

# Tenant

May 1981

Volume II, Number 5

HOUSING FOR PEOPLE NOT PROFIT

25¢



Photo by Becket Logan

Planning for a City-Wide Rent Strike. Jane Wood of the Chelsea Coalition told the meeting of nearly 100, "Forming a neighborhood network is the heart of organizing."

Planeando para la huelga de renta de la ciudad entera. Jane Wood del Chelsea Coalition on Housing, le dijo a la reunión de casi 100 personas que "formando una red de activistas es el corazón de organizando."

## City goes back on promises to *in rem* tenants

The city's plan for city-owned (*in rem*) buildings is as clear as it can be. "There are only two bottom lines for every building—sale or demolition," said Anthony Gliedman, Commissioner of the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), in an April 8, 1981 *New York Times* article.

What *in rem* tenants have known all along has now been publicly stated. As a result of this policy, the city is spending next to nothing to provide services and make repairs. In fact, HPD Deputy Commissioner Eimicke in the same article brags that the city has spent \$11 million less on these buildings than it had planned to.

### Commissioner ignores tenants

For tenants in *in rem* buildings this means days without heat, leaking roofs, elevators that don't go anywhere, and plumbing and electrical problems. While the city has made all sorts of promises over the last two years, they are doing nothing to fulfill those promises. Tom Granger, co-chairman of the Riverside-Edgecombe

Neighborhood Association (RENA), and co-chairman of the Met Council In Rem Steering Committee, as well as Met Council chairwoman Jane Benedict, have made numerous attempts to get an appointment with Eimicke to remind him of these promises and to press the tenants' demands. Eimicke, who is in charge of city-owned houses for HPD, has ignored their calls and letters.

### Calls police

Early in April a delegation of about 40 *in rem* tenants, with leaders of RENA, Met Council and the Chelsea Coalition on Housing, went to HPD headquarters to demand to see Eimicke. Eimicke refused to meet with the group and instead called the police. After an hour of chanting and singing, the group left.

It is clear that *in rem* tenants will have to take further action to win repairs and save their homes. This question will head the agenda of the next In Rem Steering Committee meeting.

—by Steve Shreefter

## City-Wide Rent Strike TENANT LEADERS SET STRATEGIES

Nearly a hundred tenant leaders from all over the city gathered at Holy Name Church, 96th and Amsterdam, on April 4th to plan further strategies for a city-wide rent strike. The meeting was called by the City-Wide Rent Strike Committee and was chaired by Tom Granger, co-chairman of the Riverside-Edgecombe Neighborhood Association (RENA) and co-chairman of Met Council's In Rem Steering Committee.

Jane Benedict, Met Council's chairwoman, was one of the panel of organizers who opened the meeting. "If there were a city-wide rent strike, it would turn this city around politically. The city is hand in glove with real estate, which is exploiting our housing shortage by rampant profiteering. We need to build a long-range program around which tenants can organize for decent, integrated housing at rents people can afford."

### Planning for action

Bruce Bailey of the Columbia Tenants Union outlined the organizing process: "Organizing a rent strike begins with a grievance. A core group of those who are most angry forms. Ideally, they conceive a goal, a program for action and a time frame for the goal to be reached. The same rules can apply in organizing for larger actions outside our own house. We urgently need to plan such actions—we could win a rent strike and still lose our homes through gentrification."

Bess Stevenson of Met Council's Harlem Branch said there have always been more reasons than demanding repairs for going on rent strike. "In Harlem, one purpose of the rent strike is to keep a building from being nailed up. When the landlord has walked away, tenants should organize immediately. That landlord has not so much abandoned the building as abandoned the tenants. He can walk right back in to milk it some more if tenants don't organize and stay that way."

"Whatever we do, we have to do it *en masse*. If 2,000 people acted together, and were prepared to go to jail, what could they do with us? There wouldn't be room in the jails."

### Most powerful weapon

Roberto Marrero of Met Council's Bronx Branch spoke of Housing Court in relation to rent strikes. "When Housing Court was established, we had high hopes. We quickly learned it was a hostile atmosphere for tenants. We've all spent too many hours there getting in the end what we could have gotten by negotiating directly with a landlord."

"Rent strike was developed by tenants. A landlord could sit down at a meeting and yes you to death all night. Once he knows you're holding the money, he can't just walk away . . . Housing Court can order a paint job, but rent-striking tenants can demand a professional one. Housing Court can't get rid of abusive and dangerous supers, but rent-striking tenants have done just this. Rent strike is a powerful weapon."

### Organize early

In the discussion that followed, tenants brought up many other issues. Is rent strike a weapon in the struggle against cooping? As Bruce Bailey said, "Cooping is an insidious tool for dividing tenant against tenant. The landlord wants to act as if the building is in his pocket. If you organize very early, you can end up in a strong position."

Bernice Siegel, leader of the rent strike at the Glen Oaks development in Queens said, "We are the grass roots; the leaders can't

do it all. We have one huge common denominator—we are all tenants."

### Our historical precedent

Jane Benedict spoke of previous city-wide rent strikes, after World War I and in the sixties, when they started in Harlem under Jesse Gray and spread to Bedford-Stuyvesant, Jamaica and the South Bronx. "There is an historical precedent for us. That movement was not sustained—we need to do it now. Today we *have* in effect a city-wide rent strike, when you consider the number of buildings on strike. Our need is to coordinate. We must bury our differences and agree on what we agree on."

### In rem in trouble

Jeannie Dubnau and Steve Shreefter of Met Council's Washington Heights branch and Donna Smith of the Chelsea Coalition on Housing, brought out the current struggles of the *in rem* (city-owned) buildings, which are now seeking renewal of their hard-won interim leases, in addition to fuel money promised but never delivered. They suggested getting behind any action the *in rem* tenants decide to take. (See *in rem* story in this issue.)

**"Today we have in effect a city-wide rent strike, when you consider the number of buildings on strike. Our need is to coordinate."**

Jane Wood of the Chelsea Coalition said, "We come home from local organizing too exhausted to do any more. We need to make a further effort to get out of the kitchen and into bigger things in the world around us. You will pull people along with you as you go."

### Mitchell-Lama plight

Several tenants spoke of the special problems of Mitchell-Lama residents (outrageous rent increases to pay for the original faulty construction, among them), and of how to draw these tenants into the heart of the struggle.

Irene Kohn of Met Council's Midtown branch and the Mitchell-Lama Committee said, "We need to get as many people as possible on those buses leaving to lobby in Albany on May 27th."

### Combating fear

Tenant leaders from Queens brought out the fear they felt some people had of the concept, or even the word, rent strike, triggering a fear of eviction. Tom Granger said, "Fear is a terrible thing. As tenant leaders, we have to go out and teach people how to combat it." Mark Brody of the East Side branch said, "Rent strike is the most effective tactic we have found, so we can't abandon it. We need to draw those afraid of it into other activities—such as lobbying in Albany."

Bernice Siegel read off a list of demands prepared by the City-Wide Rent Strike Committee:

1. We demand a 15% across-the-board

(continued on page 7)

## Join the mass Tenant Lobby Come to Albany Wednesday, May 27

### LOBBY TO

- STOP ACROSS THE BOARD INCREASES (Pass the Flynn/Dearie Rent Protection Act)
- STOP EVICTIONS IN COOP/CONDOMINIUM CONVERSION (Pass the Padavan-Weprin Bill)
- SAVE MITCHELL-LAMA FOR THE PEOPLE
- PROTECT *IN REM* TENANTS

Buses will leave from various communities between 6:30 and 7 AM. Buses will return to the point of departure between 8 and 9 PM the same day. Round trip fare is \$13.

Go to your nearest branch or affiliate to sign up for the trip (see directory, back page) or sign the form below. We'll let you know what bus to go on. For further information, call Irene Kohn at Met Council, Monday through Friday, 1:30-6 PM, 598-4900.

MAIL to Met Council on Housing, 137 Fifth Avenue, NYC 10010

I want to go to Albany on May 27. Enclosed is \$13. Tell me the location of the bus I should go on.

I want to go to Albany on May 27. I can't afford the fare. Please use the contribution someone else makes for my trip. Tell me the location of the bus I should go on.

I can't go to Albany. Here is my contribution for someone else's trip.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Met Council Branch or organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

## Editorial Dumping Koch

As has been previously announced in *Tenant*, Met Council's policy has been changed so that we are now free to endorse political candidates. This came about first through resolutions at our annual conference (January, 1981) urging Met Council to enter the political arena and later (February, 1981) when Met Council's Assembly formally voted to do so.

Why the change from a previous, long-standing policy *not* to endorse candidates? The answer lies in the temper of the times. New York is beset by closing of hospitals and schools, filthy streets, broken-down transportation systems, a starvation of housing with rents at the highest levels yet known and with a mayor encouraging landlords to charge still more.

The anger of the public has led to the formation of a Dump Koch movement. A coalition likewise was formed to dump City Council leader Thomas Cuite, the traditional "whip" who carries out the mayor's bidding in the City Council. A coalition also organized to dump Brooklyn landlord Leon Katz from the City Council. In the face of all this activity and with Mayor Koch's blatant pro-landlord, anti-tenant actions, it became impossible for Met Council to stand on the sidelines.

Endorsement of candidates does *not* mean support of long lists of political hopefuls. It *does* mean being free as an organization to support those who are outstanding in speaking out for tenants.

In the last few months, Met Council has been part of the City-Wide Coalition to Defeat Koch in 1981. This is a group of organizations far more grass roots in character than the recently dissolved coalition identified with Ted Kheel. As of this writing, an outstanding possibility to run against Koch is Assemblyman Frank Barbaro from Bensonhurst in Brooklyn. Long a tenant activist and lawyer, Frank Barbaro has been for many years an ally of Met Council and of the tenant movement in general. Met Council's Executive Board recently urged him to run. An announcement of his decision is expected soon.

New York City is in misery. New Yorkers are suffering all the ills that follow from living in a banker/landlord-run city. Met Council is indeed "in politics." It could not be otherwise.

## It Takes\$ Thousands\$

Contributions in these columns cover the period from March 9 through April 14. Some contributions may have been received but not yet processed through our books by April 14. These will be acknowledged in the June issue of *Tenant*.

### General Fund

This is the fund which helps see Met Council through in the day-to-day grind of meeting constantly rising expenses. Many thanks to the following generous contributors:

- Bay Ridge Branch:** Helen Udell, \$4.
- Bronx Branch:** \$46.90; A. Miller, \$3; Sandra Seder, \$5; Tenants of 485 East 180 Street, \$10; William Wolfson, \$5.
- East Side Branch:** Helene Bizzanca, \$4; Michael Calabrese, \$3; Irene Christopher, \$2; Jonne Cushing, \$5; Peter De Luca, \$10; S.C. Friedman, \$50; Paul Goldberg, \$5; Lilly Lann, \$5; Kathy Mattison, \$4; Esther Rand, \$50 (Honorarium from Cardozo Law School Ass'n.); Gertrude Schroeder, \$50; Jesse Sude, \$9; Beatrice Vulcan, \$25.
- Flatbush Branch:** \$10.
- Harlem Branch:** Deavera Ballon, \$6.50; Geraldine Byfield, \$3; Nellie V. Carrol, \$1; Geraldine L. Daniels, \$4.
- Midtown Branch:** Jane Benedict, \$35 (honorarium for speaking at NYU); Lillian Chuey, \$4; Mary Hess, \$10; Margaret Lehrfeld, \$4; Jane Wong, \$5.

**Mitchell-Lama:** Lee Price, \$25 (in addition to \$25 supporting membership).

**Park Slope Branch:** Marian V. Avrutis, \$5; Ann Van Zyl, \$4.

**Washington Heights-Inwood Branch:** \$4; B.H. McNeil, \$3.

**West Side Branch:** Alexandra Ghigliotti, \$10; Charla A. Gohert, \$10; Harry Katz, \$3; Manny Kircheimer, \$20; Mary Labor-da, \$2; Lynn O. Shapiro, \$3.

**Yorkville-East Harlem Branch:** Agnes J. Salinger, \$4.

**Also:** Anonymous, \$1.50, \$2; Norman Barr, \$4; Marion Koch, \$14; Joseph Lukas, \$5.

### Legal-Legislative Fund

From time-to-time Met Council draws on this fund in order to participate in law suits on overall issues affecting many thousands of tenants. We also use this money for small groups going to lobby in Albany or Washington. The big bus lobby such as the one on May 27 pays for itself because various groups and branches raise money to pay for specially chartered buses.

As usual the Harlem Branch raised money at its weekly meetings. This month the collection came to \$31.85. The Bronx Branch contributed \$16.75 towards transportation for a small Bronx-Harlem delegation which went to Albany on March 31 to lobby for the Flynn-Dearie Rent Protection Act. Many thanks to both branches.

## From the Horse's Mouth



"...many politicians who attended the wedding yesterday described the marriage as a political as well as a personal event...those who know her and the governor have no doubt that Mrs. Gouletas-Carey will have a major influence." (*New York Times*, April 12)

Last month Governor Carey married Evangeline Gouletas, who is a principal, along with her two brothers, in the largest condominium development firm in the country. Chicago-based American Invsco has become so notorious for its hard-sell techniques that it is currently under investigation in Congress for false advertising and violations of securities laws.

### \$1 million in profits

The reason for the hard sell is clear: the profits from coop and condo conversions

are enormous. After ravaging Chicago's Lakefront, American Invsco is expanding its field to New York's Upper East Side. (A company that declared more than \$1 billion in revenues in 1980, they know where the action is.) The Plaza 400, at 400 East 56th Street, was brought by Invsco and converted to cooperatives this year, at a net profit "of more than \$1 million a year on receipts of \$6.2 million." (*New York Times*, April 12.)

Invsco represents all that is most cruelly speculative in the real estate industry today. Thousands of apartments are being senselessly removed from the rental market to feed the greed of a few.

Governor Carey, who had said in mid-March, "I have never said what I will do on any bill until it reaches my desk," announced later in the month that he would *not* support a coop bill currently in Albany that would simply raise the number of consenting tenants from 35% to 51%. (Total moratoriums on coop conversion have been suggested; this is not even a radical bill—only a democratic one.) "Practically, it (the coop bill) would cause evictions because, frankly, if the conversion process is not even available to a landlord, he will abandon." (*New York Times*, March 31.) Would 400 East 56th Street, a piece of the prime, have been abandoned if American Invsco had not ridden in from out of state, bought it up and then converted it at gigantic profit?

This new alliance can only increase the callousness of our government to our needs and tenants must be on the watch.

—by Phyllis Tower

## Dear Esther



Dear Esther,

I was served *three times* with a petition for non-payment of rent. It was the same

petition, and I had to go to the post office to get the certified mail copy. Why am I being put to this inconvenience? I had to take time off from work to get it from the post office. If I had known it was the same as the two I had already gotten, I wouldn't have bothered. Is that a wrong approach?

—Elaine S.T.

Dear Elaine,

in September, 1980 the law about service was amended to provide for service 1) by mail (on your door), 2) by ordinary mail and 3) by certified mail—whether it was for non-payment or for a holdover. If you have not received all three, in the form I have described above, your answer in the court should state that service was defective and the court will dismiss the petition. If you have already received two of them, and you have the pink slip from the mailman for the third, don't take time from your job to collect it. You may assume that it is the replica of the two in hand. But the landlord or his attorney must file it.

—Esther

## Our Readers Write

To Met Council:

I attended the Met Council Annual Conference, "Taking the offensive in the War Against Tenants," and although some time has passed, I feel that I still must write to congratulate Met Council on this approach.

No longer should we tenant-workers wait for some "outsider" to come to our rescue. We can do our *own* "rescuing." We have to call the shots—and since there are more tenants than there are landlords—we can, if we enlarge our goals to include political ac-

tion. Further, there are more workers than there are bosses; so unions must be included in a joint political action to insure a concentrated unity and effort to stop the spiraling decay of our society.

Today's anger is frustrated; by using political action to direct and use that anger, we will take the first steps to turn around our government's abandonment of its responsibilities to us and our human needs.

Let's dump first Koch, then Carey, then Reagan!

—Mamie Jackson

## From the Law Journal

Whether you have retained an attorney or not, you should know that if there is a default against you, you should check to see if the landlord has filed an "affidavit of non-military service," as required by law. The Federal Code, Title 50, as well as a parallel New York statute (Military Law Section 309), provides that "no eviction...shall be made during the period of military service in respect of any premises for which the agreed rent does not exceed \$150 per month, occupied chiefly for dwelling purposes by the wife, children, or other dependents of a person in military service, except upon leave of court granted upon application therefore or granted in an action or proceeding affecting right of

possession." If the affidavit is not on file, or if it is, but no one visited you personally to ask whether there is someone paying the rent who is in military service, then the default can be lifted. This law was obviously meant to protect military dependents, but it can work to the advantage of the ordinary citizen.

The only possible hitch here is being sued for rental of under \$150 per month. However, the rent in the case described in the Law Journal was \$215 a month, and the Court suggested that sticking to a strict \$150 was a "misreading" of another law. The case was *Reitman v. Mantes*, published in the issue of June 24, 1980, page 12, column 3.

by Esther T. Rand

# Tenant

(ISSN-0040-3083)

is published monthly, eleven issues, except August, by Metropolitan Council on Housing, 137 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010 (phone 598-4900).

*Tenant* is distributed to members of Met Council as part of their membership and to affiliated organizations. Subscriptions are \$2.50 per year (11 issues); \$5 for institutions.

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Second class postage paid at New York, New York.

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Postmaster: please send form 3579.

Metropolitan Council on Housing (Jane Benedict, Chairwoman) was founded in 1958.

Office open Monday through Friday from 1:30 to 6:00 PM.

# Tercera página: El INQUILINO Hispano



## Editorial Fuera con Koch

Como fué previamente anunciado en Tenant, la póliza de Met Council se ha cambiado para permitirnos endosar a candidatos políticos. Esto se realizó primero por medio de una resolución en nuestra conferencia anual en enero pidiéndole a Met Council a que entrara a la cancha política. La asamblea formalmente votó a favor.

¿Por qué el cambio en una posición de tanto tiempo de no endosar candidatos? La respuesta queda en las realidades de estos tiempos. Nuev York está inundado con las cierres de los hospitales y escuelas, los sistemas de traspórtación decaídos, una escasez de viviendas con rentas por las alturas y un alcalde apoyando a los dueños a que cobren aun más.

El coraje del público a llevado a la gente a la formación de un movimiento par desahuciar a los consejales Cuíte y Katz de Brooklyn. Cuíte tiene la voz más poderosa en el concilio de la alcaldía y que siempre actúa como portavoz para el alcalde. Katz es un propietario de mayor importancia en Brooklyn y su hermano es el presidente de la asociación de propietarios el Rent Stabilization Association. Con todas estas circunstancias tan en favor de los propietarios, Met Council ya no podía más quedarse fuera de la cancha política y no endosar candidatos.

Endosar candidatos para nosotros no quiere decir endosamientos de una lista larga de candidatos para todos los puestos. Pero si quiere decir la libertad para la organización para endosar a esos candidatos que se muestran extraordinarios en sus posiciones a favor de inquilinos.

En los últimos varios meses Met Council ha funcionado como parte de la coalición para derrotar a Koch (City Wide Coalition to Defeat Koch in '81). Este grupo es de organizaciones más representantes de las masas del pueblo que la última coalición que se identificaba con Ted Kheel y que recientemente se desmanteló. Hasta la fecha de este artículo una posibilidad que sobresale es que el asambleísta Frank Barbaro de Bensonhurst Brooklyn se declare candidato par correr en contra de Koch. Por muchos años un activista para inquilinos y un abogado, Frank Barbaro ha sido por muchos años un aliado de Met Council y del movimiento de inquilinos en general. La junta ejecutiva de Met Council ultimamente le estimuló a que corriera. Una declaración de su decisión se espera pronto.

La ciudad de Nueva York esta miserable. Neoyorquinos están sufriendo todas las enfermedades que resultan cuando una ciudad es controlada por los bancos y los caseros. Met Council esta realmente "metido en la política." No puede ser de otra manera.

## Ciudad le da espalda a las promesas a los inquilinos "in rem"

Los planes de la ciudad para los edificios "in rem" no pueden estar más claro. Hay dos alternativas finales, venderlos o demolerlos, dijo el Comisionado de Viviendas Anthony Gleidman. Esto se saca del periódico el N.Y. Times del 4 de abril 1981.

Lo que los inquilinos en estos edificios han sabido todo el tiempo ahora fué hecho público. Como resultado de ésta póliza la ciudad está gastando casi nada para hacer reparaciones y dar servicios en estos edificios. Es mas, el diputado comisionado Emimicke en el mismo artículo del Times se las echa de que la ciudad gasto 11 millones de dolares menos de lo que esperaban gastar.

### Comisionado ignora a los inquilinos

Para inquilinos en los edificios "in rem" esto quiere decir que van a tener más días sin calefacción, con goteras de agua del techo, ascensores que no funcionan y problemas eléctricos y de plomería. Aunque la ciudad a hecho muchas promesas a través de los últimos dos años, no ha hecho nada para cumplir con esas promesas. Tom Granger, co-presidente del Riverside Edgcombe Neighborhood Association (RENA) y presidente del comité "in rem" de

Met Council junto con la presidenta de Met Council Jané Benedict, han tratado de obtener una cita muchas veces con Eimicke para recordarle de las promesas y para empujar las demandas de los inquilinos. Eimicke, quien es el encargado de los edificios de la ciudad para el departamento de H.P.D. ha ignorado las llamadas telefónicas y las cartas que se les ha enviado.

### Llaman policía

A principios de abril una delegación de como 40 inquilinos "in rem," con líderes de RENA y Met Council y del Chelsea Coalition on Housing, fueron a las oficinas centrales del comisionado para demandar ver a Eimicke. El rehusó reunirse con el grupo y en vez llamó a la policía. Después de una hora de cantos y gritos el grupo se fué

Está claro que los inquilinos "in rem" van a tener que tomar más acción para ganar las reparaciones y salvar sus hogares. Esta pregunta encabezera la proxima agenda del comite timon "in rem."

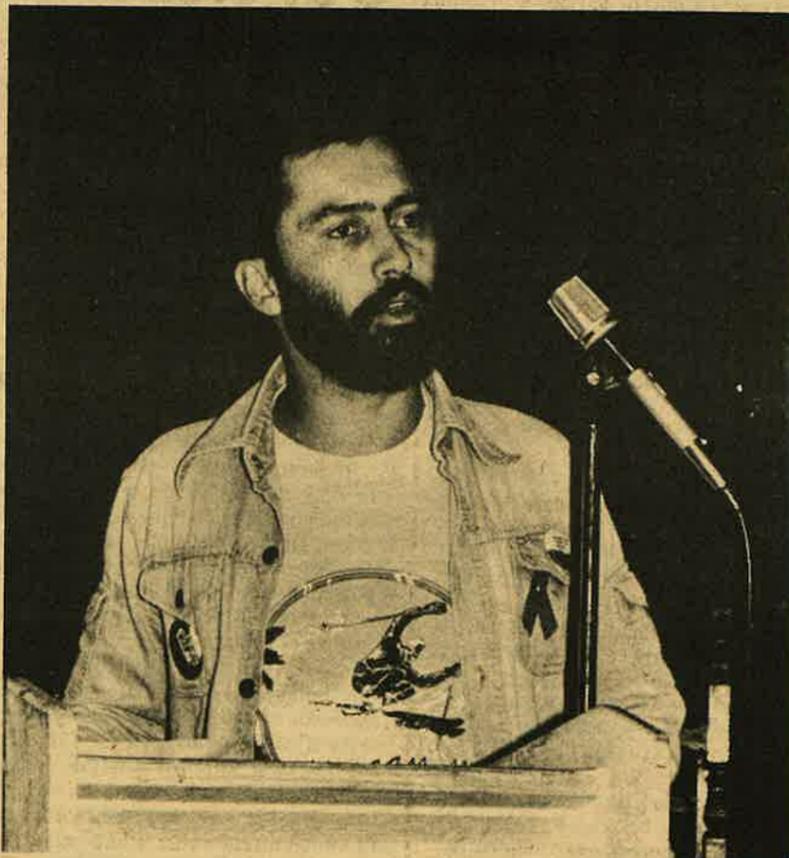
—por Steve Shreefter  
traducido por Roberto Marrero

## Escuche Latino

Esto es una llamada especial par el pueblo Latino a que se envuelva en la lucha par psar el proyecto de ley Flynn-Dearie. El 27 de mayo, que es un miércoles, vamos todos a Albany, el capitorio, par mostrar nuestra presencia a los legisladores y a obligarlos a que voten a favor del proyecto Flynn-Dearie. Met Council va anualmente a Albany con el mismo propósito de luchar par leyes más justas par los inquilinos. Esto año, otra vez, es para luchar par Flynn-Dearie que eliminará los aumentos automáticos.

Si desean ir a Albany con Met Council llamen al 598-4900 y pida la información necesaria. El viaje costará \$13.00 ida y vuelta. Van a haber algunas contribuciones par aquellos quienes no pueden pagar el viaje completo.

También le suplicamos al pueblo latino a que se inscriban a votar y que voten en las próximas elecciones. El alcalde Koch se mostrado varias veces estar en contra de los hispanos y los negros y en contra de toda persona pobre. Se a declarado una campaña para derrotarlo y se ha dicho que el voto hispano y negro puede hacer la diferencia.



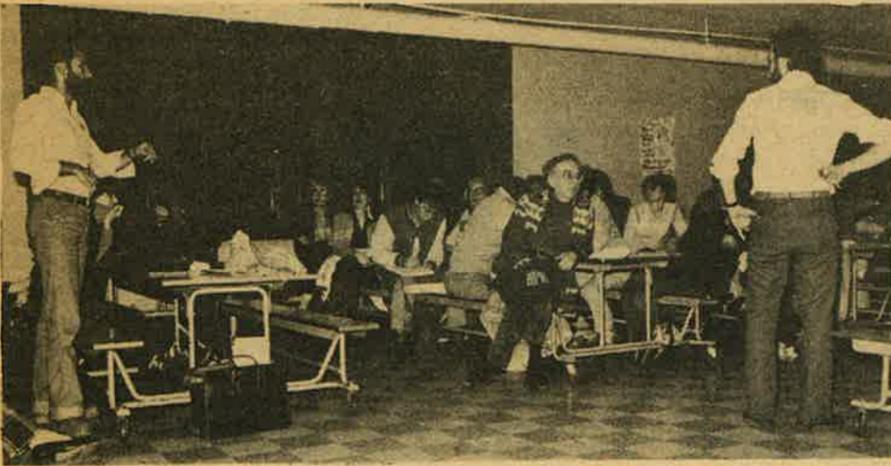
Roberto Marrero, organizador de Met Council del Bronx, en la reunión de estrategia de las huelgas de renta a nivel de la ciudad el 4 de abril dijo "Una de nuestras más grande problemas es el marullo de conversiones." Vea página 1.

Hacia a Albany  
el 27 de mayo  
Guarde la fecha

Photo by Becker Logan



## Branch holds lively meeting Organizing on the West Side



"One of our biggest problems is the tidal wave of coop conversions," said Bronx Branch coordinator Bob Marrero.

*Una de nuestras más grande problemas es el marullo de conversiones a cooperativas dijo Roberto Marrero.*

Close to a hundred west siders turned out for a special meeting of the West Side Branch of Met Council on April 9th at St. Gregory's Church on West 90th Street.

### Tenants support each other

Faced with mounting coop conversions, rehabilitation and gentrification, west siders are organizing to fight back. "We need to think beyond the leaks in our own apartments," said Dan Guenzburger, coordinator of the West Side Branch, as he opened the meeting. "In my experience on the West Side, I see a new feeling among tenants. Tenants are organizing rent strikes to support each other, in all kinds of demands. We need a new kind of consciousness, that will look to larger issues, such as lobbying in Albany for passage of the Flynn-Dearie Bill."

### Promises unkept

Bill Price of the United Tenants Association spoke out of his long experience as a tenant activist in the West Side urban renewal area. He is now working to hold the city to its original promise of 2,500 units of low-income housing in that 20-square-block area. "It affects everybody. If you don't have enough low-income housing, there is tremendous pressure from below which ends up raising everybody's rent." He told



Dan Guenzburger, West Side Branch coordinator, led the meeting. "We've heard a lot about 'master plans'—the one thing the masters can't plan is the response of the people!"

*Danny Guenzburger, coordinador de la rama West Side. Hemos oído mucho de planes maestros—la única cosa que los maestros no pueden planea es la respuesta del pueblo.*

of a current plan for the Penn Yards, the area south of 72nd Street which is the largest single section of undeveloped land in Manhattan—62 acres of prime waterfront real estate. An Argentine developer is pushing in Community Board 7 for luxury high rise coops whose cheapest apartment would cost \$150,000. "It's usual to talk price per room—this guy is talking price per square foot—\$200!"

### Why is it happening?

Price laid out some of the reasons why rents are skyrocketing and people driven from their homes: the city's "master plan" of 1969 announced, "We are going to encourage the development of a central city that will serve the multi-national conglomerates." Smaller industries would be driven out along with their work forces and housing would suit the new, "elite" work force, with its higher salaries. "There are those who say if you don't function under this new economic base, you can't live here."

He spoke of a new, more subtle form of racism coming out of university research centers in the form of sophisticated analyses of population changes. A concept of the "tipping point" developed—the point at which a certain number of Blacks moving into a neighborhood would supposedly "drive out" the whites. (It is usually put at 30%.) Trinity Church School and a group of luxury brownstone owners called CONTINUE used this falsely sanctified "tipping point" in their suit against the construction of long-planned low-income housing on site

## Fighting Coop and Condomania

1980—Mayor Koch kills all legislation drafted to protect those unwilling to fork their life savings over to a coopmaniac landlord; he says coop conversion is good for New York City.

1981—Governor Carey marries the Coop/Condo Queen of the nation, the former Evangeline Gouletas of American Invsco; he says there would be no conflict of interest in the event of legislation relating to coop conversion.

If the coop craze hasn't already spread to your neighborhood, and if Koch and Carey (Mrs.) have their way, it will.

If you won't buy because you have watched your building deteriorate without a hint of concern from the landlord or the city...if you cannot afford to buy or don't wish to cause the eviction of others...if you never had dreams of becoming a real estate entrepreneur—then let your legislators know you want them to join the growing number of those who know that there have to be changes...

One of the major issues of our annual Tenant Lobby to Albany will be protection



Bill Price, long-time housing activist, told a West Side Branch meeting of the city's "master plan" to serve only the "elite."

*Bill Price, activista por muchos años, le dijo a una reunión de la rama del West Side que el plan maestro de la ciudad es para servirles solamente a los selectos.*

30 in the urban renewal area. (They lost—but the city is still dragging its feet.)

Dan Guenzburger commented, "We've heard a lot about 'master plans'—the one thing the masters can't plan is the response of the people!"

### The movement grows

Roberto Marrero, Met Council vice-chairman and Bronx Branch coordinator, pointed out that tenants are organizing all over the country and that the movement itself has become nation-wide, with the formation of a National Tenants Union last June. "Some 200 municipalities across the country have rent control legislation."

Marrero spoke of the rampant greed of the real estate industry and the need to work for passage of the Flynn-Dearie Rent Protection Act. "When they talk about improving the quality of life in a neighborhood, they are really talking about raising the value of real estate...Every landlord gets his huge yearly increases automatically, not because he needs them. This is a reckless way to treat such a precious human commodity—which should be considered a *human right*. Flynn-Dearie would only allow a maximum increase of 5% in any one year, and landlords would have to open their books to get it."

A lively discussion followed. Many joined the Political Community Committee of the West Side Branch. Tenants went out with renewed determination to fight "the masters' plan" for the destruction of their homes and their neighborhoods.

—by Phyllis Tower

## P.O.W.E.R.

In a showing of united action, over 100 representatives of business, labor and community groups met with City Comptroller Harrison Goldin, Consumer Commissioner Bruce Ratner and Westchester County Executive Alfred Del Bello to announce they were seeking a "rollback on Con Edison's shocking new rate hike." This meeting was planned as the opening salvo of a campaign against the increase.

They presented a petition for reconsideration of the \$449.5 million increase that the Public Service Commission (PSC) granted the utility effective March 21, 1981 and announced that if their efforts failed they would seek court action.

The 47-page document, "Petition for Reconsideration of PSC Opinion on Behalf of the City of New York," lists reasons why the increase should not be granted. It includes the charge that the current rate is "already by far the highest in the nation," and that the "unprecedented rate increase" flies in the face of the commission's statutory mandate "to act in the public interest and to set just and reasonable rates."

Met Council On Housing was represented by Susan Radosh and Bert Rovics of Met Council's Energy Committee.

—by Bert Rovics

## It's easy to evict: a coop story

Reports on the current rash of coop conversion in the New York area seldom emphasize an aspect of this phenomenon which could have serious consequences for many people.

Last week, a judgment was issued against me by Judge Maurice Harbater of Queens Housing Court, taking my home away from me. This, at a time of an acute housing crisis—a judgment which will have for me, a single parent struggling to provide a decent life for my child and myself, a totally devastating financial impact. I will be thrown out to face the tightest real estate market since World War II.

### Easy to evict

A recent article in the *New York Times* on evictions from coops stated that judges are usually protective of the individual shareholder. Yet David Clurman, in his book "Condominiums & Cooperatives" talks about the relative ease of eviction enjoyed by shareholders in a coop. In other words, if you get into a building where the other shareholders decide, for example, that they don't like the color of your eyes or the shape of your nose, (if they were gracious enough to let you buy into the building in the first place) it is *easy* to divest you of your property—regardless of the extent of your investment in the apartment itself or in the premises. All that is needed—especially in a small coop of ten apartments like mine—is for the "cooperators" to get together to conspire against one.

In addition, it is possible to suffer a degree of censure and scrutiny within the confines of the cooperative that not even the inmates of houses of detention are subjected to.

Then, all that is necessary to put you on the street is for a bunch of your fellow "members of the Board of Directors" to vilify you and your child and swear to false charges under oath. Any evidence you may have to cast doubts on their credibility will have no effect. They say you are undesirable; ipso facto, you become undesirable.

Then there is the final irony: You are assessed for, and must pay, your *pro rata* share of the lawyer's fee to prosecute your eviction.

We need to add these facts to the cooping story. Cooping means not only the exclusion of many people in lower income groups, minorities, single mothers, etc. (a gross circumvention of the anti-discrimination laws in housing); it also involves the crime of arbitrary eviction. Anyone having similar experiences, either involving an initial rejection, or persecution once you are in a coop, please share these with me. You can write to me c/o Met Council, 137 5th Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010. My appeal is pending.

—by June Levine

—by Claudia Mansbach

## Activists fight racism in Park Slope

Those in the Park Slope community in Brooklyn who are fighting to preserve the character of their neighborhood were heartened by a recent decision in favor of low and middle income tenants. The story began like this:

"We are surfeited with subsidized housing developments in our area. . . . The tremendous fall-out from compacted subsidized housing, *just in terms of crime*, affects us all. . . . Concentrated subsidized housing does destroy neighborhoods. . . . We should not be used as a dumping-ground for misguided federal policies. . . ."

### Attack on Section 8

10,000 copies of an open letter containing these statements were distributed last Thanksgiving to residents of Park Slope, one of the 'brownstone' areas of Brooklyn. The letter, which was characterized by Mark Rosenberg of the Anti-displacement Committee as "implying subsidized housing brings crime" and as "terribly racist," brought to a peak the conflict over housing in the area. The Park Slope Improvement Committee (PSIC), author of the letter, attacked the Fifth Avenue Committee's policies (FAC) of "sponsoring massive Section 8 housing (federally subsidized low-income housing) in our community." FAC, a community development organization, is supporting the revitalization of the commercial area of Fifth Avenue as well as fighting the displacement of low and middle income tenants from their homes in Park Slope.

### Displacement rampant

Park Slope is characteristic of many communities in the metropolitan area divided by the housing crisis and the gentrification movement. Renovation of brownstones has contributed to a rapid increase in property

the reasons I wanted to live here are because the area is racially and economically integrated." A resident of a nearby housing project complained angrily, "I don't mug people and I live in a project."

The Fifth Avenue Committee in the December 4th issue of the *Phoenix*, a Brooklyn newspaper, claimed that the Improvement Committee letter had "so much misinformation that we felt compelled to . . . call for the resignation of members of the PSIC who hold responsible positions in Community Board 6." The FAC explains that it is sponsoring rehabilitation of owner-occupied buildings with rental units for people who require subsidies in order to remain in the community. Their program will construct new homes and rehabilitate abandoned three and four story properties and turn them into privately owned and occupied homes with subsidized rentals for families who earn under \$19,000 a year.

Supporters of the Fifth Avenue Committee point to PSIC's deliberate attempts to malign these plans which are to assist working people.

### Board notes for tenants

The conflict has ended with a decision for tenants. Despite the activity of the Improvement Committee, Community Board 6 at its most recent meeting voted unanimously to approve a Section 8, moderate rehab program for three city-owned buildings with a total of 48 units on Sterling Place. (A moderate rehab program is one in which renovation goes on without the tenants having to be moved out.) The 39 tenants presently living in the building, primarily Black and Hispanic low-income working people, are guaranteed 15 years of rent subsidies which will enable them to pay the higher rents of the renovated apartments. The city-owned buildings will be

## On the Mitchell-Lama Front

Looking at Coney Island Mitchell-Lama housing from the outside, one sees massive high-rise buildings of every possible architectural design. From 400 to over 800 families live in each of these complexes. They are pictorial food for the newspaper propaganda mills: "See, Americans *can* build decent housing—better than the communists."

### A Paradise lost

Inside one of these 25-story buildings, one finds this "Paradise Promised" to be a grand-scale Paradise Lost: intercoms out of order; only two elevators for each building; one elevator usually out of order, the other one slowly rising or descending every half hour; corridors exposed to the open air at each level.

The typical apartment is an inverted duplex, which one enters by the kitchen/dining room. Beyond that, in the small 10' x 10' living room and even smaller bedrooms, one finds neither storm windows to counteract the -20° Coney Island winter wind chill factor, nor screens to protect tenants against summer insects (unless they pay for them).

### Catching the hot water

Inconveniences and hazards of all varieties are the lot of Mitchell-Lama residents. One must calculate when to bathe or wash dishes so as to catch the hot water. Many buildings are overrun with roaches and mice. At any given moment, the plastic hot water pipes may burst and flood your apartment. Some of these so-called luxury buildings have an electrical heating system with unfused aluminum wiring. Result: circuit overloads and flash fires.



values in general; \$200,000 for a brownstone or \$70,000 for a coop is not unusual. Since buildings of less than six units are not subject to rent stabilization laws, the uncontrolled rise in rents has already driven many long time residents from their homes.

The confrontation between PSIC and FAC has been focused on plans for the development of the Baltic Street lot. The Improvement Committee is backing a plan for a large supermarket on the site while the Fifth Avenue Committee is urging a mixture of subsidized housing and commercial use. What is in question, however, is the composition and direction of the entire neighborhood.

### Affordable housing

Many brownstone owners support the actions of the Fifth Avenue Committee to keep Park Slope an ethnically and economically diverse community through subsidized housing. "We are trying to stabilize the neighborhood and provide affordable housing to the people that still live here," says Rebecca Reich, development director for the FAC. One brownstone owner stated at a public meeting called by FAC in response to the letter that "some of

turned over to a private developer who will receive generous tax advantages.

Community activists consider this a victory of a sort: the Board voted unanimously against the racism inherent in the attacks on subsidized housing, and working class tenants are being allowed to remain in their homes. Activists point out that the Board was compelled to support the tenants because housing and other groups organized in defense of low and moderate income working people.

Although Sterling Place tenants were not displaced, the program that enabled them to stay has many defects. Section 8 subsidies will never be available for *all* low and moderate income tenants, especially with Reagan's budget ax overhead. Landlords are rewarded for deliberately letting buildings run down so they and their cronies can get huge bonuses through the "market rent" levels of Section 8 and other unnecessary incentive programs. While landlords won't prove they really need this money, we the hardworking taxpayers foot the bill! Only organizing and the preventive medicine of tenant action will keep buildings from decline and the character of neighborhoods from being destroyed.

—by Constance Pohl

**"In every instance, landlords made cosmetic repairs but ignored more basic items such as apartment flooding and lack of heat and hot water."**

### Tenants fight back

Because of these conditions many tenants have gone on rent strike. Over the last four years, rent strikes have taken place at Ocean Towers (Surf Avenue and West 24th Street), Seapark East (Surf Avenue and West 27th Street) and Sea Rise (Neptune Avenue and West 33rd Street). City housing inspectors have refused to investigate these buildings because they were built by the Urban Development Corporation (UDC). UDC was a special New York State Agency deliberately created to circumvent the New York City building code and to allow builders to build houses according to New York State's less exacting standards.

### Rent strike results

Each of these rent strikes lasted from over six months to a year. Usually, they were settled by some agreed-upon stipulation, which either gave the tenants a hefty rent rebate (Ocean Towers), appointed tenant organizations as 7A administrators (Sea Park East), or elicited promises from the landlords to make major repairs (Sea Rise).

In every instance, landlords made cosmetic repairs but ignored more basic items such as apartment flooding and lack of heat and hot water. Backed by the State Division of Housing and the New York City Housing Court, these landlords felt secure in the knowledge that tenants would exhaust themselves by going countless times to court and depleting their finances on legal fees and time lost from work.

### The fight goes on

It therefore must have come as quite a shock to Grenadier Realty Corporation, one of the biggest fronts for Starrett and Eaken (the main builders and landlords in Coney Island) when the Sea Rise tenants put up a major fight against the landlord's recent rent increase petition. This petition, addressed to the State Division of Housing, had the temerity to ask for a rent increase of \$26 per room, retroactive to January 1, 1981, because the landlord claimed that he hadn't made a yearly 6% profit on his equity contribution.

Some 40 to 50 tenants spoke at the rent increase hearing on April 3, 1981. They presented hundreds of petitions and letters from tenants who could not attend and testified that Starrett and Eaken had in fact abused the intent of their section 236 builders' subsidy by not providing safe and adequate housing.

### How 236 works

Under a federal section 236 builders subsidy, a landlord puts up about \$1 million out of a total construction cost of \$17 million. The balance of the funds are financed by New York State bonds. The Fed pays for a portion of these bonds plus a monthly subsidy to cover the interest on these bonds that equal 45% to 50% of the "fair market" room rentals. Accordingly, an apartment that would have a "fair market" rental of \$700 per month would rent to qualifying tenants for about \$370 per month. At the time of the landlord's rent increase application, the Section 236 real rents at Sea Rise were at about \$68 per room.

### What happened to the money?

With the help of Met Council, the following facts were uncovered at the hearings:

In one year's collection of actual rents, Starrett and Eaken recovered their original equity contributions. Their profits had been hidden under such items as rapid depreciation on housing structures, unrealized amortization of bonds, and exorbitant management fees paid to the major general partners Starrett and Eaken (anywhere from \$89,000 to \$100,000 per year for each of their three Coney Island housing companies). The landlords, in constructing the buildings, had been motivated not by the intent of the Mitchell-Lama law and the Federal 236 subsidy—i.e., to provide decent housing for low and moderate income families—but by a desire to milk maximum profits from both tenants and tax payers.

### The racist edge

The majority of families living in these apartments are working class Black people. The deliberate and calculated deterioration of these buildings therefore takes on a racist edge because these families were lured out to Coney Island with a promise of affordable moderate income housing, only to find that they were paying good money for inferior accommodations. Starrett and Eaken are also the builders and landlords of Starrett City. While they keep mostly white middle class Starrett City in fairly good shape, they let the Coney Island buildings fall apart.

—by Emil Shaw



for further information write or call:

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ON HOUSING**  
24 WEST 30 STREET, NEW YORK 10001  
TEL: 725-4800 1:30pm to 6pm Monday thru Friday

# Met Council All Around the Town

## BAY RIDGE

Though Bay Ridge coopmania is still in its early stages, residents are already up in arms. A record crowd attended Met Council organizer Claudia Mansbach's talk on the dangers of cooping. Those attending, mostly senior citizens, were worried about having to pay up or leave the area they'd lived in for years. Many were relieved to learn about senior citizen eviction exemptions for those over 62, with an annual income under \$50,000.

Even so, the best protection is, as ever, *stick together*. The landlord only needs 35% resident approval (excluding the elderly) to start conversion plans.

Mention of Mayor Koch aroused a lot of richly deserved audience hostility. It's vital that tenants vote in this year's mayoralty election. A resounding defeat of Koch (renowned for his statement, "If you can't afford it, move!") may serve as a warning to other tenants' rights abusers, such as Governor Carey, Bay Ridge Councilman Arculeo, Assemblymembers DiCarlo and Sullivan, and Senator Mega. We apartment dwellers have great political strength; we have to remind our so-called representatives of that fact.

After enduring a cold winter, three-quarters of 580 84th Street's 72 residents held their first meeting. To begin with, they have submitted a petition to the landlord demanding heat, hot water, and a locking front door. Elsewhere, at 510 80th Street, rent controlled tenants are withholding rents until essential services are restored.

—by Claudia Mansbach

## CROWN HEIGHTS

The dates and places have changed, but the situations and concepts remain unchanged. Working people's rights are being disregarded.

Some of the tenants of 753 Classon Avenue, a building owned by Jewish Hospital of Brooklyn Housing Company, have their rents taken out of their wages before they are paid.

The 753 Classon Avenue tenants, under the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), have been hit with a 46% rent increase, to be paid over the next two years. Jewish Hospital of Brooklyn placed before the UDC an application asking for a two-step increase. They were handed the increase on a platter. The hearings, held at the World Trade Center, were decided in favor of the hospital. This is a clear example of how tenants are taken advantage of. The tenants presented figures and facts proving that management's figures were way out of line. The projected budget for 1981-82 was far too high. UDC totally ignored the tenants' opposition. This blatant example is being used all over Brooklyn as well as the other boroughs.

In order to get an apartment, some of the tenants had to sign an agreement with the hospital that their rent would be deducted from their weekly salary. This is a clear violation of tenants' rights and we are fighting to have this changed.

The tenants are putting up a gallant fight under the leadership of Mrs. Clark, president of the tenants association.

At 100 Lefferts Avenue the tenants received an order from the Rent Commissioner stating that they had been overcharged in rent for 1974, 1975 and 1976 because of violations. They proceeded to go to court to collect. These tenants have been given the runaround. They have a letter stating that if the landlord did not pay in a specified time, they could proceed to collect triple damages. To evade this, the landlord has filed an Article 78 in Supreme Court, trying to block their collection order. Mrs. Dorothy Jefferies and her committee are in the fight to the finish to get what is legally theirs.

—by Helen Cousin

## EAST SIDE

Tenants at 317-319 West 11th Street have had nothing but misery since their building was taken over by landlord Ray Meyerson last spring. At first he didn't want to make any repairs or collect the rent. Now the situation has changed. He wants the rent.

He has called tenants at all hours of the day and night, threatened evictions, and when he has done repairs for the rent striking tenants, they have either been shoddy or, in some cases, made things worse. In addition to an ongoing harassment complaint at the rent office, the tenants are preparing to picket Meyerson's home and begin using some of their rent money to do repairs right.

At 111 St. Marks Place, the tenants have just passed their first anniversary of rent strike. They bought oil and kept the boiler going all winter and are now working on structural repairs to termite infested beams in the basement. At first, they were told by the landlord's agent Walter Wouk, "No rent money, no repairs." Apparently their tenants' determination not to knuckle under and to use rent money to make repairs themselves has changed that tune.

Tenants at 104 East 4th Street are celebrating a victory in their five-month rent strike. Their landlord was forced to comply with all their demands. They got a one-month abatement of rent and were given credit for rent monies they had used for repairs.

In what has to be one of the longest current strikes in Met Council, the tenants of 362-366 Broome Street are nearing the 2½ year mark. With more than \$100,000 of rent money spent for repairs and services by the tenants, they should be proud of what they've accomplished. Special congratulations are in order for tenant leaders Helen Agro and Flo Jacobelli, who have handled the lion's share of the work.

P.J. Feldstein & Co., Inc. Do they or don't they own the building? That's a question the tenants of 87 Christopher Street would like answered before they consider paying rent. Seems Feldstein lost the building on a mortgage foreclosure. Now they say the foreclosure has been cancelled and they own it again. Tune in next month for the next thrilling episode.

Tenants of 31 St. Marks Place intend to use their rent for repairs that have been long neglected. The landlord is trying to sell, but the rent strike posters in the windows have discouraged the prospective buyer to the point that he will not take possession of the building unless the strike is settled.

## FLATBUSH

The tenants of 135 Ocean Avenue are faced with two broken down boilers, a broken elevator, and leaks in the hallways and most apartments due to a rotten roof. Yet this landlord has applied for an Article 8-A loan, which would entitle him to raise the rents, collect a low-interest loan from the city (with our tax dollars), and get a tax abatement for the next nine years. The tenants have organized and are ready to mount their offensive. First, the tenants association drew up a list of demands for the landlord, and then they made an appointment with the head of the Article 8-A program at the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development. Tenants association representatives demanded that the city refuse the loan, since this landlord has allowed the building to deteriorate to such an extent, even after rent strikes. If Mr. Zissman wanted to make the repairs so badly, he should dig into his pockets (profits) and take the money from there. But of course, a landlord can get money from the city, a tax abatement and rent increases, and not take a dime out of his own pocket. The tenants stand resolved not to pay a dime in increases, and maybe no rent at all if the city gives Zissman the loan.

At 66 St. Pauls Place the tenants organization is facing a Participation Loan program and massive need for repairs on their plumbing system. The loan is being doled out by the Flatbush Development Corporation and the city, but the tenants

plan to fight for the repairs and against the rent increase that will accompany any loan. The tenants association has already met once with the landlord. The Association also plans to meet with the Flatbush Development Corporation to express its surprise that such a delinquent and destructive landlord would be given money and tax abatements and also rent increases, and it will meet again with the landlord to inform him of tenant demands and a possible impending rent strike.

2701 Newkirk Avenue went on a rent strike last fall and winter, and consequently the landlord was forced to make repairs to the boiler system and to keep up the building generally. During the rent strike, the landlord replaced a bell and buzzer system, which did not work, with an intercom system which only half works. JRD Management, the landlord, has now applied for rent increases for that intercom system and for "locked" front doors which the building still does not have. The tenants have responded to the Conciliation and Appeals Board notices and will refuse to pay any rent increases.

—by Susan Radosh

## HARLEM

Tenants at 19 West 128th Street have been on a rent strike for about a year because of poor conditions in their building and their apartments. Although they sent the managing agent a list of all needed repairs, the only answer they received was dispossesses. When they appeared in court, it was discovered that the managing agent had no legal authority in the building and therefore no right to send out the dispossesses. The judge adjourned the case in order to give the agent time to supply the court with papers which would prove that she was indeed the managing agent as she claimed. On the date that they were scheduled to return to court, the agent did not show up and an angry judge said the agent was to be fined for contempt of court.

From that day until this, no one has come forward to take responsibility for this building. The tenants have been using all the rent money to make necessary repairs in the building, although the judge is still holding jurisdiction over this building due to its poor condition. The judge ordered a

cellar to roof inspection and the inspector reported that the foundation is solid but in need of repair. The tenants are continuing to use the rent money for repairs until the judge decides what is to be done with this building.

Tenants at 90-100 Convent Avenue have been on a rent strike for three years or more. They have been to court several times. The landlord has promised to make repairs after which the tenants would in turn pay him some money. The landlord, however, only made cosmetic repairs. The last time they were in court, the tenants received a written agreement authorized by the judge stating that if the landlord did not make the repairs as specified, the tenants would not be required to pay the rent.

When the landlord did not make the repairs, the tenants did not pay the rent, exactly as stipulated in the signed agreement approved by the judge. Yet the landlord proceeded to send 72-hour eviction notices to the tenants, despite the agreement.

The tenants received the eviction notices on March 26. On March 27, while they were in court getting a "show cause" order, the landlord arrived at the building with the marshal to evict the two tenants. The tenants returned home with the show cause order signed by the judge, the landlord's attorney and the marshal—only to find they were supposedly already evicted! They stood firm and refused to leave their apartments.

The two tenants returned to court on their appointed day and told the judge their story. At the hearing, the landlord's lawyer argued that the tenants had been evicted legally. The judge asked that the attorney submit in writing an account of this incident. Until then, he will not make a decision.

The tenants remain in their apartments. The landlord has harassed them in numerous ways, including turning off their electricity. When the tenants called the police, the police told the landlord that since he did not pay Con Ed, he had no right to turn off the lights, and ordered him to turn on the lights immediately. The tenants have vowed not to leave their apartments, pointing out that the landlord had no right to remove their furniture when they had a show cause order still to be heard.

—by Bess Stevenson  
(continued on page 7)



Photo by Becket Logan

A sewage leak which for six months streamed down hall walls and formed foul-smelling pools in the basement finally forced the tenants of 341 East 10th Street out on rent strike in January. Tenant Steven Watt reports that it took the landlord several tries to get it right, but that at last the leak is fixed. (After one 'repair job' the tenants discovered that the landlord had just built a trough to channel the sewage off into the basement). The landlord, Howard Buck, owns the entire block of buildings from 335 to Avenue B and several more around the corner on Avenue B. He is also the landlord of 131 Avenue B where, the Village Voice reports, tenants have been without heat or services and had several suspicious fires all in an apparent attempt to force them out. With so many other unhappy tenants in the neighborhood, Watt says the tenants at 341 East 10th Street believe Buck may want the Met Council Rent Strike posters out of their windows even more desperately than he wants their rent money. The tenants, however, are holding out for more repairs including something which will be a first for the building—an intercom system.

## Rent Strike/ from 1

reduction in rent for all tenants in New York City. The high rents which siphon off money that should be spent on medical care, clothing, and even food pose a threat to the safety and very health of tenants.

2. We demand a halt to co-op and condominium conversions in New York City as well as a halt to conversions of garden apartments to one and two-family homes. This process is squeezing an already almost non-existent rental housing market.

3. We demand an end to the J-51 and other landlord subsidies that are used against hotel occupants, rooming house occupants and tenants in apartments who are harassed out for "rehab," high rents, and huge profits.

4. We demand that the mayor instruct district attorneys to convene grand juries to prosecute landlords who withhold heat, hot water, and other essential services for criminal negligence and homicide if the tenant dies from lack of services. We demand this in addition to appropriate jailing of landlords in Housing Court where the withholding of services merits it.

5. We demand the necessary financial and practical assistance from the city for *in rem* tenants to run their own buildings under decent living conditions.

6. We demand the passage of the Flynn-Dearie Rent Protection Act, a bill in the state legislature to stop across-the-board increases and passalongs. If enacted, this bill would be a one-system set of controls to cover tenants presently under both rent control and rent stabilization.

### Next steps

Claudia Mansbach, Met Council organizer from Park Slope and Bay Ridge, suggested that the next meeting be widely publicized, include building leaders and address what concrete steps to take next. "Tenant leaders and activists spend their energy at buildings and in meetings. One thing we must do is train the people we work with to go to the building next door."

## Branches/ from 6 MIDTOWN

The tenants of 144 East 24th Street have learned the art of taking the offensive against their notorious landlord, Morris Booke, well known to Met Council and the Village Voice which characterized him as one of the 10 "meanest landlords" in New York City.

After successfully defeating a coop conversion scheme which forced the landlord to withdraw his phony plan, the tenants, led by chairman Don Gabler, organized a rent strike in response to the general deteriorating conditions and services in the building. The question of security plus no super in the building are priority items in the overall demands made by the strikers.

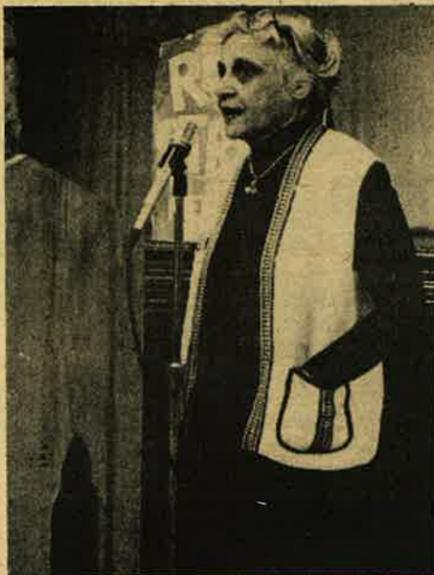
Their Met Council organizer proposed a strategy meeting, which took place at the building on April 15th, to map out an all-out attack on landlord Booke. The attorney who won the tenants' case against coop conversion continues to be retained and was also present at the meeting. The tenants are considering a suggestion to seek further publicity to get their landlord in the public eye once again.

When A.J. Clarke took over the management of 207-9 East 33rd Street, a number of tenants found dispossess proceedings being brought against them. These court actions were based on the claims by the landlord that back rents already paid were not enough. The building had changed hands and A.J. Clarke, in going over back records, managed to conjure up amounts that had no relation to reality. So the tenants got together, came to Met Council and joined. They refused to panic. They went to court together and with the help in court of organizer Bess Stevenson, the back rent claims were withdrawn. Yes, it pays to organize!

—by Jane Benedict  
and Irene Kohn

## PARK SLOPE

HOW does a six-unit building get classified as five units? And how could six tenants lose the (meager) protection of rent stabilization? Only because tenants hadn't fought for their rights. When Landlord Lee Adler took over 176 Clinton Avenue in Clinton Hill, at will he raised rents when he felt like it and categorized apartments as a



Jane Benedict, Met Council chairwoman, said at the strategy meeting that rent strike is far more than the defensive weapon of tenants on the point of death.

*Jane Benedict, presidenta de Met Council, dijo en la reunión de estrategias de las huelgas de renta, que las huelgas son mucho más que una arma de defensa de los inquilinos quienes están a punto de muerte.*

Jane Benedict wrapped it all up, in place of Assemblyman Frank Barbaro, who was unavoidably kept in Albany. "The world sees the rent strike as the defensive weapon of tenants at the point of death. It is far more than that... It is true that the odds against us look overwhelming. There are people paying 50% of their income for rent. Our Mayor is racist, anti-tenant, pro-banking and pro-landlord. But if you are organizing to build a movement, you are not losing. Where people will organize and fight, you're on the winning side!"

—by Phyllis Tower

"writing studio" or as commercial, uncontrolled space (with refrigerator). The tenants were previously unaware of their rights and are now waging battle against their landlord. He is trying every court proceeding in the book which will all be thrown out because the landlord has not registered with the Rent Stabilization Association. A recent visit by a fire inspector meant by the landlord to prove the top floor apartment illegal found only an illegal entrance door which blocks a fire exit. Tenants are owed a few thousand dollars in overcharges, and will not be scared by the "For Sale" sign or Adler's other forms of harassment.

Landlady Carolyn Anger has refused to acknowledge the rent strike at 453 3rd Street. Tenants have withheld rent since March, partly because of a frigid winter. Mysteriously, in April a new owner (one of three) appeared without notice, ready to tear up a bathroom which has needed plumbing, plastering and painting work for years and at the same time offering \$500 for the tenant to get out—the landlords are saying they want it and two other apartments for their own use. Tenants, led by Peter Cortes, are determined to uncover the schemes of all their landlords. They have lived without heat, extermination service, properly working mailboxes, security (front door) and individual repairs too long.

Right across the street, on the block which local entrepreneurs and coop crazies are plotting the future of, is 462 3rd Street. The new members of Met Council seek to stay in their homes though landlord Peter Allen is doing everything to get them out. A winter with almost no heat was bad enough; then the radiators burst during a week of heat wave and flooded the floors and wet the walls. The landlord responded to a complaining tenant, "If it's an emergency, have it in the hospital." The remaining tenants in this grand old building are not going anywhere—not only is there nowhere to go, but they are tired of being pushed around.

Harassment with intent to empty—for coop or unnecessary renovation—is an altogether too familiar story in Park Slope now being repeated at 840 Union Street. In a year's time landlord O'Brien has forced out five tenants in the eight-apartment building. Tenants spent all their rent money on fuel last winter and are still struggling with the Rent Office and Housing Court to get what it takes to make it through next winter.

## Landlord of the Month

Once upon a time, in a quiet section of Bay Ridge, some native Brooklynites were living peacefully and enjoying their apartments. They even referred to their apartments as their homes. All was going well with this group for years and years, in some cases up to and beyond twenty years.

One day, their lives were disrupted by a man who purchased their building, sight unseen, for his own greedy financial gains. Now these tenants did not mind the change of hands, until the day in October when it was suddenly very cold and they found they had no heat or no hot water. They realized oil was expensive and that some burners can run dry and boy had they run dry! For days at a time, throughout October, these tenants went without heat and hot water. Then they received a notice from Con Edison stating that the hallway lights and the electricity to the oil burner would be turned off because of non-payment of bills. They were also alarmed to find that the landlord owed a certain oil company several thousand dollars; that was the real reason there was no heat—they had been told the burner was broken.

So they met in the cold lobby with two representatives of the landlord. One promised the tenants they would never be cold again. Apparently a new man on the job, he promised them the moon, and he has never been seen again by the tenants. The other man rose to glorious heights in the landlord's eyes by his lying, uneducated ways.

The tenants were told to have faith and trust in this new organization. They did... and they are very sorry they did today. All through December, January and February some apartments reached the inferno temperature of 50. Some never rose that high. Heating guidelines of 68 indoor temperature were literally a heat wave to some. Sleeping entirely dressed became chic. Watching TV with jackets and gloves became old hat (oh yes, don't forget the hats).

Then came the ultimate. Tenants began receiving harassing, senseless eviction notices and illegal heat pass-alongs to mention a few. They had had enough. Like an answer to a prayer, along came Met Council. These tenants suddenly found out just how misled they had really been. It was hard to believe.

The landlord began renovating without building permits, hiring youngsters to do construction work, throwing large pieces of wood, frames and assorted debris from the second, third and fourth floor windows onto the sidewalks, and also supplying an ample amount of cracks, leaks, roaches, mice, plaster dust and unbearable noise. These

166 State Street is in better shape than it was, due to a rent strike. Many building repairs, most importantly a secure front door, better heat and hot water and a hallway painting were done, but the landlord would not make clear the new super's responsibilities. That super disappeared after two weeks and a new one appeared, without any resolution of the question of responsibilities. Tenants are plotting strategy to get a functioning super so they can have clean halls, individual repairs and enough heat. The fight isn't over, landlord Jack Kornblum!

—by Claudia Mansbach

## WASHINGTON HEIGHTS/ INWOOD

The landlord of the "rehabilitated" building at 625 West 183rd Street has refused to negotiate with the tenants. He claims the banks won't let him work out an agreement with the tenants. The banks gave him \$460,000 and he wants to raise the rents and collect forever. He issued 26 dispossesses and the tenants are going to court to present their case that a landlord doesn't deserve an increase for 26 years of neglect. Landlord Kaplow gave the treasurer of the tenants association a special dispossess. He claimed she owed him rent from 1973—totalling \$25,000.

At 482 Fort Washington Avenue, the tenants have decided to challenge the rehab rip-off of their building. They sent the landlord a letter indicating all the work that must be done immediately and told him they don't care about his Community Preservation Corporation (CPC) loan because they are not paying for work that



are tenants who work hard for their homes and now they were being destroyed right before their eyes, around their very bodies.

Building inspectors came day after day, listing violations and being told lies as to why these conditions existed in the first place.

What do you do when you are pushed to the limit? How do you react when representatives of the landlord threaten you with total lack of all necessary services and promises of further harassment and more threats of eviction to lease-holding tenants and rent controlled tenants.

You fight—you rent strike—you go to court. You fight to win.

The tenants in this story are the tenants of 680 81st Street in Bay Ridge, hard working, normally low-key, go-along-with-the-system people. Well, we are not going to take it any more.

We the tenants of 680 81st Street wish to thank our landlord for opening our eyes. And now we can also show other tenants that you don't have to settle for being pushed around by big business or greedy individual enterprise.

We wish to thank Met Council's terrific workers for advising us and guiding us through these uneasy times. We thank Met Council for allowing us to nominate our landlord "Landlord of the Month." Here's to you, Ralph De Sena, safe and warm in your Long Island home. Here's to you. Congratulations for making us stand up and be counted. Here's to you, sir, we'll see you in court.

should have been done all along.

Under the tireless leadership of Marlene Jerebek, the rent strike at 247 Wadsworth Avenue continues to grow stronger. The tenants have already won a new front door and are holding a month's rent pending the complete overhaul of the elevator.

—by Carol Shreeffter

## WEST SIDE

The rent strike at 206 West 104th Street is going into its second month. As soon as agent Mintz realized that he had a Met Council rent strike on his hands, he served six dispossesses. A large, well-organized group of tenants appeared in court with the six tenants who had received the notices. Judge Sparks told the landlord that he would receive the rent when repairs were made. The landlord made very few repairs, and on the second appearance in court, the Judge encouraged the tenants to use their withheld rent to make certain repairs. To date, no rent money has been turned over to the landlord. The landlord-tenant battle is escalating at 206 West 104th Street, as 14 additional dispossess notices and six notices of intent to commence holdover proceedings have just been served.

The rent strike at 310 West 99th Street, where tenants are striking over repairs and in support of certain tenants who face the threat of eviction for subletting, continues. The landlord offered the tenants who were subletting leases with increases that were less than the market rates, but still considerably above what they had been paying. The tenants are meeting to consider the offer.

—by Dan Guenzburger

# Met Council Branches and Affiliates

**BAY RIDGE BRANCH**  
Saturdays . . . 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon  
415 Ovington Avenue (near Fourth Avenue)  
Monthly membership meetings: first Thursday of the month, at 7:30 PM; Bethlehem Lutheran Church, corner Fourth Avenue and Ovington Avenue.

**BRONX BRANCH**  
Wednesdays . . . . . 7:00 PM  
Fordham Lutheran Church, 2430 Walton Avenue (one-half block south of Fordham Road). IRT No. 4 to Fordham Road, IND D train or CC to Fordham Road and Grand Concourse, No. 12 bus to Walton Avenue.  
Thursdays . . . . . 10 AM to 12 noon  
391 East 149 Street, near 3 Avenue, in association with Intl. Ladies Garment Workers Union.

**CROWN HEIGHTS BRANCH**  
Tuesdays . . . . . 6:00 to 8:00 PM  
730 Classon Avenue (between Park Place and Prospect Place).

**EAST HARLEM - YORKVILLE BRANCH**  
Thursdays . . . . . 6:30 PM  
St. Francis de Sales Church, 135 East 96th Street (between Lexington and Park Avenues).

**EAST MIDTOWN—WEST MIDTOWN BRANCH**  
(Covers on the eastside 14th Street to 59th Street and on the westside 25th Street to 72nd Street)  
Thursdays . . . . . 6:15 PM  
Note new address  
Met Council on Housing,  
137-5th Avenue (20th Street), 10th floor

**EAST SIDE BRANCH**  
Tuesdays . . . . . 2:00 to 5:00 PM  
(individual problems only)  
Thursdays . . . . . 6:00 PM  
(building & organizing problems)  
77 East 4th Street (between Second and Third Avenues). Phone 673-1000.

**FLATBUSH BRANCH**  
Wednesdays . . . . . 6:30 PM  
Flatbush Church of the Redeemer, Foster Avenue and East 23rd Street (entrance on side of church on 23rd Street).

**HARLEM BRANCH**  
Tuesdays . . . . . 6:30 PM  
470 Lenox Avenue (between 134th and 135th Streets), Headquarters of Lenox Terrace Tenants Association.

**PARK SLOPE BRANCH**  
(Newly reorganized)  
Thursdays . . . . . 7:00 PM  
782 Union Street, 2nd floor.  
(Between 6th and 7th Avenues)

**WASHINGTON HEIGHTS-INWOOD BRANCH**  
(Covers Manhattan north of 168th Street)  
Thursdays . . . . . 7:30 to 9:00 PM  
Broadway Methodist Temple, 4111 Broadway (between 173rd and 174th Streets—use entrance closest to 173rd Street).

**WEST SIDE BRANCH**  
Tuesdays . . . . . 7:30 PM  
Church of the Holy Name, Amsterdam Avenue (between 96th and 97th Streets).

## Affiliates

(Met Council has a number of affiliates. The following affiliates offer counseling and organizing advice.)

**Bensonhurst Tenants Council**  
Thursdays . . . . . 7:30 to 10:00 PM  
68-08 Bay Parkway, Brooklyn. Phone 331-1011.

**BRASC (Bay Ridge Assn. of Senior Citizens)**  
Monday-Friday, 10:30 to 3:30 PM  
450 Ovington Avenue.

**Chelsea Coalition on Housing**  
Thursdays . . . . . 8:00 PM  
326 West 17th Street, basement.

**Columbia Tenant Union**  
Tuesdays . . . . . 6:00 to 8:00 PM  
Saturdays . . . . . 12:00 noon to 3:00 PM  
250 West 106th Street, 2nd floor.

**Housing Committee of RENA**  
(Covers 135th to 168th Streets, from Riverside Drive to St. Nicholas Avenue)  
Thursdays . . . . . 8:30 PM  
544 West 157th Street. (Basement entrance)

### JOIN MET COUNCIL

Send your check or money order and this application for membership to Metropolitan Council on Housing, 137 Fifth Avenue, NYC 10010

Name: .....

Address: .....

City: ..... State: ..... Zip: .....

Home Phone: ..... Work Phone: .....

**Metropolitan Council on Housing**  
137 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010

Membership: Regular, \$12 per year; welfare, unemployed, social security and SSI, student—\$6 per year; Family, voluntary (any 2 people sharing an apartment), \$18 per year; supporting, voluntary, \$25 per year; sustaining voluntary, any amount per month or per year.

## Met Council on Housing

# Tenant

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### Save the Date

Wednesday May 20,

A Workshop on the Flynn-Dearie Bill, sponsored by the Coalition Against Rent Increase Passalongs (CARIP) will be held from 6:30 to 9:30 PM, at the McBurney YMCA, 215 West 23rd Street (between 7th and 8th Avenues). This is a preparation for the Tenant Lobby to Albany on May 27. All tenants are welcome.

### Elections

Met Council Officers and Executive Board  
Monday, September 21 at 7 p.m.  
Place to be announced

According to amendment to Met Council's Constitution, Assemblies will now meet twice a year. (See story on page 4 on the February Assembly.)

### ON THE AIR

"Tenant Survival"—Jane Benedict

Every Sunday morning at 7:06 A.M.  
Radio WBSL, 107.5 FM  
(If news is broadcast at 7 A.M., stay with it.  
The program will follow.)

Esther Rand's "Housing Notebook"

Radio WBAI, 99.5 FM  
Every Saturday afternoon  
from 1:00 to 2:00 P.M.



Tenant leaders from all over New York met on April 4 to plan strategy for a City-Wide Rent Strike. See page 1.

Lideres de inquilinos de toda la ciudad de Nueva York el 4 de abril planeando estrategia par la huelga de renta de la ciudad entera. Vea página 1.

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