THE ONLY 'FAIR' RENT IS NO RENT

No 16  SQUATTING
INSIDE:  Housing & Occupations
What's Revolutionary about Squatting?
When we looked at the Soft Cops issue after we had finished it, we realised a need for a clear pointer as to what is our view and what is a point of view that we publish but don’t necessarily agree with.

For instance, sandwiched amongst our various opinions on social workers etc., was an account by an actual probation officer — and it might be confusing to people that we agreed with him. Well we didn’t necessarily you see.

So, not wanting to have to write the whole thing ourselves; or to confuse people as to what we think; and also to avoid footnotes so huge that they take over completely, we have adopted the idea of writing an editorial article that gives our views on the overall topics raised in each issue. This allows us to print articles that we don’t agree with alongside of things we do, we hope without confusion.

It should also, over the years, (nice bit of long term planning here) give a fairly comprehensive manifesto on our ideas as Anarchists related to practical subjects such as housing, medicine etc.

The first of these dynamic articles begins on page one, and something you ought to know is that Mrs. Watson is a Councillor on Islington Borough Council and is also Chairman of the Housing Committee. There are lots of other things that could be said about her of course, but as she keeps cropping up in this issue you should get the idea...

THE ANARCHY COLLECTIVE.
EDITORIAL — housing and occupations

There is no housing problem. There's a class problem. "Housing problem" is a nice phrase implying that everyone is affected equally. The middle class may have to pay ridiculous rents and house prices but it's not they who end up in hostels and B&B. There are plenty of houses but the lower class, by definition those who always get the worst of everything, haven't the money to rent or buy them. The state isn't doing its job of providing minimal survival needs for its proles and since for obvious reasons this won't do, a lot of noise is being made about a "housing problem". But when and if the state gets around to ameliorating it, the proles will still have the worst of everything - including some homelessness, although kept to a "tolerable" level - and what housing is provided will be at the cost of less freedom.

Money - wage and price manipulation, welfare payments, taxes - is the chief instrument by which the ruling class determines who gets what, but it isn't the only one. Licences to "squat", that is, occupy council property rent-free, are simply another form of money, as are rent rebates (which in some cases reach the point where the tenant pays nothing), and free goods and services. Control is the keynote, and it's much more important than specific policies. Mrs Watson says "The problem with squatters is that you don't know whether they have housing need or not." Who doesn't know? Why, Mrs Watson, who everyone assumes has the God-given right to decide on these matters - not the squatters themselves, or the neighbours. The interest in maintaining control has been internalized both by those who profit and by those who lose by it, so that most people automatically look for state solutions to problems: whatever it is, it's got to be regularized, licensed, registered, de-casualized. And the lower class are the biggest losers.

For this reason, although we appreciate the All-London Squatters' exposure of the state's divide-and-rule tactics, we must reject the statist implications of their article, namely that squatting is only excusable as a negative, desperate expedient (just as factory occupations are usually considered justifiable when redundancy threatens - as Solidarity put it, "If the bosses won't exploit us, we'll have to do it ourselves") and squatters only excusable provided they are respectable, time-clock-punching "ordinary" people who just need a kindly landlord to pay rent to. Apart from the fact that many squatters are hippies and political activists, we don't think working-class people ought to feel obliged to live by the employment-ethic and the rent-ethic which prop each other up. We see squatting as a positive step despite its limitations.

The only real solution to the class problem, as it affects housing or anything else, is to seize the means of production and life for ourselves. (This may seem obvious but so much left and even anarchist propaganda goes along with the Why doesn't the state do its job? line which is more acceptable to most people that we must draw the distinction clearly.) It's no coincidence that squatting and factory occupations would both be affected by the anti-trespass law.

OCCUPATIONS

Workers' occupations have long been a lynchpin of libertarian ideology and practice, from revolutionary Russia in 1917 where anarchists advocated direct expropriation of the work-places and total self-management of production, to Paris in
General Management, spent about a page and a half explaining why he rejected the word "democracy" and substituted "participation".) "Job enrichment" and "participation" are good economic sense for capitalism - workers who feel involved, less alienated, and who get some measure of satisfaction, are likely to work harder and be less discontented and rebellious.

Leninists, too, call for the "re-organization of industry under workers' control". But they're not talking about self-management either; what they mean is the working class, through its executive the Party, exercising control. This means more hierarchy rather than less; and it means that the revolutionary dynamic of the people is stifled. Workers' organizations become sterile and disinterested, dominated by bureaucrats and "genial leaders".

Finally, the Labour government, or at least Tony Benn, is supporting workers' occupations. It's a good alternative to nationalisation - industries that don't make a profit, that capitalists want to close down, but are in fact necessary, instead of the working class subsidising them through taxes, why not let the workers of the industry or enterprise subsidise it directly, by taking responsibility for its losses themselves through harder work and lower wages.

As we've said before, the revolutionary reply must be to aim for more occupations and more self-management, so that self-managed enterprises don't have to exist in complete isolation, and so that self-management and libertarian ideas are talked about and experienced by more and more people.

THE ANARCHY COLLECTIVE

GEORGE FOULSER
Comrade and friend to many anarchists, died from a heart attack at his home in a squat in Kilburn, North London.

His cremation on the 22nd of March was attended by about 25 people.

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WHAT'S REVOLUTIONARY ABOUT SQUATTING?

The following 3 articles have been written by members of the Kingsgate Squatters and Rent Strikers Co-operative for Self-Management.

I'm not squatting to publicise the problems of homeless people - I am homeless. I'm not squatting because I think that if enough people do it capitalism will collapse - it won't. I'm squatting because I can't afford, on my wages, to pay rent without living pretty close to poverty. In short, there's nothing revolutionary about my squatting. That's not to say, of course, that it can't be used as a revolutionary tactic, and that it can't be a powerful way of showing people the real possibilities of a different way of life.

As the industrial scene has receded from the centre of the arena of political struggle, so housing has become a more vital issue. This has happened for a variety of reasons: the nature of capitalism and its present crises mean that peoples' expectations of improving standards, and the promises of the system, cannot be fulfilled, at a time when few people are prepared to accept their parents standards; the speculation boom of a couple of years ago, and rises in rents, rates and mortgages, and the grip of 'workerist' ideology which lays all emphasis on struggles at work, has lessened considerably in recent years.

The last decade has seen an upsurge in housing-related struggles. As the pressure on living standards increases, people have become more militant in opposing rent rises as well as demanding better-thought-out housing plans, more consultation, more amenities, etc., etc. The people who are most oppressed by the housing problem are those without houses, and, as might be expected, many of them have responded with a more radical form of direct action - seizing the houses they need, in defiance of the councils and in spite of the squeals of the bourgeoisie.

When the squatting movement began in the late 60's, occupations were frequently aimed at publicising the chronic non-use of empty houses (100,000 in London alone). Political activists, often from middle-class backgrounds and not themselves in need of homes provided the initiative and the organisation, (many of these activists, such as Ron Bailey and Jim Radford, have since defected to 'official' bodies such as Shelter and Family Squatting Advisory Service). In more recent years, however, it is the homeless themselves, only marginally interested in the politics of homelessness, who have taken to squatting as the only solution to the cycle of degradation and poverty. Although a large proportion of squatters are still young and middle-class, the squatting movement is fast becoming a mass movement.

Inevitably, the State has responded by attempts to head off this development. Its
tactics have been typical: dividing squatters among themselves, and from the working class as a whole; co-opting and defusing a large area of the struggle; and using the law.

Ever since squatting became popular, the State and the Media have tried to arouse prejudices: 'filthy', 'drug-smoking layabouts', 'never done a decent day's work', and so on. Recently the Greater London Council started a propaganda campaign to depict all squatters as "Smash and Grab Squatters". Their 'Shocking Proof' looks like an untidy kitchen by comparison with our photos of homes vandalised by the council to prevent people living in them. In their determination not to allow homes to anyone not high enough on their waiting list, houses that are going to be empty for several years are gutted and made uninhabitable (in spite of this many squatters do repair the damage and move in). They pretend that squatters are preventing them from housing homeless families - an obvious lie, since they own something like 50,000 empty houses in London. In short, they try to escape the responsibility for their gross incompetence and bureaucracy by blaming homelessness on the homeless.

They have, however, succeeded in dividing squatters by encouraging short-life housing organisations - the so-called Family Squatting groups, who take houses, shortly to be demolished, under licence from the council, usually for three months to a year, promising in return to hand the houses back to the councils when asked (some of these groups have evicted their members to fulfill this promise). The results of the actions of these groups have been to relieve the councils of part of their responsibility of housing people, often in houses in near-derelict condition, and to siphon off much anger and frustration that would otherwise be translated into direct-action.

Finally, the State is at present attempting to make squatting a crime in a blanket trespass law that would also affect occupa-

The shocking proof

The evidence against 'smash and grab' squatters
I have lived in what Council Officials choose to call "official" and "unofficial" squats. Unofficial squats are what most people think of as squats. Official squats are in fact not squats at all, but involve paying rent to a housing organisation for a short-life council house. The choice of words is sneaky, because it implies that some squats are legal and O.K. and others are not - and this is a distinction that local councils, and the G.L.C. in particular, seem to be determined to get across to people through newspapers, television, etc., in order to justify their behaviour.

The official squat that I lived in belonged to an organisation called Short-life Community Housing (SCH). The council lends to SCH (for no money) short-life houses that it is not going to use for a while. SCH makes them habitable - i.e. mends roofs, plumbing, electricity etc. - and then charges people rent to live in them. Most people pay £2-£3 for a single room and use of communal space. What SCH does with all this money is anybody's guess - it claims to be running at an enormous loss at the moment. At best, that must mean incredible inefficiency and bureaucracy. It seems a typical example of the organisation that has "rendered itself autonomous" - i.e. the administration has become totally alienated from its original purpose, and has become an end in itself. SCH is among the best of the short-life housing organisations - it has a no-eviction policy and a fairly democratic constitution. In practice it is not democratically run at all. Most of its tenants have become completely apathetic, probably because they are pissed off by the authoritarian bureaucracy of the office workers and the political power games that dominate its meetings. SCH has become as faceless and uncaring as the council housing department. Its waiting lists are now completely closed, and no amount of shouting, abuse, pleading, crying, or pretend pregnancies will persuade its complacent office workers that you really are desperate for a place.

Further, SCH is completely powerless in the hands of the council - if it doesn't behave itself, the council just stops handing over houses. The council just uses SCH as a convenience. It houses people that the council should be housing, and it usually hands back the houses as soon as the council wants them. This is obviously easier for the council than leaving the houses empty, and then having the trouble and expense of evicting squatters. Most of its tenants treat SCH as they would any landlord, and just hand over the rent each week. If you need some repairs, its easier and quicker to do it yourself than to get them to do it. The only advantage of being an SCH tenant over squatting is the security - you get rehoused in another SCH house, as long as you pay your rent every week.

Unofficial squatting is at least free from such bureaucratic organisations, and it therefore has far more revolutionary potential. Unfortunately, this potential rarely seems to be realised. In the area that I live in, fairly determined attempts were made to get a squatting group going, but they failed because no-one turned up to meetings. In this area squatters are usually evicted after about three or four months in a house. There
are plenty of empty houses - it seems easier
to move than to try to fight the eviction on
your own. Anyway, squatting is basically a
defensive act. If the landlord really wants
you out, there is really no way you can stop
him. Elgin Avenue appears to be an exception,
where squatters and tenants have been
fighting the GLC for years - but all they are
really doing is looking for loopholes in the
law so they can put the GLC off a little
longer. They have been living under constant
threat of eviction for at least a year, and the
houses have become so derelict, they hardly
seem worth fighting for. Most squatters
keep moving, and all the time and energy
that goes into looking for new houses, doing
repairs, painting, etc., means less time and
energy for other, more revolutionary things.
Generally, the bigger and better the house,
the less likely the landlord is to let you stay.
The squats in big luxurious blocks of houses
are just for fun, or to score a political point
in the newspaper.

It is estimated that there are 22,000
squatters in London. Most of them, like me,
can't or won't pay the ridiculous rents that
private landlords are asking, and refuse to
sit on the council waiting list for ten or
twenty years. (Anyway, I don't even qualify
to put my name on the list unless I have
kids, an attempted suicide, or T.B.). The
councils have accepted that they can't fight
the squatting movement as it is now, so they
are dividing squatters into "good" and "bad".
The good squatters are in official squats
(usually in derelict redevelopment areas).
They are approved of by the council, agree
to move out when the council wants them to,
and comply with any other demands made on
them. In a large squat, recently "made
official" by a charitable organisation, the
charity demanded keys to all the rooms and
the right to enter at any time. The bad
squatters choose their own houses without
asking anyone's permission first - and these
are the ones the councils are getting heavy
with. It seems a very effective way of
fighting the squatting movement. Relatively
few people are prepared to live in unofficial
squats and be continually moved on. The
official squatters can't support them for
fear of losing their own places. The councils
seem determined to emphasise this division,
and it is probably the only way they can even
begin to fight 22,000 squatters. The best
way to resist is to refuse to accept their
classification and concessions. There must
be no divisions between privileged and un-
privileged squatters. It's all or nothing. All
we need is a little solidarity.
words hang in mid-air, stuck in the throat, never flowing freely, lyrical, laughing, joyful, a key to self-realisation. Often the struggle to keep away the bailiffs, the perpetual external organising around this issue, begins to define the activities of the household, thus preventing involvement in the here-and-now.

The "drop-out" ideology infects many squat households. Those "escaping" from dependence on parental/family authority become dependent on, for example, the passive consumption of rock music, other drugs, gurus, mysticism etc. Hence the "untogetherness" of some squats which no longer reflect a refusal of constraints but rather an inability to cope. If we can fight the more conventional drugs such as work, HP, mortgages, surely we don’t have to remain addicts! This separated, drifting existence is ever threatening squat households, especially as people come into squats through casual acquaintances as rooms become vacant.

Sexual conventions amongst squatters are hardly different from any other housing arrangements despite the "communal"

However, the transitory nature of squats can inhibit the desire to positively reconstruct one's environment; and so many households degenerate into squalid, lifeless crash-pads. Joy, sensuousness, creativity, become passive indifference, collective isolation. These tendencies are reinforced when the behaviour of individuals within the household is harnessed to various ideologies.

For example the "political" squats - where left-wing ideology becomes a substitute for creativity, the discussion of "politics" (separated from everyday experience) a substitute for dialogue. Why do
functioning of many households. Couples remain as couples, defined by other house- 
holders as such, or merely through being 
crowded into double rooms. The drifting 
never-present feeling of many squats is 
reinforced by a sort of compulsive "free" 
love - usually the desire to hold back from 
genuine relationships and become "involved" 
in casual, superficial, basically sexist 
encounters - quantity wins over quality.

Without being too pessimistic, it ought to 
be said that squats as such are by no means 
radical, self-managed and free in them-

selves. Changing the lock on the front door 
does not ensure that capitalist, commodity 
relations are not free to enter the new 
household. Perhaps before considering 
moving to a squat it is worth considering:

- is the short life of the place and the threat 
of eviction really worth not paying the 
rent?
- don't squatters share the same passions, 
anguishes, and joys of their council 
tenant, housing association, private 
rented, and mortgage-paying neighbours?
- is it really such a crime for 1 person to 
occupy say 2 rooms and for "couples" to 

have their own larger space? Is this 
being selfish, making people homeless?
Surely it is the councils, government, 
and property speculators who monopolise 
space, not the homeless and badly housed.
Look at the way "responsible" organisa-
tions like SCH (Short-life Community 
Housing) crowd people into poky little 
rooms.

In a world defined by power no-one is 
free, living in squats or anywhere else. It 
is this lack of freedom and sense of power-
lessness which continually drives people on 
to seize territory for themselves - from 
refusing to pay the fare in the crowded 
underground, to factory occupations and 
rent strikes. Only when people everywhere 
recognise their lack of freedom and act for 
themselves will we see a world reconstruc-
ted according to our desires - play cities, 
territory organised for the joy of living, 
dancing over the graves of the environmen-
tal bureaucrats and their pathetic fall-out 
(from IMG hacks to the Ron Bailey anarcho-
liberals).

Snaps of a squat - how many of you living in a 
£15-a-week flat have got a bathroom like this?
LETTERS

Fellow Workers,

I just consumed your magazine Anarchy recently. A friend and fellow worker, Ottie Marchalt, brought it back from the September General Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World. She recommended it highly and I've just got around to borrowing it from her.

I have no idea how old the issue is (no. 12) or even if your collective is still publishing. I would like to subscribe to it and would appreciate it if you could inform me of all the gristy details as regards price. Do you have a US distributor or should I send money directly to you folks? Should I send check, money order or cashiers check, cash, gold, beads and trinkets?

Albert Meltzer's 'The Labour Movement in Spain' was really fine. All of the Tacoma Wobblies/Degenerate Anarchists are deeply inspired by the heroics of the Spanish Anarchists and Workers. Your readers might get a charge out of Sam Dolgoff's book 'Anarchist Collectives - Workers Self-Management during the Spanish Civil War'. If you haven't already reviewed it it's available from 'Free Life Editions', 41 Union Square West, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Worker dissatisfaction with the economic system, here, is reaching epidemic proportions as evidenced by the current wave of strikes. I wish there were more English language publications by Anarchists. There will never be too many. I have yet to encounter one that is up to the quality of yours.

Here's hoping we'll soon be putting the boss class' magazines out of business.

Yours for Anarchist Communism

Terry L. Dennis.

Comrades,

Well well, you have come out with yet another issue, amazing. After the last issue, with articles on feminism and anarchism, and the issue on Spain, this latest endeavour was a bit disappointing yet several of the articles saved it from complete impotence. These articles were: The Builders Labourers Federation story, which gave us a good introductory glance at what a 'militant' union 'is' and 'does'. Whose Revolution Betrayed, Trotsky, was good as an introduction to the 'statist' Trotsky. The short on Voline and Trotsky was nice personification of Trotsky's opportunism and would I be correct in assuming you reprinted it from News from Nowhere, which I work on. Not being malicious or anything just curious as to whether you translated it yourselves or reprinted it from us, if so why no credit in the introduction? The short in itself is quite a popular reprint, it recently was also reprinted by Solidarity in Philadelphia, Penn. USA. The open letter from the Anarcho-Feminists was excellent.

Now the complaints. Prospects of Anarchy was a liberal piece of shit. It strove to mix 'Anarchism' with 'Alternatives' or 'Counter Culture'. It is an essay on an interesting mixture, of what I can gather, the author has consumed recently as 'Culture and Entertaiment': books, theatre, tv, essays, etc. I really doubt that this article was sincerely trying to find the present historical and social movements and conditions for a revolution, if it is the author is either a raving academic liberal or an idiot reporter for a capitalist newspaper. More than likely though our unknown author is the prime example of some libertarian writer for some pacifist paper calling itself 'anarchist'.

The author tells us that a variety of liberals (some more radical than others rhetorically and action wise) from Abbie Hoffman and Richard Neville to Norman Mailer are all prime objects and transform-
ers of anarchist thought. And that old arch-
sexist Henry Miller has libertarian potential
or that Alex Comfort is challenging and in-
vestigating sex roles (this book "Joy of Sex"
should be the bedroom guide of all real rev-
olutionaries, because it tells us how to bind
and constrict our lover, our lover has to be
female, (the book contains smears against
gays) she should submit to the male so as
to 'please' him, drugs shouldn't be used, etc.
Need I say more about how backward, sexist
and dangerous Alex Comfort is.

I could go on and on, explain more and
more of the articles use of liberals to pose
to us as anarchist alternatives in the system.
However, the article shows its bankruptcy
not only in written examples but in the gra-
phic of the 'True Female Personality' now
I assume this is a joke on someone's part
however I have a slight twinge of doubt look-
ing back at the article surrounding it, and
that article praises sexist men constantly
and constantly, tells us we should look at
them as revolutionary examples, never talks
about women, or the women's movement ex-
cept for a blurb of how the Civil Liberties
has a handbook on 'Womens Rights'. Big
fucking deal.

However the author indicts himself (and
assume its a male as a woman would have
told us more about the importance of the
women's movement) when he says: 'The Young
Liberals policy in general, as expressed in
'Scarborough Perspectives' is of special in-
terest to anarchists'. The author then uses
the word 'Libertarian' throughout, tossing it
this way and that calling liberal human
rightists real 'libertarians', etc.

If the author wished to express hope, and
amazement at the struggle we are all invol-
ed in to free ourselves from capitalism and
the state then an article on the anarchist
groups like Black Cross or Solidarity or the
European Comrades and their struggles or
our sisters in their struggles would have
served much better, however I take it that
the author was trying to reach the people
who don't believe in the state, vote liberal,
and think workers are reactionary and wom-
en are something you fuck. If these people
are anarchists then I am not, and if Anarchy
magazine continues to publish such anti-
people articles then you might as well pack
up cause you have just proven the bankruptcy
of the ideal of anarchy.

"Why workers control doesn't work in
Yugoslavia", was good again as an intro-
duction, however I hope you will run more
documentation on the Yugoslavian illusion
of workers control, in the future.

The only other two articles which I
thought were useless and a waste of space
were Nicholas Walters reply and the reply to
the reply. Totally personal attacks on each
other are really not necessary in a Journal,
however it is up to you to run them if you
feel inclined, but I do think that when they
got to the point of something that could be
settled face to face, then I get lost in the
problems of the movement in England and
thus I flip the page only to find by Bakunin's
beard, none other than that old stalwart of
Canadian literature; George Woodcock.

Now the Woodcock/Meltzer debate I can
enjoy as Woodcock loves to use his pen like
his vocal chords and go on and on expressing
himself, however I really have to doubt his
sincerity, I mean George do you have to
defend yourself, and calling 'Anarchism'
outdated and a call for the 'new anarchism'
is really quite a way to avoid defining what
is going to be 'new' about your concept of
anarchism. However since you personify
yourself as Bakunin at the beginning of your
article I take it you carry your personifica-
tion of people and ideology through to the end
where you attack Marx or I mean Meltzer as
a centerist/statist a la Joe Stalin McCarthy.
Gosh that's the classic line used by every
Canadian liberal who cries when someone
says 'shut up you're rocking the boat' or
hurting my feelings. So I take it Meltzer
must represent the 'old' anarchism and you
the 'new'. So if this is true and you are moving towards the new and Meltzer the old, what is the difference? Well could it be that the new anarchism is Prof. Woodcock, great Canadian Literature Prof. is this what we should do, those of us that are Canadian anarchists, are you going to be our new Bakunin leading us through the hails of academia, to our rightful place in the Liberal Canadian State. What are you personally doing George besides writing for the Bourgeoisie? I mean 'Books in Canada' is not exactly the best loved magazine among the working masses in Canada. What are you doing George besides sitting on your ass? How many anarchists in Canada do you know or have contact with? Why hasn't you communicated your solidarity with us and your involvement in building this so called 'new' anarchism? We are struggling here by ourselves, in our workplaces, in our communities, stressing the need for people to control their own lives. At the same time we in Canada are building our groupings in the cities, publishing magazines, pamphlets, propaganda etc., What are you doing to help us George? Is your 'new' anarchism sitting on your ass getting government grants or state controlled teaching jobs in state controlled processing centres called university? Have you helped organise the young anarchists around you at UBC or Simon Fraser? What have you done, dammit George?

And what has Meltzer done, well he has struggled with Spanish Comrades and other European comrades to build an active anarchist resistance movement in Europe, that's 'old' anarchism I guess.

Now George the differences between you and Meltzer aren't just opinions but opinions and ideas based on and carried through in action. George you represent nothing 'new' just the same old passivity and liberalism that is so much part of the Statist Canadian Culture; you represent Trudeau better than Bakunin. When you get off your ass and engage in some action here in Canada, then maybe your concept of 'new' anarchism will have some relevance, however at this moment you, your analysis and your call to a new anarchism are where they originated from, on my bookshelf labelled anarchist history.

Well I guess that's about it for my complaints. We here are actually pleased with the endeavor to make anarchy as a mag at last. You were doing well till this issue, since your hearts weren't really into it your forgiven, lets try not to drop the quality anymore.

Keep up the struggle.
Yours for generalised self management
Eugene Plawiuk.

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LETTERS ctd

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After vol. 10 (1970), our records are in chaos. We assigned new series 2, vol. 1 nos. 1-11 to the year 1971. Is this correct?

 Worse yet, the last 3 issues we have received have included a volume, no numbers, and no year! Could you help us out?

To make our records accessible to the greatest number of people, it is vital that our records be clear and accurate. Any help you can give would be appreciated.

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WRITE FOR ANARCHY

We would like some articles from you. Possible forthcoming topics for Anarchy are Ireland, Doctors, and Anarchy and Organisation but if you can think of a topic you would like us to print, go ahead and write about it. We can't use articles that are too long or too academic, and we don't usually print poetry. So instead of complaining, how about doing a bit of work yourselves and writing your own Anarchy instead of expecting us to do it for you.
ALL - LONDON SQUATTERS GLC ACTION
GROUP PRESS STATEMENT

Issued at Press Conference 11.30 a.m.
Tuesday January 28 Roebuck Pub,
Tottenham Court Road. Read out by
a spokesperson for the Action Group.

"Smash and Grab Squatters" are a bogey
created by the GLC in a hysterical attempt
to blame squatters for the housing crisis
and whip up hatred against them.

It is not the actions of the homeless but
those of GLC, Councils, Speculators and
Government which are to blame for the
housing crisis.

Squatters are generally just ordinary
working people who are homeless because
they cannot find suitable accommodation at
reasonable rent. They are the "Can't Wait
Homeless". No-one should have to wait for
housing. There are 100,000 good empty
properties in London which should be taken
over for all the homeless.

The GLC's idea of reasonable squatters
is people who will voluntarily make them-
selves homeless at Council's request.
Those who demand Housing For All are
labelled "Smash and Grab".

The GLC's attacks on squatting spell
grave danger to many more than squatters.
The effect of the Law Commission propo-
sals on Criminal Trespass which are backed
by the Labour GLC would not only make cri-
minals of the homeless but would make pro-
test occupations and pickets by students and
trade unionists imprisonable acts; and
would also give the police on-the-spot pow-
ers to decide on complex landlord-tenant
legal problems which could result in
immediate evictions.

Accusations that squatters smash houses
are absurd. The squatting movement is
opposed to all forms of vandalism and
makes great efforts to repair the large-
scale deliberate vandalism of GLC and
Councils.

We have many examples of GLC vandal-
ism and keeping of houses empty for long
periods without reason. For example in
spring last year GLC deliberately destroyed
the inside of 111 Walsarton Road Padding-
ton, for which there were no plans, just before
squat families were to move in. The
GLC smashed the lavatories of 60 flats in
Ritchie House North Islington. This is a
commonplace method for making houses
uninhabitable, used by GLC and Councils
all over London. In Stepney whole streets
of houses are bricked up to make them
unsquattable. In Heathfield Gardens Wand-
sworth good Georgian houses have been
empty up to 8 years. Similarly GLC blocks
of flats at Northampton buildings South
Islington have been empty for years.

Damage to gas fittings and so on in War-
wick Avenue Little Venice revealed by GLC
last week is deplorable whoever did it but
the giant GLC propaganda machine is shed-
ing crocodile tears over blown-up and iso-
lated incidents. The hard facts about this,
the centrepiece of GLC's attack last week,
are that the Warwick Avenue flats were not
renovated for the real homeless of London.
They were originally renovated for the High
Rent Accommodation category. This cate-
gory was abolished by the Labour GLC but
although they reduced rents rich professional
people with expensive cars are still moving
in. Displayed here we have a photograph of
a Mk 10 Jaguar outside its owners house -
We give warning to the so-called-socialist GLC that all people in London who are concerned with the fight for decent housing for all will not sit back and allow squatters to be evicted and used as scapegoats for the decrease in housing standards and cut-backs in housing programmes which keep hundreds of thousands of people in slum conditions. The London squatting movement will move onto the offensive against GLC.

We are launching an Inquiry into GLC housing policy. Findings will be made public and backed-up by action. The items revealed at this Press Conference are early results, a detailed report will be made at a Housing Crisis Conference organised by All London Squatters to be held in March. We welcome Trade Unionists and Tenants to join us in this Inquiry and Conference.

We are starting a campaign for a programme which the so-called-socialist GLC and Government should support if they care about the homeless.

Our basic demand is: No Evictions - Decent Housing For All: AND all here includes single people and childless couples.

So we demand, as a preliminary programme:
- Immediate requisitioning of all empty property for the homeless.
- A crash programme of repairs, rehabilitation and building on derelict space.
- The financing of housing programmes by cash grants and interest-free loans from central Government. The high interest re-payments by Councils to City financiers must be stopped. (FACT: 90% of rent income of GLC is spent on interest repayments.)
- Democratic control by area conferences of Tenants, Trade Unions, and Squatters organisations over all housing and development plans and usage of empty property.

Concerning Elgin Avenue Paddington, the GLC "offer" of alternative accommodation made in August was unreal. It consisted of derelict slums in the main which were bricked up and had holes in roofs. The Paddington Federation of Tenants and Residents and Westminster Trades Council together inspected these properties, mainly in Jubilee Street E1, and agreed they were not good enough. Housing standards must be maintained.

Even after Elgin Avenue Squatters won the High Court Appeal against eviction in October they made it absolutely clear to GLC that they would be happy to leave immediately if given adequate alternatives. It is the GLC, not squatters, who have deliberately caused delay and according to their own figures have as a result wasted £150,000 of ratepayers' money rather than be seen to provide adequate re-housing.

It is absurd to describe the 200-odd squatters in Elgin Avenue as not being homeless but as "hippies, drop-outs, political agitators and young tourists". People in Elgin Avenue are typical of London's homeless. They have jobs, include families on and off the waiting list, and old people, and have been there up to 3 years. Some families have been referred there by Westminster Council social workers rather than to degrading Bed and Breakfast.

We warn that if the GLC attempt to evict Elgin Avenue, the eviction, which will be the biggest ever in Britain, will be physically resisted behind barricades.

Concerning Charrington Street Camden, the GLC issued 5 summonses for Court eviction proceedings on Friday. This we see as the opening of the first of a series of struggles in which the housing movement will fight the GLC's attacks on the homeless.
Tenant Beware

You may have heard of and even participated in residents' or tenants' associations. They vary from 1) a group of upper-middle class owner-occupiers who get together as a protection against people moving into their area who might lower the tone and more importantly, the house prices.

2) tenants who get together either because they have a common landlord or who live in a re-development area and are fighting for a good deal for all.

There was initially a small tenants group in our road, around a common and notorious landlord, this was extended to include all tenants when the council voted to compulsorily purchase the street with a view to rehabilitation. We got together for two main reasons - protecting ourselves from harrassment by the landlords (they get more for an empty house) and to make sure we get a fair deal from the council when the time comes. The council suggested we form a tenants association; ward councillors offered us help in setting it up and a bloke from the local law centre came to meetings to help us with legal points and general advice.

This is where I think the tenant must beware, because tenants associations have become the new radical thing for politicians to seize on; Islington Council, which really fancy's itself as a radical body, has got its very own Participation Officer, who will assist tenants in forming associations with a chairman, treasurer, secretary, minutes and rules, to fight for such revolutionary aims as choosing the colour of your front door and forming vigilante squads to beat (up) vandals.

It is hard enough anyway for tenants to form a group in which it is not just the good speakers who get heard, and where everyone one's interests are given a look in. But with an outsider included, be they councillor or lawyer, I think it's even harder. That isn't to say that legal advice isn't always useful, for instance in tenants rights of occupation; but when it comes down to it and the landlord knocks your bedroom wall down (true story) while you're out at work, all the harassment officers in the world (and Islington Councils got one of them too) aren't going to put it back for you.

When fighting over housing: to stop harrassment and evictions: to get a decent place to live, in the area you want, from the council; it takes a group of people who have a direct common interest, who are not taken in by council promises, and who are prepared to stop an eviction with force. This sort of action isn't going to come from mealy-mouthed liberals who have an image to keep up, the fence sitting pseudo-radicals, who fill the council chambers and law centres.

It's a daunting prospect at first fighting several landlords, and the council, and the owner-occupiers all on your own - but we aren't on our own, we are several hundred. Oh we haven't got experience in the council's games but if we don't try to play their games we'll be alright. They want delegations - you know a few tongue tied tenants versus the housing committee; nuts! They want residents (they're the owner-occupiers) and tenants (us) to form a joint committee; nuts again:

It's very easy to be taken over, it's easy for the eloquent few to become leaders and make deals, it's hard to get everyone interested, it's boring knocking on doors in the pouring rain to drum up enthusiasm for a meeting, it's difficult to make sure that the needs of the few are fought for alongside those of the majority etc. etc. but it can be done; it must be done if we are ever to realise our needs and desires - and basically the struggle begins at home.

Charlotte Baggins.
DON'T ROT SQUAT!

THE HOUSES BELONG TO US —
THE CITY IS OURS.