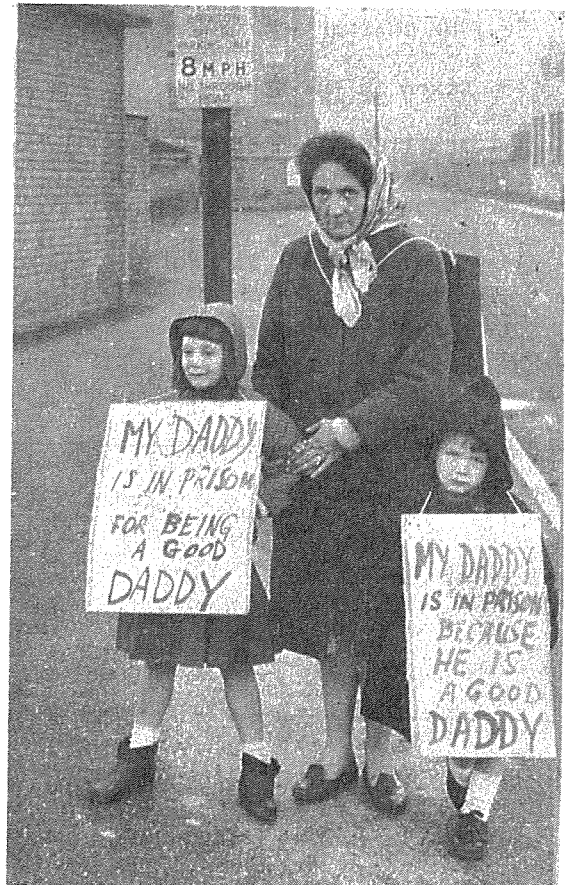


K.C.C. VERSUS THE HOMELESS

KENT HOMELESS WIN
four pages added to bring
King Hill story up to date
Jan 1967

THE KINGHILL CAMPAIGN

1/6



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February 1966.

Jointly produced on behalf of
 'Solidarity' by Andy Anderson, 40 Tudor Close, Dartford, Kent and
 'Socialist Action' by Jim Radford, 5 Clockhouse Road, Beckenham, Kent.

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Get-tough move at Dingley Dell

A NEW get-tough policy is to be enforced at the "Dingley Dell" hostel for homeless families. Kent County Council's welfare committee decided yesterday that the hostel staff will be increased to stop rule-breakers.

The committee heard that twenty-five husbands are disobeying regulations by sleeping at the hostel—in West Malling. And wives and children are staying there for longer than the permitted three months.

Daily Mirror,
Jan. 26, 1966.

INTRODUCTION

This is the inside story of the struggle now nearly six months old, opposing the Kent County Council to the homeless families of King Hill Hostel, West Malling, near Maidstone.

It is the story of the courage, patience, determination and solidarity of a few dozen working class families facing the organized might of a bureaucratic and inhuman local administration, backed to the hilt by the 'law' of the land.

It is the story of how ordinary people came to discover the real structure of power in our society, of how they saw through the promises and double talk of politicians of both 'right' and 'left', of how they discovered new friends, and of how they found out that in the last resort their strength lay in themselves and in themselves alone.

At the time this pamphlet goes to press the Kent County Council have not yet abandoned their arbitrary - and possibly illegal - rulings, which forbid husbands to visit their wives except at weekends and which limit the period during which homeless families can stay at the hostel to 3 months.

But that is only the formal aspect of the situation. The reality is very different. Some 30 men, i.e., over half the husbands of the homeless families, have now moved into King Hill, to protect their wives and children. They have done this in open defiance of the Maidstone edicts and of the rulings of High Court judges. Over 20 families have exceeded the 3 month period of stay. A lot of things have happened since that day, late last August, when KCC officials unsuccessfully tried to evict the Daniels family and started issuing writs all round.

We are under no illusions that the struggle has been won. The KCC is playing for time. It is waiting for some of the dust and smoke to settle, for the stench about King Hill to subside before the battle is renewed. Early next month a High Court judge will hear the KCC's case against the Daniels family. If he rules in favour of the KCC, mass evictions can be anticipated, backed by the full might of the Kent Constabulary. King Hill will be front page news again. It is essential that large sections of the population of Kent be both informed as to the background and forewarned as to likely developments.

The sustained resistance of the homeless families of King Hill has won the admiration of people throughout the country. It shows what can be done. It shows how 'legal' and 'illegal', 'constitutional' and 'unconstitutional' methods of struggle can be woven together. It shows how advantage can be taken of the conflicts between different bureaucratic interests, each concerned with its own 'image'. It shows how an arrogant and brutal local Establishment, used to having its every whim immediately complied with, can be forced on to the defensive. It shows finally the kind of help libertarian socialists can provide in a struggle which is about the very essence of libertarian socialism: man's domination and control of the conditions of his own existence.

In this pamphlet we hope to provide a full and accurate documentation, of lasting value. The struggle at King Hill will not be the last of its kind. We hope the pamphlet will prove useful and helpful to others who may be involved in similar confrontations in the future.

Audrey Harvey first describes the background to homelessness, in the era of Mr. Wilson's technological revolution. Andy Anderson deals with the legal tussles. Jim Radford describes the campaign that has made of the words 'King Hill' four-letter words more obscene than any ever uttered on the BBC. Some lessons are discussed in 'The Meaning of King Hill'. The various appendices contain information essential to a full understanding of all that has happened.

No account such as this would be complete without some insight as to what things look like from the other side of the desks in County Hall. On November 19, 1965, after the campaign had been going for several weeks, the Residential Services Subcommittee of the Health and Welfare Committee of the KCC met at the hostel. Dr. A.

Elliott, County Welfare Officer, submitted a report, which has come into our hands. In this he described his 'conclusions after fifteen years of administering the Council's residential services'. The report (which we shall refer to as the Elliott Report) is dated November 16, 1965. It is a textbook example of the smooth, bureaucratic and utterly inhuman approach to human problems. We shall quote from it repeatedly.

We hope you will order many copies of this pamphlet for your friends and workmates. Any help you can offer with sales and distribution will be much appreciated. Please write to either of the addresses on p. 2. We need every assistance you can provide to help carry the struggle on.

February 1966.

PRIORITIES

Resolved

That, in all the circumstances and particularly in view of the heavy expense involved - no action be taken for the present for the provision of washing and toilet facilities and electric power points in each quarter and the replacement of solid fuel cooking stoves.

Minutes of meeting of Residential Services Subcommittee of Health and Welfare Committee on 19.11.65.

Additional expenditure authorised as follows:

Hostel for the Homeless (West Malling)

Conditioning and seeding grounds of new staff house and tar paving	£263
--	------

Minutes of meeting of Health and Welfare Committee on October 20, 1965.

CRIMINALS?

A point consistently ignored by critics of the three month rule would be the deleterious effect of hostel conditions continued for undefined long periods of time upon the majority of families of close and continued association with a small minority of individuals with bad, anti-social and sometimes criminal habits....

Elliott Report, p.5.

APPEAL

Financial help (for publicity and legal expenses) is urgently needed by the KING HILL APPEAL FUND. Please give generously.

Donations - all of which will be acknowledged - should be sent to:

Dr. D. Bannister
27, Meadow Walk
Wilmington
nr. Dartford, Kent.

BACKGROUND TO HOMELESSNESS

BY AUDREY HARVEY

Mrs. Audrey Harvey has been interested in the problems of homeless people for many years. She works in a Citizens Advice Bureau in East London. She first wrote on the subject in an article published in the 'New Statesman' in 1957. Since then she has written a number of further articles published in several papers. She is also author of the Fabian pamphlet 'Casualties of the Welfare State' (1960) and a recent Penguin 'Tenants in Danger' (1964). She first broadcast on the subject on BBC Television (Panorama) in 1958 and has since broadcast on 3 occasions on BBC (Sound).

Homelessness has always been a problem about which people with homes of their own would rather not know and which the authorities look on as an intolerable nuisance. But to understand why homeless people get such a raw deal we have to go back nearly twenty years.

In 1948 the Labour Government repealed the Poor Laws. Under its new National Assistance Act it laid a duty on local authorities to shelter people whose homelessness 'could not have been foreseen' - for instance the victims of fire or flood. These authorities were County Councils and County Boroughs and they were given a free hand.

In nearly all cases they merely used the grim old workhouses where the homeless had been lodged before and in many cases they did not even bother to convert them. Most were utterly unsuitable for children and, to this day, children who become even slightly ill have to be taken to hospital because they cannot be nursed in overcrowded dormitories. A very frequent illness is dysentery.

In the early stages it was not thought that homelessness would be a continuing problem - partly because the provision of National Assistance enabled people who could not work to stay in their own homes. Another and more important reason was that a Royal Commission had confidently predicted that the post-war birthrate would go down, and it was therefore expected that the housing shortage would do so too.

Instead, the reverse happened. As well as that, young people began to marry much earlier and were no longer content to live with their parents. As their grandparents were at the same time living longer, the need for rented housing grew and grew. When slum clearance began in the mid-fifties almost all the new council houses and flats had to be used for the people whose homes were demolished, while families on waiting lists became more and more overcrowded.

Meanwhile the Conservative Government had begun to cut down on council building as a matter of policy so that there were fewer homes for families who could not afford to buy houses for themselves. Then, two years later, the 1957 Rent Act came into force. It allowed rents to shoot up without limit in decontrolled houses and flats and families to be evicted at short notice for any reason at all.

These are some of the reasons why, in London particularly, the tide of homeless families gradually mounted. Of course this was a headache for the authorities but it was not for this reason that the homeless found themselves treated - in their own words - as 'the lowest of the low'. Welfare authorities had always looked on their proper business as that of caring for old, blind and disabled people. The young and able-bodied homeless families were unwelcome cuckoos in the welfare nest.

In order to get rid of them at the maximum speed they were deliberately made as uncomfortable as possible. Partly for the same reason only the women and children were admitted. Separation, it was thought, was likely to drive them - and their husbands - to find their own accommodation, however unsuitable. So was squalor and so were communal meals and lack of privacy and sanitation. But the public had known almost nothing of this until 1957 when the first exposé appeared in print. One reason why what was going on had escaped notice for almost a decade was that social workers no longer saw themselves as reformers as they had before the war. They were being trained, and still are, to help people to accept unbearable conditions, not to try to change them.

County councillors on welfare committees did not always see it as their duty to visit the institutions for which they were responsible - and this too still goes on. Of course they had reports from welfare officials but many of these had previously worked under the old Poor Laws and a good many of them felt that, in comparison with those black old days, the new homeless were positively featherbedded.

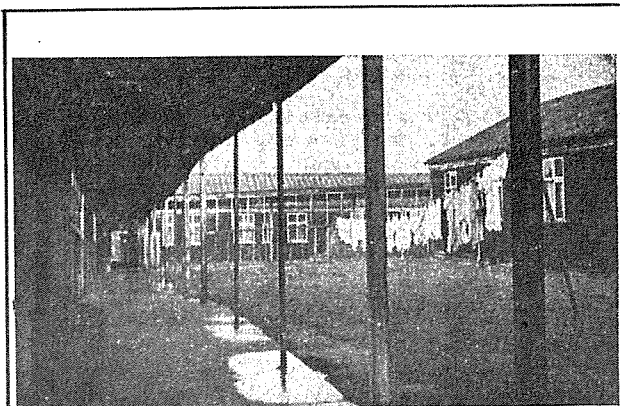
When questions at last began to be asked, the answers given concealed a good deal of the truth. The public was told that fathers were no longer admitted to reception centres because when they had been (and just when that had happened is not at all clear) they had caused endless trouble. One authority said they had torn up the sheets, for what reason cannot be imagined, and this was all the more odd because in the institution concerned the mothers and children had no sheets, not even any pillow cases. It would probably have been said that for husbands to sleep with their wives in 'welfare' centres was considered to be not quite seemly. There was also the point that although mothers and children could be fairly easily removed at the end of a time limit, or if they made complaints, fathers were a very different proposition.

In the same way the squalor in so many of the centres and hostels was excused on the ground that if conditions were made more tolerable than those in the worst type of housing, families would make themselves homeless by not paying their rent in order to gain admission. An alternative defence was to say that all homeless families were problem families. As late as 1957 a well-known socialist was heard to say that the homeless must be 'the dregs of society', otherwise they wouldn't be without homes.

Although it proved almost impossible to induce much sympathy in the authorities for homeless parents (who were invariably called 'feckless') a good deal was forthcoming for homeless children - although it was still argued that if they eventually went into public care they might be a great deal better off than with their 'feckless' 'problem' parents. What was not understood was that if you separate a woman from her husband and then threaten her with the loss of her children, she rather naturally goes to pieces.

I have seen this happen, and very quickly, so that one woman concerned became almost unrecognizable - not only in character but in looks. This is also by far the quickest way to break up marriages because husbands unable to help or comfort their wives sometimes feel they cannot bear to go on visiting them any longer and cannot face seeing the children they may later have to lose. The children themselves suffer from their mother's unbearably strained nerves and from their own terrible insecurity, and usually get out of hand or else become unnaturally quiet and withdrawn. The gain to the authorities in convenience is as nothing to the human problems with which they find themselves faced.

But what turned the scales in LCC London and brought considerable reforms was not the misery of the homeless. It was publicity which acted as the first and sharpest spur, especially publicity via television which reached millions of homes and threw shame on the government. But some justification still had to be found by the authorities for spending public money on the families which they had for so long tried to prove worthless.



WASHING on the line—the only sign of family life in the bleakness of the shabby collection of wartime huts known as King Hill Hostel. Here, a man can see his family during visiting hours.

When, in 1959, the LCC announced plans for a hostel where about 80 whole families, complete with husbands, were to be admitted - and when they also relinquished the policy of taking children into care at the end of a time limit - the reasons were chiefly economic. To keep a child in care cost the public between £8 - £10 a week, and to separate mothers from fathers in reception centres often meant that the basic charges were not paid, partly because the fathers had to support themselves elsewhere, partly because to pay for being separated was asking too much!

Naturally, the experiment of keeping families together and treating them like human beings proved to be a great success. At the new reception centre in East London there have been very few troubles of any sort, and the LCC soon went on to equip another on even more progressive lines where the mothers are allowed to cook for their husbands and children.

Meanwhile the rocketing numbers of homeless families in London in the early 1960's had led, for the first time, to some research into the causes; and one of the important results was that these so-called 'feckless' people were found after all to be 'decent' and 'normal', and in the great majority of cases, to have become homeless through no fault of their own. They did not even have an 'excessive number of children': the average was only two or three. The typical father was a young working man earning about £14 a week and more often than not the family had been evicted from furnished rooms where they had had no security of tenure.

If only other responsible authorities had followed some of the examples set by the LCC, there would have been no need for the terrible misery which homeless families have

to endure in most other parts of the country. For part of that example had always been the provision of second-stage accommodation for the more 'deserving' families who were eventually rehoused in old council buildings. Of course it can be argued that only a big and rich authority can afford to do this, but lesser authorities have far fewer homeless families to cater for. It can also be argued that, in one sense, the homeless are jumping the housing queue. But there are safeguards against this, for it is quite easy to admit only those families who can either produce eviction orders or who have no relatives who could take them in.

And from the financial point of view the cost to a local authority of not providing a roof for those who have lost their own is enormous. Besides this, there is the often-forgotten fact that these authorities have two statutory duties. The first is that under the National Assistance Act they must 'have regard to the welfare' of people for whom they are responsible. And the second is that under the Children and Young Persons Act of 1963 they have a duty to do everything possible to diminish the need for children to be taken into care.

It would be shortsighted and unfair to deny that local authorities have problems in sheltering the homeless. But to cast asunder married couples, to dismember families and to send small children into exile, depriving them of both their parents, are actions which they should never have had power to take. The National Assistance Act leaves homeless people without any rights, obliged to submit to whatever conditions are imposed on them, liable to become trespassers in law at only a week's notice and therefore deprived of the courts' protection. This must be stopped. There is no justice in it. As for 'welfare' it has become the cruellest of mockeries.

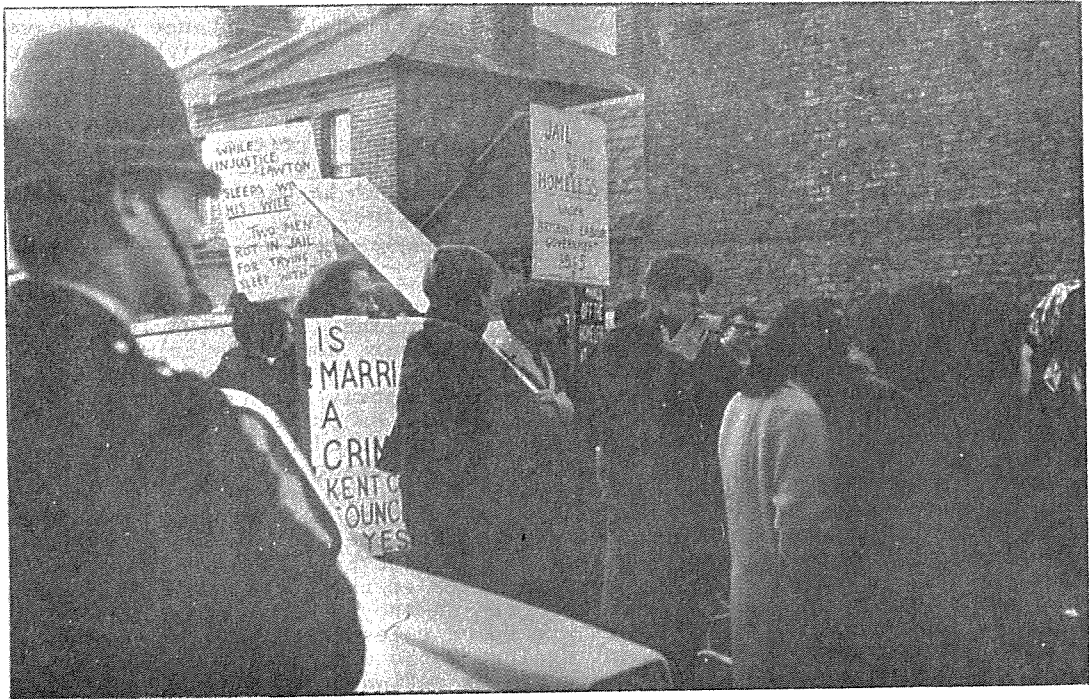
Whilst no generalisation applies to these families, there always has been a minority of adults with low standards of behaviour, sometimes criminal, who are nevertheless apparently able and willing to exploit private individuals and public bodies. Such individuals, fortunately a tiny minority, cannot be effectively dealt with by persuasion and exhortation. To them the law and regulations made under it, whether expressed by High Court judges or the County Council, mean nothing until defiance is met with enforced penalties. From 1952 until 1965, there were only three occasions when a clear determination on the part of the Department's officers to use reasonable force was necessary to enforce the Council's rules. The decision in September last to use legal processes to secure acceptance of these rules has led to such delays and long extended abuse of the facilities at the hostel that the respect for the rules built up over 13 years has been destroyed and, in my opinion, cannot readily be restored. If there are to be rules there must be an effective and speedy method of enforcement against those who, in spite of warnings, show plainly they are determined on courses of defiance and disruption.

Elliott Report, p.1.

DEMONSTRATIONS



Calling on Mr. Robinson. December 5, 1965.



At Brixton Gaol. November 28, 1965.

THE KCC V THE HOMELESS LEGAL ACTIONS

BY ANDY ANDERSON

'Need and oppression starveth in
thine eyes, contempt and beggary
hang upon thy back. The world is
not thy friend, nor the world's
law. The world affords no law to
make thee rich. Then be not poor,
but break it.'

Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet.

'Law, being a tyrant, compels many
things to be done contrary to na-
ture.'

Plato's Protagoras.

Several Kent councillors have told me that during the last few months they've had about as much adverse publicity as they can take. The Kent County Council did not want to go to Law with the homeless of King Hill. Most councillors only wanted to use legal proceedings as a final threat, to stop 'trouble', and to ensure that the homeless conform with the council's rules and conditions, no matter how inhuman.

Over the course of years the KCC have used threats to keep such people quiet and to intimidate them into accepting appalling conditions in 'Part III Accommodation'. (1) One of the best forms of intimidation is to tell homeless people that only those who 'behave' and abide by the rules have a chance of getting rehoused. Thus, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. London's notorious Newington Lodge)(2), little protest has been heard, over the years, from the many thousands of homeless families who pass through such places.

County Council bureaucrats see the problems of homelessness as sets of figures on sheets of paper. One 'policy' is to keep the homeless on the move. This is done by restricting the length of stay in 'Part III Accommodation' to a few months, weeks or even days. This, incidentally, is financially rewarding as County Councils get an annual Government grant per family coped with, in addition to the weekly grants paid to them by local councils.

The maximum stay allowed at King Hill Hostel by the Kent County Council is three months. A few days before their time is up, mothers are visited several times by the Hostel staff. They bring along forms for signature. They try in every way to 'persuade' mothers to have their children taken into the care of the Council. In several cases, the Chairman of the Health and Wel-

fare Committee, accompanied by a number of officials, (3) has tried to do the same.

For instance, immediately after Brian Lomas and Roy Mills were jailed (see further on) these gentlemen believed they held the advantage. They visited the Hostel and told a number of women who had overstayed their three months (including Mrs. Mildred Mills) about the 'benefits' of 'going quietly' and of 'putting their children into care'. They threatened that, in any case, all such families would be 'out of the Hostel within 2 weeks'. All this had doubtless worked in the past.

These measures are part of a stringent policy of deterrence, which is followed by several other local authorities as well as the KCC. Ridiculous, harsh and degrading rules are imposed. The staff is carefully selected - an essential qualification is an ability to give frigid loyalty to the local authority. Families are broken up. Husbands are excluded from this so-called 'welfare' accommodation. Living conditions are purposely kept worse than the miserable conditions thousands have to suffer under private landlords. It is a form of deliberate and cynical cruelty to children and adults alike.

(1) This term is often used to describe temporary accommodation provided under Part III of the National Assistance Act, 1948.

(2) See 'Homeless', Solidarity pamphlet No. 12, December 1962.

(3) Several women witnesses have told me that the Kent Medical Officer of Health, Dr. A. Elliott, was among these officials.

YEARS OF SMOULDERING RESENTMENT

As John Greve says, 'Problems can be "reduced" or "solved" administratively by redefining them or by changing regulations governing admission to welfare institutions. But the real-life problems still persist (and increase) in the world outside.' (4)

The problems at King Hill have been present for many years. Resentment at the dehumanizing conditions there has been smouldering for a long time. Eric Lubbock, Liberal MP for Orpington, has been doing all he can to get the KCC to bring some humanity into their management of this so-called welfare institution. Mr. Lubbock was asked to intervene by the Orpington Urban District Council. (5)

On July 23, 1964, the Orpington U.D.C. wrote to the KCC. For several months, members of Orpington's Public Health Committee had been receiving letters complaining about the appalling conditions at King Hill. 'As a matter of urgency' the Orpington Council wanted 'to place on record its deep concern'. It asked for 'specific answers' to a number of questions about the hostel. The Kent County Council replied three months later, on October 26, 1964. Mr. A.B. Howard, Chairman of Orpington Council, J.P., (and also a member of the KCC), described this reply:

'... As a member of the County Council, I regretfully subscribe to much of the criticism that has been made of the conditions within the hostel. My regrets arise from my feelings of personal responsibility and realization that the justifiable criticisms are addressed to me equally with my colleagues on the County Council.

Of the 269 families admitted to King Hill Hostel in 1964, only 16 (6%) were turned out by local authorities because of non-payment of rent.

Elliott Report, p.5.

'Mr. Lubbock's intervention in this matter was sought by the Orpington Council who had received a curt, imperious, autocratic refusal to reply to the various statements made by responsible members of Orpington Council. This "mind-your-own-business" attitude was considered so censorious of Orpington Council that no alternative was left but to refer the matter to the Member of Parliament, especially seeing that the health of Orpington people now in West Malling Hostel appeared to be in jeopardy.'

FROM RESENTMENT TO DIRECT ACTION

Since September 1965 something new has been happening. Homeless people have begun to take matters into their own hands.

The campaign began despite great difficulties. The people in the hostel had been brutalised by their situation and by all those responsible for it. Under these circumstances some people turn in on themselves and become selfish. They react to their difficulties by a carping criticism of those in the same plight. Some put the blame on each other for their misery - instead of where it rightly belongs, on those who mis-administer welfare accommodation; on the bureaucrats, on the capitalist system which is responsible for the housing crisis. Divisions are created, nurtured, and used to bring about even greater demoralization among the people. Under these conditions solidarity and collective resistance, which alone can bring an end to this misery, tend to lessen. This is exactly what the authorities want. The squalor of King Hill Hostel, the degrading rules and conditions, are all means to their ends.

The success of these 'means' over the years had led the KCC bureaucrats to misjudge the situation at King Hill. In September 1965 Stan Daniels moved in to protect his wife and children from eviction. He was quickly followed by thirteen other husbands. The blackmail tactics did not seem to be working. So the last-resort threat of the KCC was put into action.

(4) John Greve, 'London's Homeless', p.68. The Codicote Press, 1964.

(5) Now within the G.L.C. area.

COURT ACTION —
THE INJUNCTION
OF OCT. 4TH

Writs were issued to each of the fourteen men on September 23, 1965, together with a Summons to attend the Judge in Chambers at the High Court (Strand), Queens Bench Division on October 4. The defendants applied for legal aid but were refused it. Mr. Justice Roskill granted the KCC what they sought: an order that the fourteen husbands 'do by 12 noon on Friday the 8th day of October 1965 leave King Hill Hostel' and an interim 'injunction restraining them from returning to live in the said premises'.

The KCC's case was based on affidavits sworn by Harry Brown, Senior Administrative Officer in the Health and Welfare Department, Clara Olive Lipscombe, Warden of King Hill Hostel, and Alfred Elliott, County Medical Officer and County Welfare Officer.

Harry Brown's affidavit (already referred to in Jim Radford's article) had concluded that the eviction of the Daniels family, on August 31, had proved impossible 'due to the intervention of the other defendants and their children' and that 'all further efforts were therefore abandoned'. Clara Lipscombe's affidavit described in some detail the administrative difficulties encountered on August 31. She said that Harry Brown had been accompanied by a Mr. Ramsey - an officer of the Health and Welfare Department - and by a Child Care Officer from Bromley (doubtless to take the Daniels' children into custody). 'Later that afternoon, at about 4.15 pm, there was an assembly of almost every woman then living in the hostel, of whom there were 36, with approximately 90 children, who were all shouting abuse at Mr. Brown and at the other officers. This made it impossible for Mr. Brown to pursue his business. A representative of the press and a photographer were also present. As a result of this the defendant Daniels and his family continued to live at the hostel'. Clara Lipscombe goes on to describe how the other husbands then moved in. She concludes that 'the effect of this situation is that I and my staff are not in complete control of the hostel. There is open defiance from the children and there were signs of increasing surliness, difficulty and refusal to carry out instructions from the adults...'

Dr. Elliott's affidavit stated a) that the KCC owns and maintains King Hill Hostel for the performance of its statutory duty under the National Assistance Act 1948 'to provide temporary accommodation for persons who are in urgent need thereof' (6) and b) that in addition to the Administrative County of Kent, temporary accommodation is also available to the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley until March 31, 1967. Dr. Elliott said that the Council defines 'temporary' as being a maximum period of three months, and that husbands are excluded from this kind of accommodation. (We contend that by the three-months limit and the exclusion of husbands, the KCC is contravening sections of the National Assistance Act 1948, the Children Act 1948, and the Children and Young Persons Act 1963. But this will be argued in detail elsewhere).

In concluding his affidavit, Dr. Elliott stated that the proper management of the hostel depended upon the enforcement of the rules as to the conduct of the premises and the preservation of order. Whereas in the past the Warden and her staff had been able to get the residents to do as they were told the present situation had undermined their authority so that they no longer had effective control.

What judge could resist an application for the use of legal force, when management by the 'rightful' managers was being challenged and usurped by those with no 'rights', by people who throughout their lives had always been at the receiving end? The 'right' of rulers, managers and bureaucrats to manage the lives of ordinary working people has, throughout history, been inscribed in blood.

It was therefore no surprise that when the fourteen husbands asked Mr. Justice Roskill for a stay of execution, he refused. The husbands claimed that the KCC was acting 'ultra vires' with regard to its duties under the provisions of the National Assistance Act 1948, that to enter into a contract enforcing the separation of a husband from his wife was against public policy, and that as tenants they sought protection from eviction. Mr. Justice Roskill's only reply was that the husbands were 'trespassers'. In a property-owning democracy the rights of property are clearly paramount!

(6) See National Assistance Act, Section 21 (1)(b).

THE APPEAL

— OCT. 8TH

At 11.30 am on October 8 (half an hour before the deadline by which they had been ordered to get out) the 14 'trespassing' husbands appealed against Mr. Justice Roskill's refusal to grant them a stay of execution. The appeal was heard before the Master of the Rolls (Lord Denning), Lord Justice Harman and Lord Justice Winn. Mrs. Stella Hydeleman, Counsel for the 14 husbands, said that their wives and children were in the hostel because they had nowhere else to go. There was adequate accommodation for the husbands. They were not there to make trouble. There was no question of their causing any additional work for the managing wardens. She added that social workers would say that the wives had enough emotional distress without the additional strain of losing their husbands.

Lord Denning and his mates were not to be moved. But, during the 'discussion' that followed, the Master of the Rolls did issue what was tantamount to an instruction to the KCC to amend their rules about visiting. He said: 'In the ordinary way husbands would go to work and would only be there at night. These men can go and visit their families at any time, but they must not sleep there' (see 'Evening Standard', 8.11.65).

Up till the end of August the Warden and the staff were able to ensure that in general families kept their quarters properly and the accommodation used in common was maintained at a proper level. This was done by regular visitation but on occasions since that time the behaviour of some of the families, defiance of authority and the continued presence of men has meant difficulties in management that have effects on the condition of the premises... It is, however, idle to suppose that for a period of months a handful of men, some most undesirable characters, can live as trespassers and apparently successfully defy authority without the conditions under which they are living degenerating.

Elliott Report, p.2.

It was nearly 12.30 pm when Lord Denning began to pronounce his judgment. He claimed that 'under the statute it is clearly in their (the KCC's) power to make rules as to the conduct of these premises. Where persons become unsuitable they can be required to leave the hostel... One can well see that once rules of this kind are broken there is disorder and it is difficult to keep any control at all...'. Lord Denning dismissed the Appeal. Lord Justices Harman and Winn concurred.

CONTEMPT OF COURT

— NOV. 1ST

During the two weeks that followed October 8, the hostel Warden, Assistant Warden and Second Assistant Warden set about building up 'evidence' to victimize four of the 14 husbands. The affidavits sworn by these officials stated that Mrs. Joan Daniels was visited in her section of Block 1 at 7.30 one morning but that her husband was not there. An affidavit by a cleaner (Mrs. Broad) stated that she had seen Stan Daniel in a crouching position outside Block 1 at about 7.45 the same morning. The day was foggy, the man was crouching, and she claimed to have recognized him from a small lavatory window on the first floor of the staff building which was over 100 yards away.

Another affidavit stated that Mrs. Mill accommodation had been visited some time after 7.30 am on October 20. When the officials eventually got in they found Roy Mill standing on a locker. One of them said 'Alright, Mr. Mills, come out'. But he made no reply.

Mrs. Joan Sales' room was also visited a little later the same day. An affidavit stated that Dennis Sales was found there. One of the officials said: 'Alright, Mr. Sales, come out'. But he made no reply.

At about 9 am on October 19, the hostel management called on Mrs. Betty Lomas. In an affidavit it was said that the figure of a man was seen lying on a bed, but that it could not be said for certain that the man was Brian Lomas.(7)

(7) In his judgment, Mr. Justice Lawton mistakenly referred to the family named in this particular affidavit as Mills. He also mistakenly referred to the time the others were seen on October 20 as 7 am when even the affidavits stated that it was after 7.30 am.

These affidavits were the sole evidence on which the KCC applied to the High Court, on November 1, for a Writ of Attachment or for an Order for Committal (8) of the four husbands.

The KCC claimed that the husbands were in contempt of the Court Order made on October 4 in that they had been living at the hostel since that date. No witnesses were called. Those who had sworn the affidavits did not appear in Court to be cross-examined. Stan Daniels did not come to Court but sent a doctor's certificate to the effect that he was ill. The other three men denied that they had been living at the hostel since October 4. Ten minutes before the hearing 'defence' Counsel, Mrs. Stella Hydleman, tried to persuade the three husbands to apologize and to give an undertaking not to do it again. The men were annoyed and confused by this. They were not professionals. They had been called 'trespassers' because they thought it right to spend their spare time with their families in their hour of need. The men did not make a very professional impression in the witness box. Mr. Justice Lawton said they were lying. He 'found the contempt proved'.

But realizing that an immediate committal to prison would provoke uproar, he obtained from the men an undertaking that they would 'keep away from this hostel except at the proper visiting times which are between 10 am and 8 pm on Saturdays and Sundays'. 'In the event of an emergency, such as the illness of a wife or child', the men would not be allowed in the hostel 'without first reporting to the police and being accompanied by a police officer'. Stan Daniels' 'truculence had become infectious'. It was 'essential for the administration of justice in this country and for the proper administration of Acts of Parliament that Orders of the Court should be obeyed'.

While the judge was speaking, pickets were parading outside, in the Strand. They carried posters saying: 'Four men on trial for sleeping with their wives' and 'Is marriage a crime? KCC says yes'. Many leaflets were distributed to passers-by.

CRIMINALS!

On the question of repayment for electricity at the hostel, I have the following observations:

.. present system of charge: flat rate 7½d. per unit.

.. S.E. Electricity Board maximum resale price is 4d. per day + 1.95d. per unit...

County Welfare Officer Report, 14.12.65.

UNDERTAKING
WITHDRAWN

— NOV. 5TH.

On November 5 Stan Daniels appeared before Mr. Justice Lawton. He was found guilty of contempt on the same flimsy evidence as the other three had been on November 1. He was made to give a similar undertaking.

The same morning Brian Lomas and Roy Mills addressed the Judge in open Court. They presented his Lordship with a statement dated November 4 (later published in full in 'Freedom', on November 13, 1965). In this statement they sought to withdraw that part of their undertaking, given on November 1, regarding visiting their families at King Hill Hostel. Mr. Justice Lawton read the statement. The following then ensued:

Lawton: You appreciate the significance of this letter?

Lomas and Mills: Yes.

Lawton: You appreciate that I found you guilty of contempt last Monday and that the normal penalty for this is prison?

Lomas and Mills: Yes.

Lawton: I advise you to get legal advice before you embark on this course of action.

Lomas and Mills: We have thought about it fully and our minds are made up.

Lawton: I am not going to accept this letter. If you are going to discharge your obligations, you must do it in a proper listed hearing. And if you are not going to be represented you should obtain advice from the Crown Office. I don't want to hear any more. Now go away.

Brian Lomas and Roy Mills went away, to the Crown Office, where they got a hearing listed for November 19.

(8) The granting of either meant imprisonment.

GAOLED — NOV. 19TH

Brian Lomas and Roy Mills next appeared before Mr. Justice Lawton on Friday, November 19. The KCC barrister and solicitors were also there.

Brian Lomas was the first to present a statement (see Appendix 7a). He asked this to be read out as he was partially blind from cataract. The Judge read out the statement. He also read out the statement made jointly by Lomas and Mills on November 5 when they had addressed him in open Court. He attributed this statement to Brian Lomas. When Lomas attempted to correct His Lordship, he was told to sit down and be quiet.

The judge then asked if Roy Mills had anything to say. Mills said he would read out his own statement (Appendix 7b). He handed up a signed copy to the judge. Roy's statement had been based on the joint statement he and Brian Lomas had made to the judge on November 5 (the judge at that time had said: 'I am not going to accept this letter'). It was the judge's own confusion of mind that led him to make the snide remark about the 'remarkable similarity of language and approach' in both statements. But this was nothing compared to

the confusion of mind that led His Lordship to say that the position of husbands separated from their homeless wives and families living in the appalling conditions of King Hill, was no different from that of many thousands of members of the armed forces or from that of Her Majesty's judges, who for a substantial part of the year, were separated from their wives and families!(9)

After the two husbands had refused to accept a further small 'concession' by the judge (to the effect that they could only visit the hostel with the written permission of the warden), they were committed to prison 'sine die' for contempt of court.

(9) As Paul Johnson wrote in the 'New Statesman': 'This comment reveals such a lack of understanding about the causes and nature of human misery as almost to pass belief. Judges on circuit live in considerable comfort - and they have just been given an increase in salary which is almost certainly greater than the total incomes of both the gaoled men put together. But this is not really the point. Isn't the judge aware that, for a homeless family, living on the edge of complete destitution, the need to cling together and share their hardships is paramount? Doesn't he see that it's the only thing they've got left in this world? Doesn't he know that criminologists agree that broken homes are a prime cause of delinquency? One sometimes feels that judges live in a world totally divorced from everyday reality, and I hope that this episode will lead the Lord Chancellor to intensify his efforts to further their social education.' (November 26, 1965)



Husbands jailed for staying with wives

By Daily Mail Reporter
TWO MEN who refused to promise not to call on their wives in a hostel outside permitted hours were jailed by a High Court judge yesterday.

LOMAS & MILLS FREED

NOV. 30TH

On Friday, November 26, Brian Lomas and Roy Mills met the Official Solicitor in Brixton Prison. They told him they would renew the undertakings if he arranged for them to appear before Mr. Justice Lawton again. There was considerable embarrassment among Court and prison officials at their being there at all. Mr. Justice Lawton himself lost no time in having the two men brought before him.

In the High Court, at 10.30 am on Tuesday, November 30, His Lordship talked about Christmas. He reminded the KCC that their County had housed Dingley Dell (where Dickens' Pickwick had enjoyed such a jolly Christmas). He mildly admonished the KCC for not having made arrangements for husbands to be with their wives and families during this season of goodwill to all men. After all, he seemed to imply, they had the power of the Courts to help them revert back to their unchristian attitude as soon as the season had passed. Dingley Dell could again become Bleak House. He suggested that the KCC's season of goodwill to King Hill husbands should extend from 2 pm on December 24 to 9 am on December 27!

Perhaps His Lordship was trying to throw a minute spanner in the KCC's works. After all, if it is alright for the husbands to live at King Hill over Christmas, why not all the time?

Then Counsel for the KCC, Mr. John Newey, felt it was time he got in on the act. Moved by the pantomime atmosphere and putting on his best pan-faced comedian style, he asserted that the council had always been 'very generous in their rules'. It was only when these homeless people had begun actively to resist this generosity that the KCC had become ungenerous.

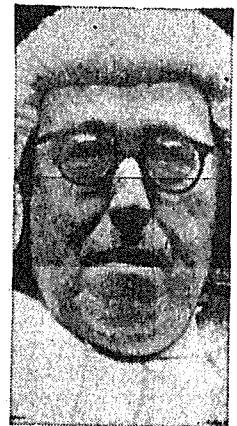
By this time, His Lordship seemed to have got a bit mixed up with all this generous Christian business. Addressing Roy Mills and Brian Lomas, he likened the Law to the lions which at one time fed upon Christians. 'Before you can wear the martyr's crown', he said, 'you must suffer the lion's teeth'. They should bear in mind that the lion's teeth would bite even harder next time. He then made some political comments to the effect that the law was not concerned with politics. 'The Courts were not sounding boards for political and social grievances'. He suggested that it was wrong for men to argue in their legal defence that they felt they had a duty to be with their wives and families when they were most needed. They shouldn't break the law and do things themselves. They should try to get their county councillor or their M.P. to change things. If at this stage a genie had appeared in a puff of smoke, nobody would have been surprised!

Having renewed their undertakings, the two men were released.

The most sensible things I heard that morning were said to the press, outside the High Court, by Roy Mills: 'My only worry', he said, 'was that the judge might insist that I first apologize - I couldn't have done that. Anyway, he didn't... By going to prison we've drawn the attention of even more people to the situation at King Hill. Brian Lomas has come out because he's got a house which he can move into on December 10. With one of his children ill, he needs the time to get things ready. I've come out because I can carry on the fight much better from the outside'.

THAT MAN

The difficulties at the hostel since August stem directly from a number of these families having their difficulties and frustrations used and exploited by one man who has attracted to himself a wide range of supporters for widely differing reasons.



Elliott
Report, p.1.

MR. JUSTICE LAWTON

SOLIDARITY

'Solidarity' is a paper, a series of pamphlets, a group of rank and file activists and a frame of mind.

The paper and pamphlets have been appearing more or less regularly since 1960. The supporters - loosely associated in autonomous groups - are active in the 'unofficial' industrial struggle, in anti-bomb and in tenants' struggles. They are also active in a constant struggle for theoretical renewal and a re-definition of socialist objectives and methods of action relevant to the society of today. The frame of mind is profoundly anti-bureaucratic. 'Solidarists' enjoy their seditious, disruptive and debunking brand of politics. They don't care a damn on whose toes they tread.

'Solidarity' sees the traditional 'left' as part and parcel of all we are up against. The left has lost its vision of a society without rulers and ruled. It is no longer a vehicle for social change in this direction. In fact traditional socialist ideas

today reflect the deepest requirements of the class societies of East and West.

Increasingly bureaucratic institutions, ideological sterility and increasing political apathy feed on one another. Only a radically new approach to politics, to action, to organization and to theory will help people break out of this vicious circle.

'Solidarity' does not see the crisis of the left as a 'crisis of leadership'. There are today too many leaderships to choose from. What is lacking is people prepared to think and do things for themselves. 'Solidarity' seeks to help all those ready to act on their own behalf in challenging bureaucratic society on any of a wide variety of fronts.

Write to Bob Potter, 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1, for a full list of our publications on industrial, anti-war, historical or theoretical subjects. A subscription to 'Solidarity' costs 10/- for 12 issues, post free.

SOCIALIST ACTION

Formed in September 1965 by a fusion of Committee of 100 activists and disillusioned ex-members of Bromley Labour Party, Socialist Action is a flexible, non-doctrinaire organization appealing to those who are ready to work for Socialism instead of just talking about it.

Socialist Action differs from other left wing groups in that it does not seek to impose a particular blueprint for socialism on its supporters. Its aim is to provide a banner and a cutting edge for the fragmented and disaffiliated left, and to this end it concentrates on rallying the maximum support for specific socialist projects.

Socialist Action condemns the Labour Government for its implementation of the economic, racial, and foreign policies of the Conservatives, and is committed to oppose anti-socialist legislation and activity,

from any source, by whatever means seem likely to be most effective.

Members of Socialist Action are opposed to all forms of exploitation, including State capitalism. They believe in free and open discussion on every issue, but although concerned to learn from the mistakes of the past, they seek to avoid time-wasting bickering over irrelevancies and to concentrate on the urgent priorities of peace and socialism.

Practical opposition to the U.S. invasion of Vietnam is already being emulated nationally, and new groups are being formed and encouraged to unite socialists of various backgrounds in direct action campaigns such as King Hill.

If you decide to form a Socialist Action group, contact Alan Duff, 53c Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

THE CAMPAIGN

BY JIM RADFORD



Early in May 1965 a Painter and Decorator called Stan Daniels, his wife Joan and their 4 children arrived at King Hill Hostel.

They had been evicted from a private flat in Sandford Road, Bromley, when the property changed hands, and the new owner wanted them out. Stan offered to pay more rent and took the landlord to court but eventually he and his family found themselves on the street. His appeals to the local Council for help brought forth an offer of temporary accommodation at West Malling for his wife and children only. This was at first refused, for Stan was determined not to be parted from his family. It was explained to him that if the children did not go to the hostel he faced the risk of prosecution for not properly caring for his family. In the face of this pressure Joan reluctantly agreed to accept the conditions at King Hill and Stan found himself lodgings elsewhere.

One of the conditions that Joan had been forced to accept in order to put a roof over her children was that the family would vacate the hostel after 3 months. Needless to say their one desire was to do just that. But as the weeks went by, and in spite of constant effort and their willingness to pay a reasonable rent, they found themselves unable to obtain another place.

After 3 months of trying to support and help his family from outside, Stan had had enough. Instead of the family moving out, he moved in.

On August 31st, officials of the Kent County Council arrived to evict the Daniels. The family barricaded themselves in. Intimidation was used. The water supply was cut off. Other residents in the Daniels' hut were told to leave so as to isolate them. But the residents showed tremendous spontaneous solidarity. A council official, Mr. H. Brown, said that 'thirty women and eighty children crowded into the corridor in a solid mass... the tyres of a car were let down... and the entrance to the hostel was barricaded by dustbins'. (1) Mr. Brown concluded that efforts to force the Daniels out had better be abandoned. With the solidarity of the other residents, Stan and Joan Daniels won the first round.

Thirteen other husbands then moved in. In the High Court, on Monday, October 4, the Kent Councillors got an interim injunction which would enable them to use force to separate the 14 husbands from their wives and children if they were still there after midday on Friday, October 8.

Appeals for help sent to 'the authorities' proved to be worse than useless. The Kent Councillors replied with threats and court action. The Minister of Housing, Mr. R.H.S. Crossman, did not even bother to reply to the letter he was sent, nor did the Tory Chairman of Bromley Housing Committee, councillor R.G. Foster, although many of the homeless families at King Hill come from that area.

(1) See Affidavit submitted on October 4, 1965 to the High Court of Justice, Queens Bench Division, in case of K.C.C. vs. Stanley Daniels and 14 others.

THE REBELS UNITE

The publicity around Stan Daniels and the defiant husbands did bring help however - from two left-wing groups committed to Direct Action and the kind of 'do-it-yourself politics' that Stan and his friends had been driven to.

On October 5, the Kent Solidarity Group had produced a leaflet (see Appendix 1) outlining what had happened so far. On October 9, a poster parade was held in the streets of Maidstone at which members of the two groups met one another, discovered they could work together and - more important - got personally to know a number of the homeless families who were eager to help distribute the leaflet.

On October 14, at a house in Bromley, the first of a regular series of meetings took place, attended by supporters of Socialist Action and the Solidarity Group, plus residents of the hostel. During the following week various members of these groups visited the hostel and talked to the other resident families. Questions were asked and answered and facts were checked, until the situation, the issues, and the alternatives were clearly understood by everyone. By the following Thursday, it was clear that Socialist Action and Solidarity were committed to absolute support for the homeless families in their struggle to be treated as human beings. An Appeal Fund was launched and widely circularised. Money began to come in from local factories, trade union branches and interested individuals.

THE CHARTER PROCLAIMED

On October 23, an open air meeting was held inside the main gate of the hostel. It was attended by practically every resident family and about 30 outsiders. The main purpose was to form a Committee of residents which would negotiate on behalf of them all, and to discuss the Charter of Demands (Appendix 2) which it was proposed to submit to the Kent County Council.

In order to distract and entertain the 100 or more children on the camp, a fancy dress parade and children's party had been arranged for the same afternoon. Many of the visitors brought gifts of toys, clothing and food for this purpose.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of Socialist Action, Jim Radford, but the microphone was soon handed over to the residents - husbands and wives. The Charter was read out and unanimously approved. The main demand was for immediate removal of the

threat of eviction for those who had overstayed their 3 months and for an end to the inhuman and unnecessary regulations separating husbands from their wives and children.

It was agreed that the Charter should be signed by every resident wife prepared to do so, before being presented to the Chairman of Kent County Council and that copies should also be sent to each individual councillor.

Once these decisions had been taken, that part of the meeting came to an end. The children's party began. It was while hordes of small children in a fantastic variety of fancy dress were being lined up for a parade that the local constabulary arrived on the scene.

A police car entered the gate from which emerged two P.C.s and an almost unbelievably stupid Chief Inspector, who in spite of the evidence provided by his eyes proceeded to blunder around shouting for about 10 minutes apparently under the delusion that he was breaking up a CND meeting!

It seems that one of the hostel staff, witnessing the unusual number of visitors and the strange spectacle of children actually enjoying themselves in King Hill, had telephoned the police. And, of course, one of the vans did have a CND symbol in the rear window.

THAT MAN AGAIN

I should view with great concern any arrangement to admit men, whether husbands or not, as a general rule. The reason is that some of the persons using the Hostel have standards of behaviour, particularly in relation to sexual matters, that are difficult to describe or comprehend. Thus, there is a man in the Hostel at present who first consorted with a mother, then with her daughter and now has both of them with him. Another case was that of a woman who came in with her children, having left the man with whom she was living. The reason that she left him was that she had been sharing this man - apparently in amity - with one other woman, by whom he also had children, but when the man introduced yet a third female partner into the household this became too much

Elliott Report, p.6.

Ploughing his way through the children, making ineffective attempts to confiscate the loud hailer and various cameras that were levelled at him, this over-zealous discredit to the Force managed to chivvy all the Press men off the premises, and ignoring all attempts to initiate a rational conversation, proceeded to bully and manhandle everyone who tried to speak to him. Eventually his big mouth took him a little too far when he referred to the residents as scum. A group of extremely angry women surrounded him and he was forced to dive into his car for safety. It was only after intervention by the very people he had been trying to eject that he was permitted to reverse out of the camp.

A detailed complaint concerning this incident (Appendix 3) was later sent to the Chief Constable of Kent, together with a list of 10 witnesses. The complaint was somehow 'investigated' without bothering to interview or even to contact any of these witnesses. In due course the complainant was told that no action or apology would be forthcoming.

MINISTERS 'DIRECTLY' INFORMED

At this time the Labour Government was making strenuous efforts to maintain its fragile majority by winning the Erith by-election. Their light-weight candidate, Mr. Jim Wellbeloved, was being bolstered by frequent visits from Cabinet Ministers.

On October 25 it was the turn of Richard Crossman, Minister of Housing, to visit the constituency. The Minister duly climbed onto the platform of the Erith Girls' Grammar School and beamed at a large audience, blissfully unaware that it contained a dozen or more families from King Hill and thirty or forty of their socialist friends.

Had he known this, he might perhaps have chosen not to address this meeting from behind a poster which boldly proclaimed 'ANOTHER LABOUR PLEDGE FULFILLED - FREEDOM FROM EVICTION'!

However, he began his speech without interruption. It was not until after some 15 or 20 minutes of unstinting praise for the Labour Party and its fantastic record in housing and protecting tenants, etc, that someone decided to inject a note of reality into the proceedings by asking 'WHAT ABOUT THE HOMELESS FAMILIES AT KING HILL?'

Instead of explaining that he knew nothing whatsoever about King Hill, Mr. Crossman chose to ignore the question. More and more of the audience joined in the questioning, until (when it became clear that Mr. Crossman had no intention of answering any

questions on this topic) the interruptions became constant and angry. The Chairman made repeated appeals and demands for order - promising that the Minister would answer questions later, but the more experienced among the questioners demanded a personal assurance from the Minister that he would eventually answer questions on King Hill, and when this was not forthcoming, even the Chairman, as he later confessed, shared in the general feeling of betrayal.

Amidst continuous uproar Mr. Crossman finally sat down. The inept candidate, Jim Wellbeloved (sic!) rose gaily to try and retrieve the situation by delivering a speech about an elaborate and fantastically expensive new town centre he wanted - a speech that had been carefully written well in advance to appeal to middle class voters.

The audience listened for a few minutes with growing incredulity. Then the questions began again, still directed at Crossman! The humiliated candidate tried to dismiss the homeless by inferring that they were irresponsible. He denounced their supporters as 'Trots and anarchists' or even worse 'members of Socialist Action'. It seemed as if the whole meeting suddenly came to its feet at this ludicrous evasion. It was notable that local trade unionists, who had frowned at earlier interruptions, were now angrily demanding that the legitimate questions of the homeless should be answered. At the height of the uproar, Brian Lomas, one of the husbands who was later to go to prison for refusing publicly to forswear his wife and children, coolly walked onto the platform behind the speakers and placed copies of the King Hill leaflet in front of them. He was grabbed by several stewards who began to manhandle him out of the hall. Other stewards attempted to remove people from the rear of the room, but they held their ground.



At this stage the Chairman gave up in despair. It was clear that the platform no longer had any control over the meeting. A violent situation was only averted when a member of Socialist Action produced a megaphone and called the meeting to order. Before handing it back to the chairman this speaker explained that they had not come with the intention of disrupting the meeting but solely to ask Mr. Crossman if he was aware of what was happening at King Hill. Did he know that women and children were being evicted? Did he know that children were being taken into compulsory care and forcibly separated from their parents? And now that he did know - would he do something about it? The hostel was by no means full. Would the Labour Government stand by and allow the Kent County Council to use police and bailiffs to evict these families?

The Labour Minister still did not answer. Shortly afterwards, he left the hall with a set face, a police escort, and the pleas and jeers of the homeless ringing in his ears.

The following day's papers described the meeting with varying degrees of bias and distortion. According to the 'Daily Mirror' 'a pitched battle took place between police, stewards and homeless demonstrators!'. In fact the police, for once, did not intervene. The only violence (apart from attempts by the stewards to maintain the Labour Party's democratic image by ejecting its critics) took place when one well dressed woman, who would have looked equally at home at a Conservative Party Conference, chose to declaim loudly that, as an Owner Occupier who had come along to hear Mr. Crossman, she was not interested in King Hill! Unfortunately, she said this standing immediately behind a mother of four, who for three months had endured the squalor and misery of King Hill. In turning to reprove this affluent exponent of the 'fuck you, Jack' mentality, the mother was seized by one of those moments of speechless exasperation in which emotion takes charge. Instead of words, she delivered a resounding slap.

The Labour candidate, appalled at the introduction of practical issues and human problems into his comfortable ascent to Westminster, made strenuous efforts to prevent any recurrence of this humiliation. At future meetings in Erith there were often more policemen and stewards than audience!

On November 4, at another local school, Bob Mellish, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, arrived to support Mr. Wellbeloved. Some 50 residents and friends of King Hill also turned up. Stewards with police backing refused admission to people they claimed to recognise, to anyone wearing a CND badge or a beard, or to anyone who admitted having come from King Hill. The meeting started with almost as many people outside the hall as in. A number of local people demanded to know the reason for this undemocratic discrimination. Mr. Wellbeloved repeated his fatuous statement that those supporting the homeless were not members of the Labour Party, and therefore should not be allowed to intrude into 'his' election! Even some of the party faithful found this difficult to swallow. The candidate was already having quite a rough passage, when one of the supporters who had managed to get inside, casually got up behind a patrolling steward and slipped open the bolts on the emergency doors at the side of the hall. The policemen guarding the door from the outside were taken completely by surprise. Half a dozen people got into the hall before anyone knew what had happened. As more homeless families and their supporters began to enter a dozen or more stewards rushed forward and violently attacked them, using fists and feet on men and women alike. One woman was punched full in the face and hurled backwards through the door. Her assailant was himself immediately thumped by a young man behind her. But most of the violence was left to the Labour Party S.S. who could be seen twisting the arms and kicking at the legs of those who came in.

THE WRECKERS

'For families at King Hill to outstay the 3 months is not normal. The 1964 figures show what happened in the days when, as a County Welfare Officer put it, "the system worked smoothly". Of 224 families passing through the hostel in 1964, 155 found housing or had it found for them. In 69 families some children were taken into care, but of this number 39 took them out within six months. The remaining 30 families - involving about 100 children - were broken up, often permanently.'

The Guardian, January 5, 1966.

Nevertheless, 8 or 9 people managed to get in and stay in until the doors were closed again, when they were dragged to the main entrance and thrown out. During this time, however, they succeeded in addressing the meeting and Mr. Mellish in particular. Mr. Mellish was reminded that he had received written notice of the question they wanted to ask him. It was obvious to everyone present that this considerable exercise of force was for the sole purpose of protecting the platform from certain questions that the outsiders wished to ask. Even the 'Daily Express' reporter wrote the following day that 'since the intruders did nothing but sit down and shout to be heard at what was a public meeting, I could see no cause for the violence with which they were ejected'.

Mr. Douglas Kepper, editor of the 'Socialist Leader', rose to shout in protest 'I am deeply shocked and horrified at what I see at a Labour meeting'. The statement was cheered by the rest of the audience, many of whom left the meeting to ask for leaflets and to express their disgust for the blackshirt tactics of Erith Labour Party.

The clamour inside continued until Mellish promised that he would go outside and talk to the demonstrators. Finally he came out and addressed them in the darkness. First he apologised for their exclusion from the meeting, blaming this on the local party. Then he explained that Crossman had now read the leaflet he had been given the previous week and that they had discussed the situation at King Hill with Kenneth Robinson, the Minister of Health, who was responsible for these places. He assured his listeners that Robinson was aware and concerned, and that representations were being made to the Kent County Council, asking them to relax their harsh and unnecessary rules.

THE MINISTER DEPLORES

...It may be observed that rules, or accommodation, which provide for the separation of families or for termination of their stay before there is any resolution of the need which led to their admission are hardly consistent with welfare in modern terms...

Part of letter (dated 7.12.65) from Ministry of Health to the Clerk of the KCC.

The hostel wives listened to him attentively. Then they told him that the County Medical Officer of Health, a Dr. A. Elliott, had been round the hostel advising them to give up their children voluntarily, to avoid having them taken into compulsory 'care'. 'Is this right?' they asked. 'Can they tell us to give up our children?'. 'Can you promise that our children will not be taken away from us?'. Mr. Mellish carefully refrained from making any promises. But he did denounce the Kent County Council, saying that 'this business of taking children into care is quite inhuman. It couldn't happen in London. Kent had better start following London's lead'.

The women returned to the hostel that night with a glimmer of hope.

THE SLEEP-IN

On Friday, November 12, in spite of the injunction and the pending court hearings, nine of the husbands announced in a signed press statement (see Appendix 4) that they felt it their primary duty as husbands and as men to be with their wives during this period of great strain and humiliation. 'To draw attention to this monstrous denial of common humanity' they said, 'we have decided to remain with our families this coming week end and to sleep with our wives in King Hill on Saturday night, November 13'.

The 'Sleep-in' was on. When supporters visited the hostel on Saturday after 8 pm (by which time all men were supposed to be out) it appeared that every husband was there. So was the press. There was no official interference, but the KCC chose that evening to send a private enquiry agent to serve writs on seven families who had exceeded their 3 months.

The fat and pompous agent served his writs in a most unctuous way, professing sympathy for the families he was helping to destroy, and dislike for the task he was performing. When asked why, in that case, he had taken on that case, he had taken on the job, he changed the subject.

After a short celebration at a pub (aptly called 'The Startled Saint') a few hundred yards down the road from the hostel, the husbands marched back to the gates. They entered the hostel, and showed that even the KCC couldn't tamper for ever with the laws of nature!

BRINGING LIFE TO COUNCIL MEETINGS

The date of the County Council's quarterly meeting was rapidly drawing near. There had been no word of acknowledgment from the officials or members of the KCC that they had received the Charter. A second letter was therefore sent to every member of the Council (Appendix 4). At the same time leaflets were being widely distributed to Trade Union branches and to individuals and organizations thought to be sympathetic. Messages of support and contributions to the fighting fund began to come in.

On November 17 a number of King Hill families and friends made their way to Maidstone to attend the Kent County Council meeting. Each councillor had been sent, the previous day, a third letter signed by Eric Lubbock, M.P., a copy of Audrey Harvey's article on 'Homelessness' (printed elsewhere in this pamphlet) and a precis of what had happened so far. They couldn't plead ignorance.

The report of the Health and Welfare Committee (Appendix 6) left the families in no doubt that the Council was determined to maintain the 3 months' limitation of stay and to enforce the exclusion of husbands. This remarkable document contained not a single reference to the misery these regulations were causing. It revealed no glimmer of awareness that there was a human problem at King Hill. It did however disclose that much earlier in one year, before the present campaign began, the Council had been invited by the Ministry of Health to review its policy and in particular the inflexibility of the rules which prevent husbands from occupying temporary accommodation with their wives and families and which in any circumstances restrict the stay of a family to a maximum of 3 months'. The report continued: 'Such review was undertaken and at its meeting on the 19th May 1965 the Council decided not to vary its policy, being firmly convinced, in the light of experience and the practical issues involved, that the existing arrangements were, in general, adequate and constituted the most effective and economical means for the discharge of the Council's statutory duty'.

The words 'adequate' and 'effective' are clearly more elastic than one had suspected! And the word 'profitable' might well have been substituted for 'economical'. The report clearly showed that in addition to the weekly rent of £1.2.6. paid by each woman, the KCC charge her local authority an additional £8.1.0 per week for the shelter she 'enjoys' in their dismal huts. (The KCC also receives an Exchequer grant, part of which goes to the provision of this type of accommodation).

On entering the lobby at County Hall, we found the stairway to the Council Chamber blocked by a large uniformed porter, who informed would-be listeners that all the public seats were full. Repeated questioning elicited the surprising information that 35 of the 40 seats available for the public were occupied by representatives of the press! (We later discovered that County Hall has a separate gallery for pressmen). From the surly, uncommunicative attitude of this official (and the proximity of a dozen or more policemen, including 2 Superintendents) we gathered that unwelcome visitors were expect

By lunchtime the number of King Hill residents and friends awaiting admission had grown to over 30. As the Council Chamber emptied, they formed an orderly queue at the foot of the stairs. A Superintendent explained that we could not occupy seats during the break, as there would be important papers lying around. He agreed that we were obviously first in line for whatever public seat might be available after lunch.

As 2 o'clock approached people began to come in and drift up the stairs. Since none of them were being vetted or questioned by the porter two people were eventually stopped by those at the head of the queue and asked politely whether they were going to the Council meeting and if so whether they were councillors or press. 'Yes, they were going to the meeting. No, they weren't either councillors or pressmen'. An explanation was promptly demanded from the Guardian on the Stairs, who refused to give one. A similar appeal to a Police Superintendent produced a shrug and the statement 'it's up to him', indicating Horatio.

This was the last straw. Having waited patiently for several hours the Socialist Action and Solidarity supporters announced their intention to enter the chamber and began edging their way past the uniformed obstacles. The police immediately went into action and began to thrust the leaders towards the main door. Those in front sat down and those behind milled forward. After attempting vainly to drag their limp burdens through the crowd the police gave up the idea of ejecting people. They fell back on blocking the stairs.

'I want to help the homeless as much as anybody - but these people are not members of the Labour Party..'

Jim Wellbeloved, Labour MP for Erith, during the bye election.

Since September, however, men have come and gone as they please and there have been numerous visitors from a variety of organisations - fashionably termed associations for protest and dissent - all of whom by active practice and example have created and encouraged wide breaches of the Council's rules and the Orders from the High Court.

Elliott Report, p.3.

A loud angry speech was made from the steps protesting at this barefaced exclusion of the public from what was an open council meeting. Councillors then in the lobby and on the stairs were asked to raise the matter inside the Chamber. Other councillors coming in were accosted with the same request.

Eventually, amid growing clamour, one of the councillors reappeared at the head of the stairs. He called down "there are 2 seats available". After a brief consultation with the police, Horatio climbed the stairs to investigate this alarming report. He returned a few minutes later to announce magnanimously that he would let two people in. Within seconds one of these had returned to tell us that there were at least 5 more empty seats in the Council Chamber. Horatio investigated and was denying the report when yet another Councillor left the chamber to confirm it. Finally, seven of the unwanted guests found themselves installed in the back row of the chamber. Another small victory for direct action!

One of the first things we observed in the chamber was that although the public seats undoubtedly contained newspapermen, they also contained a large number of men with short hair and large feet, who seemed to be more interested in the people sitting near them than they were in the proceedings. This was understandable, as the proceedings turned out to be unendurably tedious. It soon dawned on us that we were witnessing a filibuster, that would make it impossible for the Health and Welfare Committee's report to be discussed that day. As an additional precaution, the agenda had also been rearranged. Should Thanet apply for County Borough status at some unspecified future date? No one seemed to know. No one seemed to care. But one after the other, councillors rose to say exactly what some one else had said 5 minutes earlier. At the time the chamber was half empty, as Councillors left in droves to seek refreshment. At other times it was painfully apparent that NO ONE was listening to anyone. Speakers nevertheless continued to mumble their way through laborious notes.

Meanwhile the 25 of us who had been refused admission had retired to discuss the situation. Some remained as a decoy at the front entrance, while others went off to explore the deep bowels of County Hall. After a while we discovered another entrance to the building. Climbing a small staircase to the second floor we walked boldly along the corridors, chatting up various office girls en route, until another entrance to the Council Chamber was pointed out to us.

At half past four, the droning monotony of the KCC at work was disturbed by a ringing cry of 'Why aren't you discussing King Hill?'; 'We want to know what you are doing about King Hill'. Intruders had burst into the sparsely occupied Press Gallery. Police were suddenly everywhere and quickly pulled the unofficial pressmen out before they could barricade themselves in. As the chairman was about to shrug the matter off with some brief comment, the door at the side of his platform suddenly burst open. A bearded man stepped up to a decorative brass rail almost immediately below the Chair (and on a higher level than the rest of the chamber) and shouted: 'There is something you ought to know. Families in King Hill Hostel are being destroyed. Men are not allowed to sleep with their wives. Children are crying for their fathers'. At this point he was cut short by the pressure of a policeman's forearm across his throat. As he was pulled backwards, another policeman chopped at his wrists until he released his hold on the brass bar to be dragged outside. The 'Kent Messenger' gave this episode a big front page splash in its issue of November 19, 1965.

...The Council will, where it considers necessary and as circumstances permit, improve premises providing accommodation which are for the time being under its direct control. It will continue to take such steps as it considers practicable to secure the improvement of other premises or parts thereof in which accommodation is provided by the Council. These improvements will also include the provision of additional services, amenities and requisites... and such other matters as will be conducive to the comfort, happiness and well-being of the residents therein and the attainment of a pleasant normal home-like atmosphere...

From 'Scheme for the Exercise of the Council's Functions' (under section 21 of National Assistance Act, 1948). This Scheme was submitted to the Government by the KCC in May 1949.

The chairman, now clearly ruffled, was expressing his views on those who sought to influence the Council by such disgraceful behaviour, when he was again interrupted. One of the men who had been allowed in got up and walking calmly down amongst the councillors, addressed the Chairman: 'I am sure you will appreciate, Mr. Chairman, the feelings of those who have been deliberately excluded from this meeting. This Council is pursuing a policy of committing men to prison simply because they are visiting their wives. Women are being turned onto the street and children forcibly taken away from their parents because of decisions taken here. This council is responsible for all this. Surely it is reasonable to expect you to discuss these matters. This is far more important than anything you've been talking about this afternoon.'

This unofficial speaker was able to say a good deal more than the others because by the time the policemen were able to catch up with him he was well amongst the councillors' benches. Instead of resisting he continued to move slowly towards the door.

The ejected demonstrators reassembled in the courtyard. As the councillors began to leave the building at the close of the meeting, they were questioned - individually and in groups - about their attitude to King Hill. Many refused either to answer or to listen. Others tried to be facetious but were soon brought to earth by the bitter logic of their questioners. One thing was made abundantly clear to us. Few of the councillors had more than the haziest idea of the conditions and regulations governing the hostel or of the problems faced by the residents. One or two councillors promised to see the place for themselves. Members of the Labour Group agreed to meet two people from King Hill at 9 am the following Wednesday before the resumed council meeting.

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN

Whilst there has always been a full regard for the need to avoid children being taken into care, sight has not been lost of the fact that there are circumstances when in the children's own interests, that is a proper course.

Elliott Report, p.4.

When the Council met again, on November 24, the 'public' was allowed to enter. Once again the police, in uniform and out, were very much in evidence. Prior to the meeting we had sent every councillor a copy of an article on homelessness by Audrey Harvey, and a 3 page leaflet outlining the history of the present struggle, together with a covering letter from Eric Lubbock, Liberal MP for Orpington.

The meeting was a farce. With one or two notable exceptions such as Councillor Josephs from Ramsgate and Mrs. Clothier from Gillingham, few of the councillors seemed to grasp the principles involved or to feel any real concern for the families and children they were discussing.

The report went into minute detail on subjects such as 'vandalism' at the hostel. It quoted the exact number of broken windows in a given period and the cost of repairing damaged walls and toilets. But it was apparently not considered either relevant or necessary to inform councillors that the Minister of Health had written two further letters to the Council (on October 26 and November 15) asking for an enquiry and expressing his concern over the rules which resulted in children being taken from their parents. Nor were they told that a letter had been received from the Home Office drawing the attention of the Council to its responsibility under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act, 1963, which aims to lessen the need for children to be received into care.

A feeble attempt by the Labour Group to set up a special sub-committee to investigate the situation at King Hill was swept aside. The Health and Welfare Group had already set up its own sub group to do this. No mention was made of the Residents' Committee or the King Hill Charter. Despite a strong speech by Councillor Josephs, no real attempt was made to consider the desirability of changing the rules. There were no organized interruptions but occasional spontaneous interjections from the public seats at some of the more fatuous or inaccurate statements resulted in several of the disgusted Friends and Residents being escorted from the chamber by the police.

The battle in the courts had meanwhile resulted in the imprisonment of Roy Mills and Brian Lomas for the dastardly crime of staying with their wives. Throughout the hearings there had been pickets outside the High Court distributing leaflets and carrying placards drawing attention to the fact that there were 'TWO MEN ON TRIAL FOR SLEEPING WITH THEIR WIVES'. Another poster read: 'Is marriage a crime? The KCC say yes!!'.

OUTSIDE BRIXTON

On Sunday, November 28, almost 100 people met outside Lambeth Town Hall and marched up Brixton Hill to the prison. Half the marchers were from the hostel. There were about 30 children. Those of Roy Mills bore placards stating 'My Daddy is in prison for being a good Daddy'.

Led by Jim Radford, speaking through a powerful loud hailer, the marchers made their way to the rear of the prison where the upper windows of C Block are visible from the road. Ignoring the police who had said that no demonstration would be allowed at that spot, the march halted at Thornbury Road and various people including Andy Anderson, Terry Scott and Mrs. Mills spoke through the loud hailer. Messages of support and sympathy were given while the police in cars and on foot stood by. A great cheer went up when several arms were seen to be waving through the iron bars. Finally the demonstrators marched away singing 'We Shall Overcome'. We heard afterwards that although Roy and Brian had not heard the speeches, many people in the prison had. All the messages were conveyed.



CALLING MR. ROBINSON

On December 1st Mr. Justice Lawton released Mills and Lomas and suggested that the KCC should relax its rules over Christmas and allow husbands to stay.

The following Sunday a coach brought people from King Hill to Kentish Town Underground Station. Here they were met by the Friends and various other supporters, and together we marched to 12 Grove Terrace, the home of Kenneth Robinson, Minister of Health. Posters asked 'WILL THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT SAVE US FROM THE KENT COUNTY COUNCIL?' and proclaimed 'RACHMAN IS NOT DEAD. HE IS ON THE KENT COUNTY COUNCIL'.

Mr Robinson answered the knock on his door and invited three of the hostel residents inside. He promised that although he could not interfere with legal processes, he would do everything in his power to bring about an improvement in the situation at King Hill. At the meeting held outside his house Mr. Robinson was urged to take a more forceful line with the KCC. A letter signed by members of the Residents' Committee - which called upon him to 'show us that Labour's promised freedom from eviction applies to King Hill' - was left with him.

This demonstration received good publicity in Monday's papers. The following week at least 100 people turned up for a repeat performance. This time the Minister did not answer the door and the police refused to allow a meeting outside the house. It took place instead directly opposite on the other side of the road. A number of speakers called upon Mr. Robinson to get moving on this problem and to keep the promises he had made.

Other pressures were being brought to bear on Mr. Robinson. Eric Lubbock was corresponding with him. Mrs. Anne Kerr (2) MP for Chatham was making representations to him. Various councils including Dartford and Malling had conveyed their distaste for the KCC's tyranny at King Hill. The Simon Community had announced its plan to hold a 3-day march from the hostel gates to the Embankment.

The Kent Federation of Labour Parties, spurred on by Anne Kerr, paid a bold nocturnal visit to the hostel on December 9. The deputation was surprised to find not one, but two, joint meetings of Residents and Friends taking place simultaneously. The Labourites explained that although they could not participate in the direct action campaign, they would like to arrange a lobby of Kent MPs at the House of Commons. Their offer was accepted - without illusions - by the Residents and Friends.

THE LOBBY

Twenty-four hostel residents came to London by coach on the evening of Wednesday December 15. About 40 people entered the House of Commons, to be met by Anne Kerr.

(2) Mrs. Kerr had been visited at the House of Commons by Jim Radford and Andy Anderson and had been horrified to hear that in her constituency families were being crossed off the housing list once they 'left the district' by moving to King Hill.

As anticipated, there was a striking shortage of Kent MPs. Shirley Williams, Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Health, was there however, to report back to Mr. Robinson. Earlier that evening she had spoken strongly against the KCC's administration of King Hill in a television programme. The meeting went well apart from an unsuccessful and rather ridiculous attempt to exclude representatives of the Friends of King Hill, on the ground that the Committee room had been booked by and for the Labour Party of which they were not members. This line of argument was dropped quickly when the Friends pointed out that the lobby was supposed to be for the benefit of the homeless - not the Labour Party, and made it clear that they had no intention whatsoever of being excluded. In fairness to the 20 odd members of Tonbridge and Sevenoaks Labour Parties who turned up most of them probably knew nothing about this little altercation which took place before their arrival.

PICKETING ELLIOTT

The following Saturday about 16 residents and an equal number of Friends marched through the streets of Maidstone to the comfortable, secluded home of Dr. A. Elliott, the man chiefly responsible for administering King Hill and the main advocate of evictions and 'discipline'. Throughout the campaign the Doctor has refused to discuss or to negotiate with the Residents' Committee or with the Friends. It was at his suggestion that the staff at King Hill swore the affidavits which sent the two husbands to prison.

Placards carried on the march read: 'Kent needs a new, humane Medical Officer'. 'Dr. Elliott, Kent's workhouse master'. 'While Dr. Elliott sleeps with his wife, the homeless are jailed for sleeping with theirs'. Every home in Lancet Lane was leafleted. A meeting was held outside Dr. Elliott's residence, 'The Sycamores'. Since then there have been several other pickets, including one on Christmas Day, when Mr. Pithkeathly a hostel husband, and Heather and Derek Russell spent the afternoon patrolling in front of Dr. Elliott's windows.

The Doctor is reported to have been extremely annoyed at this 'audacity'. He was equally annoyed when, together with every member of the KCC, all Kent MPs, sundry Ministers, the Queen and the hostel staff, he received a specially printed Xmas card from the homeless. Beneath a particularly squalid photograph of the hostel huts, with a dustbin in the foreground, the card said 'WE HOPE THAT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE ENJOYING THE FESTIVE SEASON'. The inside of

the card read 'WE ARE NOT, at Kent County Council's King Hill Hostel, West Malling'. On the cards sent to KCC members the inside text read: 'THANKS TO YOU, we are not...'

Mrs. Lynch, the 'Welfare' officer at the hostel was so incensed at receiving this card that she drove first to Knockholt, where she confronted an innocent and startled Brian Richardson, on his doorstep, with a demand for an apology. When she finally accepted that Brian had nothing to do with it, she drove on to Beckenham, where Jim Radford cheerfully admitted designing and posting the card. Mrs. Lynch refused to believe that any of the homeless families 'that she did so much for' could possibly have wanted to send such a card to her. She hurried back to her comfortable house in the hostel grounds to write a strong letter to the 'Kent Messenger' in which she named Jim Radford as the sole perpetrator of this unkind cut. 'The card' she stated, 'was not from the homeless at all'. Unfortunately the 'Kent Messenger' printed, next to her letter, one signed by 35 hostel residents in which they made it clear that the Christmas card had been thoroughly discussed at two full meetings of the Residents' Committee and that both the wording and the list of proposed recipients had met with unanimous approval!

The campaign continues. Further demonstrations are planned. A duplicated newspaper 'The King Hill News' has been produced to keep everyone in the hostel informed about the progress of the campaign. The first issue provides the residents with the sort of useful information (bus timetables, welfare facilities, useful phone numbers, etc.) that Mrs. Lynch and her assistants should be attending to.

The residents still live in uncertainty and worry. But there is a determination and an assurance in their attitude that was not there 3 months ago. These people have discovered that there are people who care and who will stick their necks out to help. They have proved to the country (and much more important, to themselves) that with courage and unity a handful of working class families can defy the might of entrenched bureaucracy.

This fight will go on until the KCC accepts the welfare principles of the twentieth century and begins to apply them at King Hill.

EVICTIIONS

BY ANDY ANDERSON

We have mentioned elsewhere the pressures exerted on mothers of homeless families which compel them to sign the 'form of undertaking' - NA 22 - before being admitted to King Hill.

This is followed by another subtle form of bullying. At least once a month a letter is sent to each of the residents signed by Dr. A. Elliott (over the euphemistic title of County 'Welfare' Officer). In this letter, he refers to the 'undertaking' and reminds residents that they must leave the hostel by a date exactly three months from the day they entered.

The attitude of the authorities is well shown up in a letter read to a special committee meeting of the KCC held early in September 1965 to discuss action against certain husbands. The letter came from a close colleague of Dr. Elliott, a certain Miss M.M. Burrows, then on holiday in Switzerland. This middle-aged spinster from the parish of Kemsing is chairman of the Children's Committee! (1) She wrote asking why legal action was only to be taken against the husbands. Action should also be taken to evict the families. All the families who had reached their three-months limit should be evicted. The good lady was concerned that action had not been taken sooner. Miss Burrows ended her letter by assuring the committee that she was having a lovely time, weather splendid, etc, etc...

The KCC's attempt to force the families onto the streets did not begin until mid-November, when 8 of the mothers who had over-stayed the three months 'allowed' by the KCC were served with High Court writs. Mrs. Joan Daniels and Mrs. Blackman were the first to be notified. Their cases were to come before the Registrar in Maidstone on November 23. They applied for legal aid. Legal aid was refused. The letter from the Law Society to Mrs. Blackman giving 'grounds' for this refusal stated that she had not made out a prima facie case. Hadn't she signed an undertaking which entitled the County Council to possession after 3 months? It was 'ungrateful' of Mrs. Blackman, said the Law Society, to allege that she had signed under duress.

In the Maidstone court, on November 23, Stan Daniels succeeded in his attempt to represent his wife. But his success went further. Without any assistance from lawyers, he had prepared a defence in some considerable detail. He had presented only the first part of it when confusion broke out on the opposite side. They quickly adjourned the proceedings, for an indefinite period. Mrs. Blackman then went before the Court. The hearing lasted less than a minute - just time enough for her case to be similarly adjourned.

The KCC then decided to concentrate on the case of Joan Daniels. The wording of their application for possession had been completely altered when they again appeared before the court, on January 6 1966. They asked for the case to be heard in the High Court, London, on the grounds that it would take longer than two hours. It is clear that the KCC are making this a test case. If they win, they feel they will promptly be able 'legally' to evict the other dozen or so families, regardless of whether they have anywhere to go or of whether these families will then be split up even more. The hearing is scheduled for early March. You will be hearing a lot more about it, in due course.

(1) This committee had to be set up by the KCC under the Children Act 1948. Home Office circular No. 160/48, describing the purpose of this Act, says that Children's Committees must 'keep in mind the importance of doing all that is possible to save children from suffering the misfortune of being deprived of a normal home life... To keep the family together must be the first aim.' See also Children and Young Persons Act 1963, Section I (1).

POLICE IMAGE

A meeting of the Health and Welfare Committee of the KCC was held on December 14, 1965. Mr. G.T. Heckels, Clerk to the Council, submitted a report to this meeting, which throws an interesting light on the relations between the KCC and the County Constabulary.

We are pleased to divulge the contents of this restricted correspondence. The 'incident on the afternoon of the 23rd of October' refers to the events described in Appendix III.

'As desired by the Residential Services Sub-Committee, I have been in touch with the Chief Constable regarding various incidents at the hostel which had necessitated police intervention.

The following reply has been received from the Deputy Chief Constable:

...With regard to the item concerning the incident on the afternoon of the 23rd of October when the police were called to a meeting being held by members of CND here again it was not possible to take any positive action since the hostel staff declined to request police assistance to eject obvious trespassers. The police have very restricted powers in acting on private premises and you would no doubt agree that by attempting to eject these people unlawfully we would have probably been liable to an action for assault.

The committee may be assured that in spite of the antagonism of the occupants of the hostel and their complete lack of cooperation in law enforcement, we shall continue to make every endeavour to respond to requests for assistance from the hostel staff and to trace persons responsible for any offences. In the circumstances, I think it is in no way surprising - measured against the general back-

ground - that enquiries into small thefts and damage at this establishment are seldom successful.

The occupants of the hostel are well aware of our limited powers in dealing with certain matters and I do not see how we can lawfully and properly do more than we have towards trying to help the staff in dealing with individual instances as they arise.

With regard to the meeting of the Health and Welfare Committee on the 14th December at which this matter is to be discussed, I feel it would be unwise for the police to be present on such an occasion when matters of an operational nature are bound to be dealt with. Undoubtedly, we shall be called to this hostel on future occasions either by the staff or by the occupants, and I think it is most important that it should not appear that we have taken sides in the matter. The duty of the police is clearly to act impartially in taking such measures as may be necessary to enforce the law and our presence at such a meeting might cause this impartiality to be in doubt. In the circumstances, therefore, unless you have any further views on the matter, the police will not be represented at the Health and Welfare Committee meeting.'