		F M A M J J A S O N	
agreement accepted by council,	1971	D J	
THFS start operating		F M A M J J A S O N	
last squatters move out of Arbour house	1972	D J	contractors start work
		F M A M J J A S O N	
	1973	D J	
Eviction at 20 Myrdle St.		F M A M	first flats handed to Council

