

March April

Bulletin No 1

CRISIS



DUBLIN HOUSING ACTION COMMITTEE

SIXPENCE

"JUMPING THE QUEUE"

One of the main objections raised against squatting families in Dublin is that they are trying to jump the queue and obtain accomodation before other families who are longer on the corporation list. To understand the situation more clearly it is necessary to distinguish between those squatting in corporation dwellings and those in private property.

Due to the housing emergency that now exists, an increasing number of families are finding themselves actually home-less. In sheer desperation some of these families, in order to obtain shelter, have moved into corporation flats which have become vacant. It would be wrong to condemn those who are made homeless through no fault of their own. The blame lies squarely on the heads of the present government whose housing record is among the worst in Europe.

Although the DHAC fully support homeless families who squat in corporation flats, we do not encourage families to occupy corporation property. Rather, we encourage them to occupy private property in particular those houses that are due to be demolished for "re-development", such as the houses at Pembroke Road, Ballsbridge (*these houses are perfectly habitable*), or others such as 20 Mountjoy Square, which is being left to rot by the infamous "Georgian Preservationist" and "humane landlord" Ivor B. Underwood Esq, for the purpose of getting rid of sitting tenants and converting the property to office accomodation.

Families who occupy these houses are not "jumping the queue". Apart from solving their housing problem, they ask nothing more than being allowed to remain there until such time as they qualify for a corporation dwelling.

Speaking at a DHAC meeting recently, Fr. Michael Sweetman SJ, in reference to the Dennehy case, declared, "What he did is, strictly speaking, illegal but it is not immoral". This we believe to be true. Laws that allow and encourage landlords to knock down sound houses or leave them idle during a housing emergency are immoral, and the courts and judges that uphold them are in contempt of justice.

Throughout the city of Dublin there are hundreds of flats and houses lying idle (*vacant possession being more important and profitable than housing families*) while 10,000 families are homeless. For this reason we call on all homeless families to join the DHAC and to occupy all vacant private accomodation.

We call on the government to make the building of homes for the people a priority and to curb speculators; to declare a housing emergency and requisition all vacant accomodation for use as family accomodation and halt the demolition and conversion to other uses of sound living accomodation, to halt the building of office blocks by re-directing the capital and labour involved to the building of family accomodation.

If these reasonable demands are met, we feel sure that before long, there would not be any queue left to jump.

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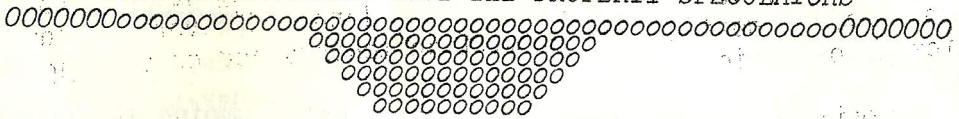
ON SATURDAY afternoon the 15th. of Feb. the Cork Housing Action Committee held a meeting in Patrick Street, Cork, to protest against the housing shortage in the city and in particular to protest at the jailing of five of their members who had refused to sign bonds to be of good behaviour. They had been charged with taking over the City Hall on the night of January 21st., the anniversary of the First Dail.

THE HOUSING group has held other public meetings at this venue and up to this the police have always diverted the traffic when asked to do so by a member of the committee. On Saturday, however, they refused to do this and people attending the meeting were attacked several times by police trying to force a way clear for traffic.

IT SEEMS clear that the police authorities in Dublin and Cork believe that the demands of the traffic are of much more importance than the right of freedom of assembly and the right of sincere protest by the people.

WE WISH the Cork Housing Action Committee continued success in the future.

HOMELESS FAMILIES DEFY THE PROPERTY SPECULATORS



On Wednesday, Feb. 19th. three homeless Dublin families moved into an empty house at 146 Pembroke Road, Ballsbridge. this property was lying idle for two years and the owner is Mr. Paul Stritch, a well known jeweller and landlord. Two other buildings beside 146 have been practically cleared of tenants and are due to be demolished for "re-development".

Shortly after the families moved in, Mr. Stritch arrived accompanied by three policemen and a bully boy of his own. He demanded that the premises be vacated immediately. The squatters pointed out that they had no place else to go and offered him a fair rent. This he refused and he later supervised the dismantling of the electrical fittings, gas fittings and water pipes. He personally smashed the pipe of the only working toilet in the house, flooding the basement in the process. When it was pointed out to him that these action left the children without water he replied that he was not responsible for making any of the women pregnant.

Point 2 of the five points of the DHAC programme is "the introduction of bye-laws to prohibit the demolition and conversion to other uses of sound living accomodation". WE therefore support these families in their struggle to find shelter for themselves. We also deplore the use of trade union labour in an attempt to make the house uninhabitable by depriving them of light, water and cooking facilities. We would ask trade union executives to issue instructions to their members onot to give assistance to evicting landlords.

We once again call on Dublin Corporation to declare a housing emergency and take over houses such as 146 Pembroke Road for the benefit of Dublin's homeless.

LANDLORDS

The high increase of property value in Dublin is being exploited to the full by the landlords and speculators. These landlords feed off the desperate need of Dublin's homeless for accommodation. These exploiters can be divided into two groups. The first group are usually still in the process of making money out of tenants, which gives them a steady income. The second group are more ambitious. They acquire property while keeping a sharp eye on the property market and do not wish to be burdened with tenants as they can make more money by selling out to foreign or native developers, whichever offers most.

Take for example, Mr. Peter Ryan of 9, Howth Road, Dublin, who specialises in slum property. Mr. Ryan buys property as cheaply as possible, therefore he prefers condemned houses or houses in bad need of repair. But, whether these houses are condemned or not, he lets them out in flats to the needy Dublin families at rents ranging from £1 to 30/- a room and only charges £75 key money on taking possession. Mr. Ryan uses the corporation bye-laws to evict tenants while still holding on to the £75. He owns property in Usher's Quay, St. Kevin's Avenue, Luke Street etc., and he smilingly admits to his tenants that he is "only in this racket for the money". At week ends he can usually be found at race meetings squandering the money he has extracted from his tenants but he appears early on Monday mornings doing his rounds of exploiting, evicting and collecting his rents, with a smile.

However, Mr. Ryan is small fry compared with J.S. Lister Ltd. of Dorset Row, who have been buying property quietly mostly on the North Side of the city in Dorset Street, Richmond Street, Brunswick Street, Aughrim Street and elsewhere. An investigation is being carried out by DHAC to find out just how much property J.S. Lister actually own and their intentions regarding this property. Perhaps they intend building houses for Dublin's homeless, time will tell.

A case worth mentioning is that of Mrs. Mary Nightingale, a widow, who lives alone in a basement flat at 8, South Circular Road, Portobello, Dublin. Mrs. Nightingale has been living in this flat for the past ten years. Her landlords are Mr. and Mrs. O'Malley who live in the top portion of the house (five rooms altogether), and have four young children. The O'Malleys insist that they want Mrs. Nightingale's Flat and have tried every method of terror in an attempt to frighten Mrs. Nightingale into leaving. They seem reluctant to take any legal action which is allowed them. Mrs. O'Malley who is the actual owner of the house says that she should not be subject to having a "common tenant" in her house as she has always been used to having a house to herself.

The methods used by the O'Malleys include boring holes in the ceiling between their accommodation and Mrs. Nightingale's flat and pouring water down at all times of night and day, jumping on the ceiling and knocking lumps of plaster down on top of Mrs. Nightingale and generally harrasing the unfortunate woman downstairs to the point of distraction. The O'Malleys are small landlords at present but by using these tactics it will not be long before they become larger as they are following in the traditions of the more successful landlords in Dublin.

Everyone who is familiar with the recent agitation in Dublin knows well the name of Ivor B. Underwood of Dalkey, Co. Dublin, a landlord. Mr. Underwood's barrister, Mr. Rex Mackey, states that his client is a "very humane man". About three years ago Mr. Underwood owned a house in Capel Street. One of his

tenants, a Mr. O'Mahony, had his furniture confiscated by Mr. Underwood because he did not leave the premises and live on the street. This furniture was the only possession of Mr. O'Mahony and to date he has not received one piece of his furniture back, or any compensation for same. Mr. O'Mahony did not owe any rent or debt to Underwood whatsoever, and despite many pleas by Mr. O'Mahony for the return of his furniture he has been ignored completely. A very humane man indeed is Mr. Underwood.

MORE NEXT ISSUE SD.

EDITORIAL

The Dublin Housing Action Committee seeks to organise all the homeless people in Dublin into a mass militant body to agitate against the appalling housing situation that now exists. At present there are approximately 10,000 families homeless in Dublin alone and the figure is growing daily.

As individuals we cannot do very much to remedy this. Many families are at present living in overcrowded conditions, paying rent in excess of what their income will allow, living under the threat of eviction where their landlord is seeking planning permission for the purpose of re-development and in some cases are actually being intimidated and abused by landlords who find they have no further use for tenants.

Throughout Dublin, there are a big number of families who, due to the housing shortage and landlord terrorism live in misery. This is why an organisation such as the DHAC is necessary to combat landlordism, protect tenants (whether legal or illegal) and to agitate for the provision of homes for the people of Dublin.

The DHAC is a non-political and non-sectarian organisation of homeless people that to date has had limited successes in focusing public attention on the housing shortage, in stopping evictions and in protecting tenants from the arrogance of extremist landlords. However, we realise that as yet we have only scratched the surface but, judging from the response to our recent demonstration we believe that the potential for the future is enormous.

The solution to the housing problem and to landlordism lies with the homeless themselves. It is up to you to play your part in the fight for social justice. Join the DHAC and remember the old saying "Unity is Strength", it is by no means out of date.

READERS COMMENTS ARE INVITED

If you have a point of view to express on any aspect of the housing situation please write to:

THE EDITOR, DHAC, c/o 30 GARDINER PLACE, DUBLIN 1.

HOUSING AND VIOLENCE
(Letter from Brendan Scott)

Recently all the predictable establishment hacks crawled from beneath their various stones to denounce the demonstrations against the imprisonment of Dennis Dennehy. We were told that violence had come to the streets of Dublin and that this violence was directed by subversive elements with "foreign" ideas.

The craw and tub thumpers conveniently forgot that violence has been with us for years - their kind of violence; the violence which sucks on human misery to fatten speculators bank balances. It is violence to allow home grown TACA speculators and foreign combines to grow fat on land and property deals while families of five and six have to eat, sleep and wash clothes in one room. One can see real violence in forcing human beings to live in rat-infested Benburb Street, in Corporation Place, in Irishtown. Cathy Ni hUalachain Comes Home to roost every day in Dublin.

It is violence to see £2½ million pounds per acre i.e. £3,140 a sq. ft. for office property in Grafton Street while Nero Boland fiddles with electoral boundaries in the Customs House.

It is violence to see an Insurance Company with £5½ million invested in property while thousands of families cry out for a place to live.

Today there is "no room at the inn" for the poor family. If Joseph & Mary settled in a Dublin stable they would be arrested for squatting. "Caesar" Haughey is only interested in establishing a money market in Dublin. There is no need for a Herod to massacre the innocents - diseases of overcrowding will see to that. The Joe Dowlings and Oliver J's are too busy looking for the thousands of trained Reds under their beds to see the star from the East rising above the overcrowded slums of Dublin. If the wise men come they will be advised by Brian "the lavatory lizard" Lenihan to leave their gifts with the customs and keep their mouths shut while in Ireland.

A society which roars for the preservation at all costs of the "sacred rights" of private property is a sick society. A society which jails men for finding a place for their families to live is a violent society. A society standing guard with bared teeth over its own vomit is a contemptible society.

The foundations of Irish society - the 1916 Proclamation and the First Dail Programme - are sound. The Fianna Fail top-stories are crumbling - the woodworm of graft and the termites of speculation have eaten into their fabric. If Erskine Childers and his pals are still in the top-story looking with pleasure at a blank television screen, when the rotten structure crumbles no one will weep for them. All that would remain then would be to clear away the rubble and re-build on the old and strong foundations.

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M O N E Y £££ £££ £££ £££ £££ £££ £££ £££ £££ £££ £££ £££

Funds are urgently needed. Please send all donations to ;

THE SECRETARY
DUBLIN HOUSING ACTION COMMITTEE

c/o 30 GARDINER PLACE
DUBLIN I.

SHELTER AT LAST

A message from the Dennehy Family

For over three years we existed in terrible conditions. First we lived in a shack and, later on, we suffered in a 10ft. leaky caravan without water or toilet.

Now, thanks to the DHAC and the struggle of all those supporting the housing agitation in Dublin, we have a 22ft. modern caravan on a corporation site at Queen Street. Water has been laid on by the Corporation and a flush toilet is being installed.

For the first time in years, we have a fixed adress, civilised conditions and security of tenure. Three years ago this was denied us and it would be denied us today as well but for the DHAC. If all the families who are paying exorbitant rent or existing in inhuman conditions, joined the DHAC they too would be helped immensely in their struggle for proper homes at fair rents. In fact, if we all joined together we wouldn't have much of a housing problem at all. It is only when we are divided and weak that the 26 CO. state and the landlords can continually crush us into the ground.

The Dennehys.



SQUATTERS COLUMN

On the 30th. of July 1967, a young married couple and their child, a baby-girl of 5 months, squatted in a Corporation Flat which had been vacant for at least four months. The flat consisted of 1 room, toilet, and scullery. There was not any bedroom as such.

Before squatting in this flat, Mr. and Mrs. K. had been living with Mr. K's family. They were advised to leave however, by the local dispensary doctor who told them that their baby's health was being endangered by TB, because her husband's father was suffering from this illness. For this reason Mr. and Mrs. K. left and found accomodation elsewhere. This was a furnished flat at a rent of £4-5-0 per week. The flat was all electric and this added another £3-0-0 to the weekly expenses. Mr. K. could not afford this expense as he was only taking home £12-0-0 wages each week. As his job was in County Dublin he had a lot of expenses in bus fares, at least 5/- each day.

They got no chance however, to seek alternative accomodation as their landlord gave them a weeks notice to quit on the pretext of complaints from other tenants about their baby crying at night. Mr. K. , in an effort to find other accomodation before the week was up, took some time off work and as a result he lost his job.

So, at the end of that week Mr. K. was in the desperate position of having no job and no place to live. Hestayd at the back of a church for two nights, with his wife and child. Someone told them that a one-room flat was vacant in a place nearby. Mr. K. went to see this place and, on making sure it was empty, he decided to move in with his wife and child. On Sunday 30th of

July at 11.30 pm, the night of their wedding anniversary, they took over the vacant flat. On the following Thursday morning Mr. K. went down to the local rent office and paid the rent for the flat which came to 11/2. Soon after he returned to the flat a corporation official, accompanied by the caretaker, called in and demanded that Mr. K. vacate the flat. Mr. K. replied saying that as he had paid a weeks rent he did not intend leaving immediately but, if the Corporation would provide alternative accomodation he would leave. The corporation official left at that and did not return.

As time went on Mr. K. continued to pay rent which eventually rose from the original 11/2 to 19/11. The Corporation decided to make Mr. K. a parole tenant. Then they brought the case to court and the judge ruled that he could not sign an eviction order on Mr. K. because of the fact that the Corporation were taking rent from him. So, in September 1968, having taken rent from Mr.K for 14 months, they suddenly refused rent. They again took the case to court and this time they succeeded in getting an eviction order. Mr. K. then went to the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mr. Frank Cluskey, seeking help. Mr. Cluskey gave an assurance that he would contact the allocations branch on behalf of Mr. K. Soon afterwards Mr.K. received the following letter from the Lord Mayor :

MANSION HOUSE

16TH SEPTEMBER 1968

DEAR MR. K.

Following your interview with me, I have been in Touch with the housing allocations branch of Dublin Corporation and they have informed me that you should be offered alternative accomodation before the eviction order takes effect.

*Yours sincerely,
FRANK CLUSKEY
LORD MAYOR.*

Following this Mr. K. got notice of eviction to take place on the 4th. of December. Mr. K. went to the allocations department to see if they would give him the accomodation mentioned in the Lord Mayor's letter. He was informed that he would not be given any alternative accomodation by the Corporation.

Mr. K. was again in a desperate situation. However, he found support in the form of the Dublin Housing Action Committee whom he contacted along with others in a similar position to himself. Thus, on the morning of the threatened eviction, members and supporters of DHAC gathered outside the flats which were threatened and when the bailiffs arrived and saw the reception awaiting they beat a hasty retreat. The K. family were able to remain in their flat and no further action has been taken by the Corporation.

There are many more cases like this one which you can read about in future issues of this bulletin. For obvious reasons we cannot reveal the full name of the family involved.

More next issue

ANOTHER BATTLE OF MOUNT STREET ?

Occupants of fifteen houses in Mount Street received the shock news in mid-March that their houses were to be demolished to make way for "Ireland's largest Office Block" which is to be built at a cost of £2 million.

The behind the scenes dealing which went on in this case is typical of the way in which the big-time Irish and foreign speculators operate in our present society.

The Dublin Housing Action committee has pledged itself to protect the interests of the families involved and have assured them that we will use all the means at our disposal to ensure that no-one is evicted against their will.

NEWS FLASH ! ! ! ! !

On Wednesday night 25th. March a Dublin family moved (with the help of Dublin Housing Action Committee) into No. 48 Mount Street which is due for demolition. Previously, this family had been squatting on corporation property and we would like to commend them for their decision to vacate the flat and occupy instead vacant private property.

BUILDING SOCIETIES INCREASE INTEREST RATES AGAIN ! !

The blood-sucker building societies have again increased the interest rate on home-loans which is now at the shockingly high figure of 9%. What does this mean to the homeless ? It means that many more people will now be unable to afford a building society loan and will inevitably turn to Dublin Corporation to solve their housing problem. Thus, the present housing list will be lengthened and the general situation will deteriorate.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the major factor in the housing crisis is the problem of building finance in the private sector. The main channel of finance in the private sector are the many building societies but not all the money invested in them goes towards building houses. Societies may advance money for the purchase and development for building purposes of agricultural land and even for office blocks and business premises generally.

There is a conflict of interests here between private housing as a social service and the superior profitability at the present time of office block building. So the people who are victims of the building society bandits do have a common interest with the DHAC and its battle to end the present mad scramble in office block building.

DUBLIN HOUSING ACTION COMMITTEE

Aims and Objects

The DUBLIN HOUSING ACTION COMMITTEE regards as homeless those individuals and Families falling into one or more of the following categories :

- (A) SPLIT FAMILIES- father and mother and children unable to live together.
- (B) The severely overcrowded.
- (C) Married couples living on property where children are not allowed.
- (D) Families obliged to live with parents-in-law.
- (E) Families obliged to pay rent excessive in relation to their income.
- (F) FATHERLESS FAMILIES- mothers and children with no male support, e.g. widows and deserted wives.
- (G) THE STATUTORY HOMELESS, who have been taken into local authority reception centres.
- (H) Most caravan-dwelling families.
- (I) SQUATTING FAMILIES who have been forced to squat on either private or Corporation property.

IF YOU ARE HOMELESS JOIN THE DUBLIN HOUSING ACTION COMMITTEE !!

The Dublin Housing Action Committee has pledged itself to fight for the following

- * 1. ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR THE CITIZENS OF DUBLIN
- * 2. FAIR RENTS FOR PROPER HOMES
- * 3. PROTECTION FROM EVICTION BY UNSCRUPULOUS LANDLORDS
- * 4. AN END TO THE SCANDAL OF EMPTY HOUSES
- * 5. PROTECTION FOR SQUATTING FAMILIES

* * * * *

I wish to become a member of the DUBLIN HOUSING ACTION COMMITTEE

NAME : _____

ADDRESS : _____

Mark the category of homeless to which you belong on the list above and send this application to ; THE SECRETARY, DHAC, c/o 30 GARDINER PLACE, DUBLIN I.