

# HOUSING ACTION

OCTOBER

No. 4

Free

10,000  
copies

Waiting list: Only 400 in 'real need' - says Tory

## IS THIS REAL NEED, JACK?

WE REPRODUCE JUST 3 OF THE LETTERS RECEIVED BY HOUSING ACTION SINCE THE LAST ISSUE ABOUT PEOPLE ON THE WAITING LIST.

Dear HOUSING ACTION

I registered on the waiting list in June 1976 stating that I didn't want accommodation at Balloon Wood.

They agreed and said the waiting time for a flat was several months, for a house several years. I was willing to wait then having only just moved into my present accommodation and not knowing the dangers for myself and my two year old child. This is a privately rented flat on a landing beside steep stairs that my child is continually falling down, getting bumps and bruises. There is nowhere for her to play. Myself and my child now suffer illness through the damp which causes a great deal of fungus. She has bronchitis and endless cold and my doctor has written to the council. I have now got rheumatism from the damp.

I have to share a bathroom which is filthy despite efforts to clean it. My room used to be a bedsit with kitchen and wasn't redecorated so I have half a front room and half a mess. I've complained to the landlord and get endless promises but no action.

### 'WE CAN'T HELP'

I have contacted the council time after time. Always they say: "We cannot help. You'll have to wait your turn. There's people worse off than you." I know this but must they and I suffer while council houses lie empty. Must my child end up in hospital.

The council say anything to stop you pestering them. I wrote to Reveille who contacted the council. Reveille was told they hoped to offer me suitable accommodation in a few weeks and not at Balloon Wood. So after 13 months I at last received an offer - where I'd stated I didn't want to go. Yes, Balloon Wood. As you can imagine I refused. I went to see a Mrs Foster who sent letters saying the council would help, but she was out. They said that as I had refused Balloon Wood I would have to go to the end of the list, perhaps wait another 18 months and, even then, I could be offered the same place.

So I expect it is Balloon Wood or stay where I am now. They can't give accommodation they don't have but so many houses lie empty and anyone with money can buy a house while us who have been on the list so long get dumped in multistorey flats like Balloon Wood. So we try to ignore the damp, the cold, the fungus and the beetles and illness while they go home to their nice warm centrally heated homes.

So let's hope one day before my child's too ill they let me and others who are suffering the same occupy the empty houses and flats.

Name and Address Supplied\*



# IS THIS REAL NEED, JACK?

Dear Sir

On reading HOUSING ACTION No 3 we decided to write and tell you that we are on the Waiting List and have been since January 77. At the moment we are living with my mother who has 5 children of her own and I have a little boy 18 months old. There are only 4 bedrooms and as you may gather it is a little overcrowded and very cramped. So altogether there are 9 of us, the youngest of my brothers is 9 years old.

## APPALLING

We both think it is appalling of the Council to sell houses to people who can afford it but what about those who can't? Are they expected to live in hostels or walk the streets?

We have only been married since April and are very much looking forward to setting up a home of our own.

We have furniture but not all we need as we have nowhere to put it, but once we are given our own place we can get the rest with ease.

It is very disturbing living with so many people in one house, it is beginning to cause arguments and we don't want that. So as you can see we are in need of our own home rather urgently.

We are both willing to try and buy a house through a mortgage but we cannot possibly afford a deposit.

Before long we are going to be told to go because it is overcrowded and what will we do - we haven't anywhere else to go and will probably end up putting our baby into care until we get a home where we will be very happy. Thank you for listening to our problems.

Mr and Mrs Spencer  
4 Orlock Walk  
Armside Estate  
NOTTINGHAM

Dear HOUSING ACTION

I have a room with leaking roof, a faulty plug and a broken window letting in a gale force wind. Without the gas fire (also in need of service) it would be like the North Pole.

When I approached the landlord, threatening not to pay rent, he said he was very upset - and after all he had done for me. What had he done except giving myself and my baby continual flu, a bed ruined by rain, damp bedding, carpet and curtains?

It took 2 months to find this bedsit. The Homeless Families Unit said you had to be homeless 12 months in Nottingham before they would help and sent me to an agency on Mansfield Road. They sent me to another agency on Sherwood Rise that had a 6 month waiting list. I put my name on the council waiting list. They closed their ears to my pleading and said they would send my number in 8 weeks. Everybody thought I was alright for the time being with being on my

own and my child in a foster home. Nobody had sympathy and made me feel guilty for having a child. I put an ad in the papers but the only response was from lonely men - whose intentions might have made me need to leave suddenly. All the housing societies had long waiting lists - even Family First and they had regulations that would turn any girl into a nun. Their idea seems to be that young girls who have 'sinned' should be taught a lesson. This might apply to some but not everyone.

I hope that people who read this letter will have a bit more understanding for those who cannot afford to pay for a house and have just enough to live on.

Name and Address Supplied

## WAITING LIST ROCKETS

THE WAITING LIST BROKE THROUGH 9,000 LAST MONTH. It is now shooting up at over 15 registrations per day - every day of the year. By the end of 1977

the vicious Tory policies will have caused it to rise by over 5,500. We have only room to print 3 of the letters we received from people on the list which show what these figures really mean.

Yet Jack Green tries to pretend it isn't there. Who are you trying to kid, Jack?

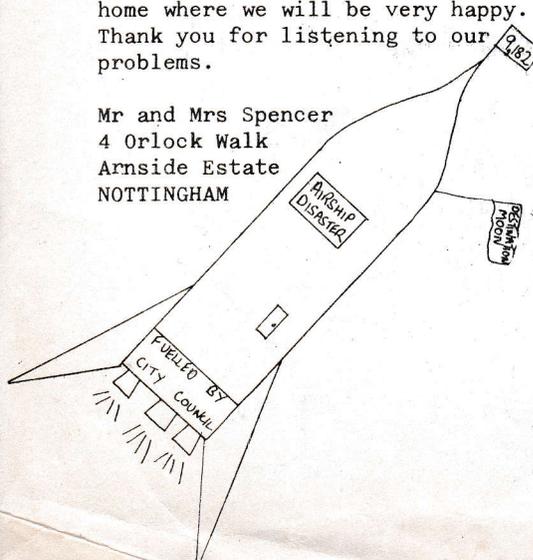
Let's take a look at the fairy tales you are trying to spin to Government ministers. You said in a letter to Ernest Armstrong "My comment about real need on the waiting list being only 300-400 was made to Mr Shore as well as to your officers and was explained at the time. The bulk of the list is made up by people not yet married: people who are looking for better accommodation: men in the forces anticipated discharge in years to come, and such like. The hard core of real need is up to four hundred. We also believe that at present some are joining the waiting list as this is a prerequisite to purchase in many cases." (City Council Minutes).

## SLAP IN THE FACE

What you say completely amazes us - it's a slap in the face for thousands on the waiting list. If you don't happen to be married - if you are a single person or part of a one parent family, then Jack, and the Tory Council, does not think you are in "real housing need." Or if you're waiting for a house so you can get married then again you're not in need. If you're overcrowded you're not in need. Nor if you have just moved to the city, nor if you are a lodger, under pressure to get out

This council only talks about clearance. It makes no effort to keep the waiting list down but would rather sell houses than help people on it. The letters above show what it means to be waiting for a place. However we thought we would also look behind some of the propaganda that spews out from councillors and officers. These are our findings:

(CONT.)





- There is no sign of the fantastic growth in the waiting list being stopped. Every statement of housing policy by the present council forgets to mention that it exists! The so-called management team calculated last October that only 7,500 people need to be rehoused between 1976 and 1981, ie 1,500 per year. These figures come from paid council officers who seem to forget the other 4,000 waiting list registrations each year now.
- Even the Chief Executive admits that "the waiting list may be unreliable - there is no guarantee that all the persons who may need to look to the Council for accommodation are currently registered."
- For example, in February this year the overcrowding waiting list shows 33 overcrowding cases. Yet a survey of just one part of the city, Basford/Forest Fields, shows that there are 1,121 households who "could appear to be overcrowded" in this area.
- This issue of overcrowding is just one example of the waiting list being a totally inaccurate way of measuring housing needs. The waiting list naturally penalises all people thought to be "underserving", eg battered women, single persons, people coming into Nottingham for jobs, pregnant girls and so on.

- Of course not everybody on the list wants housing immediately. However it is nonsense to say only 3 or 400 are in real need. Let's look at the 4 largest sections of the list at the end of September: Lodgers 6631; Secondary list 889; Aged Person list 519; Supplementary List 1110.
- Starting with the Supplementary List, it is true many owner occupiers on the list are down there as an insurance. However there are also tenants on this list who live in self-contained flats/houses, perhaps with no bathroom or in terrible conditions.
- Most of the Secondary List are from the forces, who need a place sometime in the future. However the recent case of the soldier who had been registered for 11 years and still couldn't be found a house on leaving the forces show the desperate pressure even on this list.
- Again, the "aged persons list" is used by many as an insurance, as a council report says "the need increases

progressively from year to year". So therefore there will always be people on this list who urgently need housing.

- The biggest section - over 70% - of the waiting list is the "General and Lodgers List", some 6,631 registrations. Jack Green vainly tries to say only a few hundred are in real need, but doesn't give detailed explanations. Our quick look at that "mismanagement" report produced last year shows that the council officers only think the "aged persons" and "married persons" are in "immediate need" - and there are about 400 of these people out of the 6,631.

Perhaps this is where he gets his figures. If so, Green chooses to pretend the other 6,231 don't matter!

And is Jack Green proud of the time it takes to get a place even if you are in his priority category? Last November Campbell Lee the Housing Director reported that it takes "approximately 15 months for a flat at Balloon Wood and 5 years for a house at Bilborough." That's when the list was in the 5,000s now it's over 9,000, so how much more difficult... Moreover what about people continually being offered places where they don't want to go eg Balloon Wood!

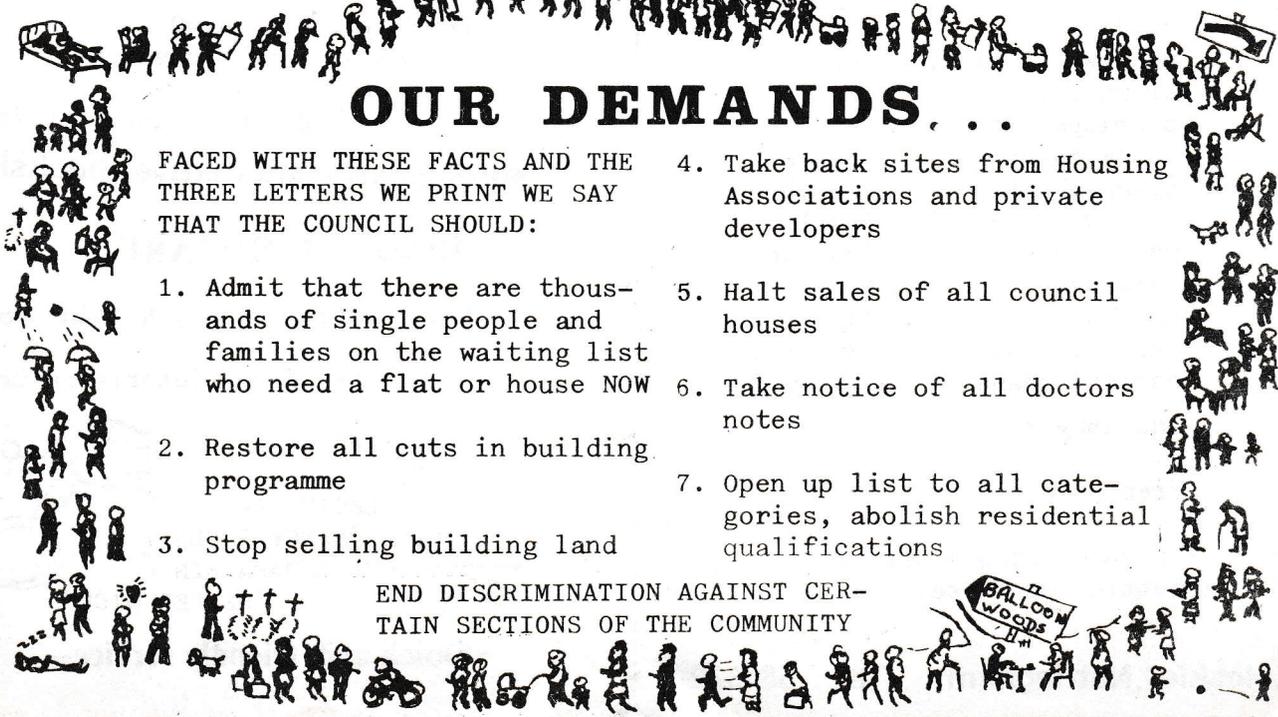


## OUR DEMANDS...

FACED WITH THESE FACTS AND THE THREE LETTERS WE PRINT WE SAY THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD:

1. Admit that there are thousands of single people and families on the waiting list who need a flat or house NOW
2. Restore all cuts in building programme
3. Stop selling building land
4. Take back sites from Housing Associations and private developers
5. Halt sales of all council houses
6. Take notice of all doctors notes
7. Open up list to all categories, abolish residential qualifications

END DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY



# GENERAL & MUNICIPAL WORKERS UNION STATEMENT

## Caretakers Action

On behalf of the caretakers who are members of the General and Municipal Workers Union, we would like to bring to the attention of the tenants the full story behind the present industrial action in respect of the withdrawal of our members from the Standby Agreement.

### LEVEL OF SERVICE

We appreciate this action must obviously have some effect on the level of service provided by the Authority to their tenants but the Union and its members feel that the tenants should be aware of the true facts, and where the responsibility actually does lie for this situation.

### ORIGINAL AGREEMENT

Because our members have to live on the job in order to provide the necessary level of service to the tenants, our original Agreement with the City of Nottingham Housing Department agreed a level of rent reduction, but because we were looking for a total rent reduction and being unable to secure that, we agreed with the Authority a payment for 'standing by' in order to give a service to the tenants covering a period of 24 hours.

The existing payments to our members under the Standby Agreement have not been increased for some considerable period of time and presently the figure for a full 7 days standby is £2.81.

### NEW RENT INCREASES

When the new rent increases were proposed, on behalf of our members, we indicated to the Authority that as our Rent Abatement and Standby Agreement had been negotiated as a complete

package we felt it only fair that if the rents were to be increased then it should follow that our Standby Payments should also be increased.

The Housing Committee refused to consider this line of action, and our members felt they had no option but to withdraw from the Standby Agreement, which was now completely out of date.

### COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITY

We can therefore only apologise for the inconvenience caused to tenants, but would indicate to the tenants that the responsibility for this situation lies fairly and squarely with the City of Nottingham and its Housing Committee.

Any particular problems arising from this situation which the tenants feel ought to be brought to the attention of the Union can be brought either to our Shop Steward Mr Rox - Phone No. 50654 or the General and Municipal Workers Union - 542 Woodborough Road, Nottingham - 607171.-

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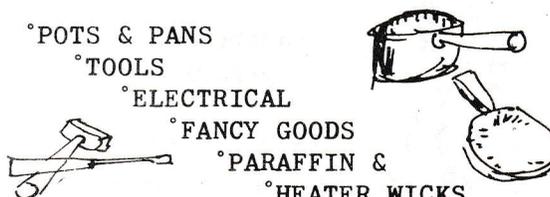
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# HOUSING ACTION

HOUSING ACTION is an independent paper produced by representatives from tenants groups who make up the Nottingham Housing Action Group, who want a better deal for all council tenants and others living in poor housing conditions.

We would very much welcome help in writing, producing, and organising the paper. We would also welcome letters or ideas on any housing issue. Housing Action is non-profit making and finances itself through donations and advertising.

The Mailing address for this issue is: 2 WILLOUGHBY AVENUE, LENTON, NOTTINGHAM.

## EXCHANGES

EXCHANGE wanted from 3 bed semi with living room, front room, bathroom, 2 toilets, garden, c/h for 3 bed c/h, parking space (if possible) near Trent Bridge or Edwards Lane. Reason for leaving - just had twins and can't cope with hill and steps in garden - nowhere for children to play. Apply Mr and Mrs Cooper, 72 Dornoch Avenue, Sherwood.

EXCHANGE wanted from 2 bed c/h flat at Balloon Wood for house on Edwards Lane Estate with garden for young child. Tel 204247 Mr Checkley.

EXCHANGE wanted from 1 bed ground floor flat on slope to 1 bed flat with a flat access. Contact Mrs Freeley, 40 Linmen Gardens, St Anns.

## Fighting Fund

In the second issue we launched a Fighting Fund and received £40.33 during the month. We forgot to put it in the last issue! However we would still welcome donations to help build the paper, buy essential equipment and make us independent of other financial sources.

EXCHANGE wanted from 3 bed house in St Anns for 3 bed house anywhere in Nottingham. Contact Mrs Shaw, 44 Northumberland Close, St Anns.

This column is free to any reader of HOUSING ACTION - just write in.

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## Top Valley: Rent Struggle

M WOOD  
Top Valley Tenants and Residents  
Association

Before I give a report on the rent struggle we still find ourselves in, we would like to thank all who gave support on the 24 September last.

The poor turn-out on the march was linked to many reasons:

- First, the abuse our committee have suffered in propaganda on the estate calling us "Reds" to "Radicals".
- Untrue accusations that we have been working for some political faction.
- We felt the press and local Councillors threats in saying that possessions would be taken for outstanding rent arrears did not help.
- Rent increases were promised over 6 months before we took any action at all to oppose them - so conditioning local people's minds into thinking that there was little they could do to effect the situation.

- There was a lot to do organising our committee before any actual contact with tenants could be started.
- The physical effort of actually collecting the petition and calling public meetings took up a lot of our time so making the council's decision date that much nearer.

### PETITION IGNORED

The petition was handed in and presented to the Housing Committee on Tuesday 11th October where it was "noted" ie ignored. We felt that the response of over 2,000 signatures proved the local councillors unrepresentative in voting for the increase. This has not depressed the committee's objections to the rent increases, and we are now considering further action.

### REFERENDUM

In an estate referendum which we conducted it appears that the majority of tenants would be in favour of abiding by the Government's guideline of 60p a

week increase. They were still objecting to the £1.75 increase feeling that they were in effect paying today what should have been next year's increase.

Given this support we are now concentrating our efforts on getting this year, value for money on facilities provided for us and will be campaigning for no further increase for a minimum of 2 years.

### FUTURE

Some of the facilities we will be pushing for are:

- ✦ A youth campaign - to utilise youngsters' vigour and enthusiasm constructively ie Youth Club, disco, indoor sports etc and getting the youngsters involved with helping the elderly.
- ✦ Social Events - Outings - trips for both young and old, keep fit classes, jumble sales, etc.