

FREE CITIZEN

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SQUATTERS FIGHT burned out now chased

REMEMBER THE TIME THREE MONTHS AGO WHEN THOSE BURNT OUT IN THE RIOTS WERE GETTING HELP FROM EVERYWHERE. THEY SQUATTED IN HOUSES ALL OVER WEST BELFAST. NOW THEY NEED HELP AGAIN BECAUSE THEIR HONEYMOON PERIOD IS OVER. AN ALLIANCE OF LANDLORDS, ESTATE AGENTS, AND JOBBING BUILDERS IS SEEKING TO PUT THEM IN THE STREET AGAIN. THE SQUATTERS ARE VULNERABLE BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT ORGANISED CONVENTIONAL WELFARE ORGANISATIONS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN THEIR PLIGHT BECAUSE WHILE SQUATTING IS MORALLY RIGHT IT IS LEGALLY WRONG.

This is the type of thing that has been happening over the last few weeks. We have left out names and have switched round details to avoid intimidation of squatters. They tell their own story.

"One morning a lorry came up with 4 men and sheets of corrugated iron on the back, they came to the door and said that we must get out because they had orders to board the place up."

"I was in bed after all night vigilante duty, when suddenly this strange woman appeared and demanded that I get up. I got up and went down stairs, she was with her husband, they said we were to get out, they said I was a liar and had not been burnt out, every time I spoke I was called a liar, the woman said that she would go and get people to help throw us out. She left her husband, and he sat on a chair in the hall all day, later some friends chased him out."

"Men arrived one day and said that they had come to improve the house and that they were putting in a new bathroom. They said it would be better if we went because they would have to knock down the kitchen wall and tear up the floor in the living room. We refused to move and they went away."

These are just the stranger ways landlords and agents have of intimidating squatters. For them the problem is simple. Houses in good condition in safe areas are in enormous demand, a quick sale could mean a large capital gain compared with pre-August prices. That is if the squatters were out of the way.

The answer is simple, slum property in disputed areas is now worthless to landlords. The tenants have fled and no new takers can be found. So what could be better, you persuade the squatters to leave the

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"It is a pity that the protesters did not burn those people out several years ago. Do you know a lot of them were only paying 7/- a week rent" ---- Catholic Landlord to member of the West Belfast Housing Action Committee.

LEGALISED LOSS

The Minister of Commerce has revealed just how much public money was squandered by British Standard Relays and Monarch Electric, two fly-by-night firms which went bankrupt in Derry leaving thousands unemployed.

B.S.R. cost the government £298,128, Monarch Electric cost only slightly less at £233,177. Just think if the unemployed of Derry had been given half a million to spend on providing employment for themselves, on building and running their own factory, they could have managed things much better, but then they would have had no greedy English shareholders to take the money.

MARKEY FOR N.I.L.P.

Rumours persist in Newry that Councillor Markey and his Newry Labour Party will shortly join with the Northern Ireland Labour Party. Councillor Markey's record in Newry is far from perfect. Whenever proposals were brought forward for starting a points system for the allocation of houses Markey opposed it because it threatened his role as a party boss. At a time when the C.R.A. was taking great pains to shoe that anyone was free to walk through Newry, Markey issued a violent statement threatening Paisley if he dared to hold a march in Newry.

The Northern Ireland Labour Party has always been an uncomfortable alliance between those with a Republican socialist and those with a British Labourite position. If Markey the opportunist and small time political gangster is allowed to join the split between the two groups can only grow wider.

Meanwhile in Belfast Paddy Devlin's continuing involvement with Voice of the North (this week's edition devotes two boring pages to well known socialist hero Eamonn de Valera) is bound to cause increasing discontent in the party.



BERNADETTE BACK IN DERRY
TO FACE THE SCARMAN COMMISSION.

CASH CRISIS

faces further education

The whole nature of the Further Education programme for mature students in Northern Ireland may be disastrously affected by inadequate grants. Students fear that the two full time further education colleges in Northern Ireland could become finishing schools for the well-to-do rather than schools where those who did not have educational opportunities in early life can make up lost ground.

The two colleges are situated in Belfast and offer a wide choice of subjects. Business studies, Secretarial, Hairdressing, Dental, Nursing and G.C.E. subjects at "A" or "O" level.

Now this you may rightly remark is all rather marvellous and offers career opportunities to the adult frustrated at work. However to take advantage of any of these courses one must study full time and this automatically means giving up ones job. O.K. -- one is now unemployed and the "rosy well-educated future" becomes dulled with the immediate prospect of economic hardship. Because one is not available for employment every kind of state benefit is ruled out. People do argue that students should be aware of the financial implications of setting out on a course like this. In the first place we feel that the state should give assistance to people trying to gain new skills. Secondly the authorities do refer to an award system.

It is here that the difficulty really begins. Who is entitled to an award? What is the total amount of each award? What category does the claimant place himself in? The answers to these questions are not easily found. Here however are some practical examples of how the "scheme" works.

1. A man who has been working for 12 years finds himself without a grant and unable, despite the fact that his National Assurance Card is fully stamped, to claim any type of assistance.

Q. Why did he not receive any award.

A. He did not prove his willingness to avail himself of further education at night classes in earlier years.

Comment Surely if one leaves a job and a wage to undertake full time study one is showing an undoubted willingness to learn.

2. A widow is automatically excluded from the award scheme because she is already receiving state aid.

Q. What type of state aid?

A. Ten shillings per week widows pension.

Comment Despite the fact that married women are supported materially by their husbands, they can receive an award amounting to £110

3. A twenty year old girl resigned

from a job and £11 a week to resume studies. She was the only wage-earner in a household of 8.

Q. How can I live on £2 a week.

A. "You are not meant to" (straight from the mouth of the authority) Comment - not needed!

The simple, just end to the irregularities of the award scheme would be an automatic further education grant as is the case in higher education. N.I., with its odious unemployment rate, must surely benefit from its people being further educated whether it be of a practical or academic nature. The majority of adult students are simply undergoing job retraining but unless grants are given to everyone embarking on a course, the Further Education Centres are going to receive less and less actual "workers" and will ultimately evolve into Fine Finishing Schools for people who can afford to participate.

A delegation met the Deputy Director of Education on Monday, 27th October, and the practical difficulties in giving out awards were explained. The system is full of injustices and must be corrected but the basic problem is that the authorities just do not receive enough money from the N.I. Government. Our next step?

An interview with Captain Long. Future developments reported in FREE CITIZEN.

Our thanks to Wandsworth Trades Council for a gift of £3.

sentenced after frame up

A further unjust sentence this week came when Mr. Corrigan of Ardoyne 1 lost his appeal against 6 months imprisonment.

He is alleged to have provoked an Orange March by holding a tricolour up to the window of a bar. We are satisfied that this is not the case and that in point of fact Mr. Corrigan was severely beaten by the police because he tried to remonstrate with them when he witnessed their brutality towards another man who had committed no offence. He was only subsequently charged because he appeared on the 24hours T.V. programme and told what had happened to him, this after being assured by the producer Mr. David Lomax that nothing could happen to him. Two weeks later a case was cooked up against him and he was sentenced to six months. He has never seen the policeman who claimed to have known him well for six years.

SEND MONEY BY GIRO

It's quicker easier and cheaper. Just go to any Post Office and get an "In-payment" form. Fill it in using our number 68 101 2005 and hand it back with the money plus 9d fee (less than the postage + postage on a postal order). You can even send a message on the back of the form as we get that too.

HOW LONG ARE THE BRITISH TROOPS STAYING

Just how long are we going to have British Troops at our street corners? replaced by a permanent garrison of British soldiers.

When Westminster finally decided to send in troops to help clear up the mess created by its Stormont puppet, most people felt that their job would be done in a matter of a few months. Yet, during the debate on the Queen's speech in Westminster, Mr Jeremy Thorpe, leader of the Liberals, said: "We shall have to accept that we will have an increased garrison in N. Ireland for many years to come." No country can be in a state of normality when every street corner is occupied by armed soldiers of a well-known colonial power. The people of Bogside did not fight to have the RUC offences. Yet no prosecutions have been brought against RUC men, and none have been suspended pending enquiry into their behaviour.

Most notorious of all, the Tynan (Murder) Squad of B-specials, who fired into an Armagh crowd killing Sean Gallagher, are still on active service doing road checks in Co. Armagh. The Special Powers Act has not been repealed—nor has it been used against Craig, although two Republicans are currently held under it. At the beginning of the week

Reforms of the RUC and disbanding of the B-specials must be carried out at once. Half of the police still wear guns, and all of them are still proudly wearing their hated black uniform. The expected resignations of senior officers has not taken place, and those who gave orders during the Battle of Bogside still hold office in the force. It was publicly admitted that the RUC threw stones in Bogside, and many civilians have received savage sentences for much lesser Stormont voted to postpone yet again the reform of local government boundaries. Originally, these corrupt councils - it is now admitted that they were elected on a gerrymandered vote - were due to retire in 1970. Then it was postponed to 1971; now it may be 1972 or even later.

In the long run, only reforms, and not British troops, will ensure peace. With calm restored by British troops, Stormont hopes that it will once more be able to forget about reforms.

WE WANT SOCIAL JUSTICE NOW, NOT BRITISH TROOPS FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS.

GROGAN — savage sentence

THE SENTENCING OF MALACHY GROGAN TO TWO YEARS IMPRISONMENT FOR FIRING SHOTS IN DEFENCE OF HIS HOME ON SEPTEMBER 8TH MUST RANK AS ONE OF THE GREATEST INJUSTICES OF THE PRESENT TROUBLES. JUDGE TOPPING'S REMARKS ON LOCAL VIGILANTES MADE AT THE TIME MUST COUNT AMONGST THE MOST ILL-INFORMED EVER MADE BY AN ULSTER JUDGE.

On the evening when the offence occurred a mob came across the barricade in Avoca Street. The local vigilantes returned to their respective homes to defend them. When Grogan reached his home a heavy iron grating had already been thrown through his window, his wife was hysterical. He got the wife and children out into the back yard. Three petrol bombs were thrown at the house, two of which went through the parlour window, then Grogan went out into the street and fired the shots wildly rather than at anybody.

Head Constable George Gibson said in evidence, "I am satisfied from my investigations that in the early hours of the morning he (Grogan) was subjected to so much provocation that he and others on patrol went to defend their homes. I believe it is true that they thought they were under attack."

Now note the idiotic smugness of Judge Topping's summing up; — "In my view the enforcement of law and order must be left to those whose task it is —". One might well ask, "Where are the forces of law and order when a man can have three petrol bombs

thrown at his house?" Topping continues "there is no room for bands of persons, whether mixed or not, roaming the streets of this City, particularly at night — I hold that they could constitute a real threat to the peace of the City." Again one might well ask "Was it the men on vigilante patrol in the Bone area who threatened the peace?"

It is true that Grogan was in illegal possession of a gun, but in the events of the last two months the law has been effectively irrelevant in many areas when it comes to protecting homes. Surely the circumstances in which Grogan fired his gun constitute mitigating circumstances. If not the law is an ass, the more so when meted out by Judge Topping.

RIOTS HIT EXAMS

In two weeks time the II-plus tests; will begin. We oppose the whole system of selection at 11, and favour comprehensive education instead of a system by which there is a privileged educational sector and an under-privileged sector. Things are going to be worse in the poorest areas this year. Headmasters report that many children have been badly affected by the riots. Late nights and noise and alarms have disturbed many children. Just think of one thing, when the men were out on vigilante duty every night think of the disturbance of the normal life of the family. Captain Long, Minister of Education thinks otherwise. He thinks the riots have had virtually no effect on children. He has no need to worry, his children are safe enough.

bus fares Protest

Belfast bus fares are going up again. In a period of less than 15 months the lowest fare will have increased by 50 per cent, meanwhile transport workers wages have gone up a bare 8 per cent. The rise in bus fares will hit working class people hardest. It will worsen traffic congestion in the City because more people will try to go to work by car. It will mean that the buses will lose still more passengers.

Anyone willing to help organise a boycott of the fares increase should write to us.

P.D MEETINGS IN FIVE CITIES

People's Democracy members spoke at meetings attended by over 5,000 people in five different cities at the weekend.

Miss Finnuala Flood spoke at a meeting of students in Cork. It was to have been a debate with a Fianna Fail T.D., but Fianna Fail now have an official policy not to be seen in debate with the P.D. presumably because they know they would lose (officially because the P.D. have insulted the Taoiseach which is true). At a meeting sponsored by the Limerick Socialist Workers Group an audience of 300 asked lively questions for nearly two hours from the three P.D. speakers.

Mr. Michael Farrell in Limerick said that partition was not the root cause of the problem in Ireland, as Fianna Fail and the green Tories maintained, but only a symptom of the problem of English and American imperialism, which affected North and South alike.

Expressing solidarity with the Dublin Housing Action Committee, Mr. Farrell said that it was hypocrisy of the 26-Co. government to say they support the Northern C.R. movement, when they would not support the same movement in the South.

At the same meeting Mr. Gemmy of Limerick Labour Party received loud applause when he said that the church had co-operated in allowing a capitalist system to flourish in Ireland, a system in which "freedom" necessarily meant freedom for speculators to exploit human misery.

Speaking at a meeting on "Ireland the Way Forward" in St. Joseph's Training College, Belfast, Mr. Peter Cosgrove said that the unity of the Civil Rights Movement had not been very great; sections had opposed very relevant civil rights such as one man one job and one family, one house. In 1918, Mr. Cosgrove said Sinn Féin had united Ireland better than Civil Rights had in the last year — an all class alliance in which all joined together to proclaim the 32-Counties an all-Ireland Republic.

In 1921 however the goomben men had sold out to imperialism and murdered those who had fought for the republic. This Mr. Cosgrove declared provided a lesson for today: before all sections of the community were united it was necessary to analyse the real interests of the people, otherwise those who fought might be jettisoned and another compromise made with imperialism.

"The basic demands of the Civil Rights Movement" Mr. Cosgrove went on "apply equally well and even better to the Republic." In Dublin there were 10,000 homeless and in the republic there were 50,000 unemployed. Some 23,000 emigrated each year from both parts of Ireland. Between the two parts of the country there were 100,000 unemployed.

CASH FOR P.D

Students at York University have agreed to give £50 to P.D. "to help right the social wrongs in Northern Ireland." The money was earned in a T.V. quiz programme "University Challenge". But the York University Conservative Association are asking a solicitor to try to get a court injunction to stop the payment.

Their reason — "the decision is an unnecessary inflammation of the Ulster problem".

STOP RUGBY TOUR

The forthcoming tour of the South African rugby team to England and Northern Ireland should be opposed by all P.D. members. Massive protests in England have already been planned by anti-apartheid groups.

We have too much apartheid here between the two communities to encourage any more racials. To those who claim that sport and politics don't mix we would point out that the South African Government ensure that they do — witness the disgraceful D'Oliviera affair.

There are already too many political prisoners in Ulster for us to welcome emissaries of a government that praises the Special Powers Act and interns without trial even more political prisoners than the Mad Major and his associates.

HOUSING CRISIS

HUNDREDS OF THE HOMELESS WILL SPEND THE WINTER IN HUTS AND CARAVANS. SQUATTERS THROUGHOUT THE CITY MAY HAVE A DECENT ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS BUT WILL RISK EVICTION AND WILL LIVE A LIFE OF PERPETUAL INSECURITY.

MEANWHILE EVERY DAY THE HOUSING PAGES OF THE DAILY PAPERS ARE FULL OF ADVERTS FOR HOUSES AT A PRICE. HOUSES LIE EMPTY WAITING FOR THE WELL-TO-DO TO MEET THE SPECULATIVE BUILDERS DEMANDS. SIMILARLY OFFICES LIE UNUSED.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS TREATED THE SITUATION AS AN EMERGENCY IN MOST FIELDS. WHY NOT IN THE HOUSING FIELD? IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO REQUISITION THE KINGS HALL FOR TROOPS SURELY IT IS POSSIBLE TO REQUISITION ALL EMPTY PROPERTY FOR THE HOMELESS.

THE CORPORATION REFUSES EVEN TO RATE EMPTY PROPERTY. THE GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED EVEN TO OFFER LOANS TO SQUATTERS SO THAT THEY CAN PURCHASE THE HOUSES THAT THEY SO BADLY NEED.

MEANWHILE THE SQUATTERS ARE DENIED A NUMBER OF STATE BENEFITS BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO RENT BOOKS. WELFARE FUNDS ARE FRITTERED AWAY DEALING WITH SUPERFICIAL PROBLEMS AND LEAVING THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF DECENT HOUSING UNTOUCHED.

IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT TAKE ACTION, OTHERS WILL. ON BEHALF OF THE HOMELESS WE WILL DECLARE WAR ON EMPTY PROPERTY

WHAT WE ARE

THIS WEEK WE HAVE BEEN VARIOUSLY ACCUSED OF RUNNING A "PROTESTANT" NEWSPAPER BY SOME AND A "CATHOLIC" NEWSPAPER BY OTHERS. THIS IS A GOOD THING, IT MEANS THAT WE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT WE ARE NOT A PAPER "FOR THE CATHOLICS" OR FOR "THE PROTESTANTS". ANYONE WHO WANTS A BIGOTED AND SECTARIAN POLITICAL PAPER STICKING UP FOR THE PEOPLE OF ONE FAITH ALONE SHOULD STOP READING THIS AT ONCE. WE STAND UP FOR ALL THOSE ON EITHER SIDE OF THE PEACE LINE WHO ARE EXPLOITED AND DEPRIVED. WE STAND AGAINST THOSE WHO HAVE USED RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS TO MAKE EXPLOITATION EASIER. CATHOLIC UNITY REALLY MEANS VERY LITTLE WHEN WE SEE THE WAY THAT THE SQUATTERS ARE BEING TREATED. SIMILARLY ON THE PROTESTANT SIDE OF THE COMMUNITY THERE ARE GOOD AND BAD PEOPLE.

HUGHES SENTENCED UNJUSTLY

This week P.D. supporter Hugh Hughes lost his appeal against a two week sentence for putting up posters in the Ardoyne area. Hughes is only 17 and has lost his job as a result of the sentence. Compare this with the treatment of two men who were arrested while putting up U.C.D. Ulster Constitutional Defence Committee posters on the Lisburn Rd. A resident Mr. Thomas Burns objected when Kenneth Hamilton and William Murphy put these posters on his fence and on a nearby lamppost. In a scuffle which ensued he had teeth knocked out. Burns made strong complaint to the police pointing out that "people of the Falls had been prosecuted for putting up posters not anything as offensive as the posters put up on his fence."

Murphy and Hamilton were fined a mere £10 and bound over to keep the peace for six months. Note that their behaviour did lead to a breach of the police, in Hughes's case the police charged him with "behaviour

FROM PAGE 1.

good houses so that you can make a quick capital gain, you send them back to the slums where they belong, and get rent from them for houses which no-one else will take. As one agent told us, "I have been very generous, I have offered Mrs Jones two houses in one street, mind you it is a peculiar street, during the trouble both sides were so frightened that they all ran out. It has been a big problem for us."

Some landlords have found the squatters useful. In one case a house had lain empty for 9 months, the windows were broken, plaster-work damaged, the yard full of filth, there was no lavatory, no cooking equipment and no lights. Trench House paid £115 towards repairs, the man spent £30, and gave up three weeks work himself to put the place in order. Now he has heard that he definitely cannot either buy it or rent it. The landlord will let him stay until the £115 has been used as rent. In a year and a half the man will have to leave and the landlord will benefit by the improvements done by the squatter and paid for by welfare authorities.

Agents use any ploy. One agent told a squatter that a man had bought their house for his son who had just married to live in. The squatters however went to see the owner who had another story to tell. He said "there are 1900 reasons

IF YOU ARE A SQUATTER AND NEED HELP OR WANT TO MEET WITH OTHER SQUATTERS.

CONTACT W.B.H.A.C.
c/o P.D. Headquarters,
84 Albert Street,
Belfast 12.

If you want to give your support to the squatters please contact us also.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY WRITE TO US AT:-

84 Albert Street
Belfast BT12 4HL

liable to lead to a breach of the peace" but no trouble occurred.

Paddy Maxwell, former Nationalist M.P. for Foyle was the magistrate who sentenced Hugh Hughes. The Derry Unemployed Action Committee are so disgusted by his record on the bench that they have called for his dismissal. We fully support their call.

why I can't let you have the house, I can sell it for £1900 pounds tomorrow."

In every case squatters are prepared to pay a fair rent, but if as in one case a landlord has extracted £6.10.0 a week rent from nurses for a kitchen house he is hardly going to be satisfied with a fair rent.

Further down the line there are squatters in a worse plight. The houses in Drew Street owned by Queens University and occupied by squatters are in appalling condition. Water is running down the walls and sewers at the bottom of the street are broken. Queens has helped some of the squatters but now they want them out to start redevelopment. The squatters could of course leave tomorrow if Queens were to offer some of the 20 or so empty houses in good condition which the university at present owns.

The squatters have this in common. They are desperate people at the end of their tether. Months of insecurity, and or bad conditions, are affecting their health, the children in particular are suffering. P.D. Members and others involved in the West Belfast Housing Action Committee aim at present to help protect them against eviction and threats, help them organise themselves, provide legal advice and other services. We also intend to campaign for public support for these people.