

THE MEANING OF KINGHILL

The campaign around King Hill has thrown light into some pretty murky corners.

For years the KCC had been getting away with its inhuman policies. It had taken the homeless on piecemeal and away from the public gaze. The silence of the residents was made up of fear, hopelessness and ignorance of their basic rights. As long as their resistance could be fragmented, talked to death or shunted into the harmless channels of official correspondence, all went fairly smoothly. No noisy protests. No major rows. Every dastardly little deed deftly swept under the carpet. But last September collective resistance suddenly developed. The KCC had to act in the full glare of publicity.

DIVIDE AND RULE

When people arrive at King Hill they are unofficially but quite promptly 'sorted out' by the authorities. Dossiers on the various families are compiled, based on reports from social workers, the previous housing authority, the hostel staff, and others. Many of these reports are inaccurate, others are hopelessly biased. The homeless are soon pigeon-holed. There are 'reliable' people, who are likely to be 'grateful' for the roof provided over their heads and who won't cause 'trouble'. And there are the others: the 'feckless', the 'improvident', the 'trouble-makers'.

Most of the 'goodies' gradually move into a special block. They tend to get rehoused before the others. The 'baddies' remain, 'difficult' people, an 'insoluble' problem...

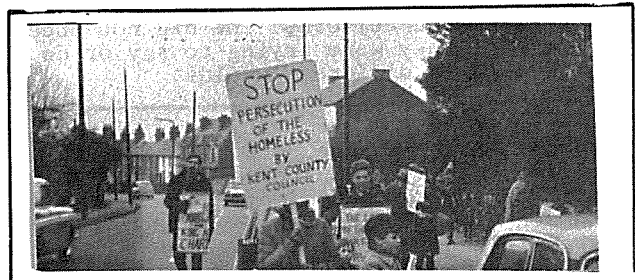
For years the cooperation of the goodies helped things go smoothly at King Hill. The rules were not challenged. They were therefore retained. Because favouritism was not open or blatant its effects were all the more pernicious. It divided the homeless. In a subtle manner it fostered the belief that acquiescence paid. The 'rights' of those who initiated the decisions to continue doing so - and the nature of the decisions themselves - were never questioned.

All this has now changed.

SEEING THROUGH THE LAW

Decisions taken at different levels of the modern bureaucratic administrative machine tend to reinforce and buttress one another. The division of labour among those who rule was shown up to a nicety in relation to King Hill.

The KCC seeks the help of the Courts against men who have challenged certain of its decisions. The Court is 'not concerned' with the humanity or otherwise of these decisions. It is not even concerned with the legitimacy of the decisions. It takes all this for granted. It accepts - as a premise - both the validity of the rules and



the claim by the KCC that these rules have been broken. The Court, in its wisdom, imposes penalties on the 'transgressors'.

The KCC then claims that the action of the Courts (in sending the men to prison) proves the legitimacy of their rules. (1) Surely, they imply, the Courts would never send people to gaol unless they had committed some serious offence. The Court decision encourages the KCC to act more boldly. The KCC proceeds to take further action, confident in the assumption that the Courts will give support. After all, those who are statutorily entitled to take some decisions can impose pretty well any decisions. Natural inertia operates in the interests of the decision-takers.

At a different level another kind of buttressing takes place. No one is personally responsible for anything. The buck is passed to and fro. The Judge proclaims that the correctness of the law is not for him to comment on. He 'only applies' it. He therefore 'regretfully' sends the homeless husbands to Brixton gaol. The Minister of Housing and Local Government 'would like to help'. After all the rehousing of people being evicted from local government premises might be thought to be his concern. But the ultimate responsibility for Part III Accommodation turns out to be a matter for the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health would, of course, also like to help. But he can't do anything as long as there are Court cases, injunctions, appeals, etc. In other words, he can't intervene to prevent evictions until the evictions have taken place. The KCC, meanwhile, is sitting pretty. It only has periodically to threaten legal action for total and permanent paralysis to afflict one and all... one and all that is who play the game according to this particular set of rules.

But the whole system is very sensitive to interference by people who don't share the basic assumptions. This was shown again and again.

When the four husbands were first brought up before Mr. Justice Lawton they were 'legally represented' (i.e. they met their Counsel a few minutes before the Court proceedings started). But, however well intentioned, their Counsel shared none of their basic beliefs. She did not understand what they were trying to say or do. They lived in different worlds.

(1) See, for instance, p.6 of the Elliott Report: 'Both the Master of the Rolls and Mr. Justice Lawton commented on the "no men" rule and, after reviewing its ostensible hardship and the reasons for it considered it right'.

MINIMUM SECURITY

The acceptance of universal welfare services as a part of national life results in a natural unwillingness to accept that there are some groups of people, ranging from train robbers to some parents of homeless families, who show no desire to conform to acceptable standards of life and who pursue anti-social attitudes in defiance of society so long as they can.

Elliott Report, p.1.

She probably lived in the same world as Counsel for the KCC, in the same world as the judge, in the same world as the businessmen, bureaucrats, retired colonels and admirals in Maidstone County Hall. Is it surprising that the 'defence' proved a stone around the defendants' neck? Before they knew what was up the husbands found 'abject apologies' being presented to the Court on their behalf.

The judge had the initiative. The men were on the defensive. The judge decided to play it firm but magnanimous. He imposed conditions. They accepted. Playing the game according to the rules proved in practice an expensive trap. Between them judge and barristers had determined the area of discussion. None of the real issues emerged. The KCC won hands down.

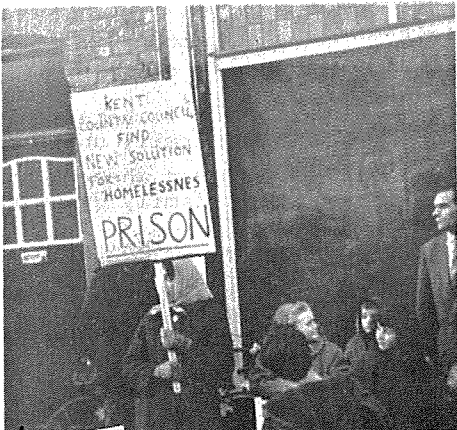
A few days later, the men realized what was happening. They decided to act on their own behalf. They publicly revoked their undertakings. In so doing they attracted nation-wide attention to their plight and to the conditions and rules of King Hill. They spotlighted the actions of the KCC and the role of the Courts. They made a stand which won the admiration of thousands. They showed that there is a moral and human law, higher than the law of the courts. They dispelled the myth of the 'humane judge'. They showed that judges had a social function to fulfil: to apply laws made by unrepresentative minorities in the interests of unrepresentative minorities.

The action of Brian Lomas and Roy Mills clarified the basic issues. Everyone appeared in his true colours. Brian and Roy went to prison. The image of the KCC emerged tarnished and tattered from the encounter. And the judge was shown to be wrong in proclaiming that the courts could not be used for airing social grievances!

A TOTAL CONDITION

Life at King Hill starkly shows up the totality of the modern proletarian condition. These families are caught in a web. The impersonal and hostile fabric of this web dominates and permeates every aspect of their lives. Wherever they turn, they come up against a cold, callous reality, based on rules regulations and institutions beyond both comprehension and control. The object of the rules appears to be simply the imposition of an alien almost abstract will on those least able to fend for themselves.

Few of the families at King Hill have any savings. Wages are usually well below average. From economic necessity many of the King Hill husbands have had to change jobs. Or if they have kept their jobs, hours have to be spent on travel. Being pushed around, at work, is nothing new to these families. In this respect their fate is commonplace. Hundreds of thousands are submitted to this in modern industrial societies. Where these families differ is that in every other aspect of their lives they also experience the tremendous pressures of a hostile environment. Outside of work, they experience the same alienation, the same degradation, the same systematic dehumanization. When husbands apply for work and they say their families are at King Hill, prospective employers turn their noses up. When wives apply for accommodation giving the address of the cursed hostel people just don't want to know. The children get snubbed at the local school. The tradesmen are calculating and cautious. The very name of the hostel carries a social stigma. Treated like dirt, the families gradually begin to feel like it.



Those who end up at King Hill have been deprived of a part of themselves. The destruction has taken place bit by bit. They have lost some of their self-confidence, some of their awareness of their rights, some of their ability or will to fight back. Because less articulate than most they get pushed around - by the local N.A.B. bureaucrats, by local doctors, by the officials of housing committees, etc. They are on the receiving end 24 hours a day. Look at the picture of 28 year old Mrs. Mildred Mills, taken outside Brixton prison (see cover). It sums up the totality of the proletarian condition, even in 1965.

The Friends of King Hill have helped these families regain something of what they had lost. They have helped them stand on their feet again and look the world in the eye. They have helped them reappropriate a fraction of their lost humanity.

SOME PROBLEMS

It has not been plain sailing. During such a struggle, just as in a prolonged strike or other form of direct confrontation with authority, different people tend to come to the forefront at different stages. People prominent at one stage may fall back for a breather. Others then advance to carry the brunt. This is both natural and unavoidable. No human shoulders can or should be expected to carry the full weight of the state's repression. No one should have the undivided responsibility for carrying the struggle on.

The development of a new consciousness is a slow, painful and uneven process. Many will lapse into inactivity when their personal problems have been solved. Illusions in traditional institutions - or in traditional methods of struggle - may only be shed very slowly, and constantly tend to be reborn. On the other hand the most timid today may tomorrow be advocating the most radical measures. Each contribution should be welcome. We must learn to weave each personal effort into the dynamic of the struggle as a whole, without false optimism, and without fruitless recrimination.

The ups and downs of the campaign, the uncertainties, the false hopes, the divisive tactics of the authorities, the brutalising effects of the conditions these families have had to endure during the campaign, all these acted against any rapid and lasting growth of solidarity. When progress is slow there is a tendency to blame one another. The slowness is not

seen, as it should be, as proof of the resilience of the opponent. It is not seen as a spur to more determined action. It is attributed to the defects and shortcomings of those in the same boat as oneself. What is remarkable under these circumstances is not that solidarity and the level of consciousness only developed slowly and erratically. It is that they developed at all. That they have grown as they have more than makes up for all the difficulties.

In a struggle such as this, radical organizations can play an important role. They can help in providing information, addresses and technical facilities. They can ensure that those in struggle get the widest assistance and publicity possible. They can honestly convey to those they are helping some of the previous experience of their own militants.

This however will only be possible if such organizations see themselves as instruments of the struggle, not as some kind of self-appointed leadership. The tempo of struggle and the assessment of the sacrifices to be made must always be determined by those most directly involved. No external organization can lastingly substitute itself for those it is fighting for. If it does so it brings about both the defeat of the struggle and its own destruction.

The help offered by Socialist Action, Solidarity and others during the King Hill

struggle often exceeded that offered - or expected - in the context of traditional politics. For many - both in the hostel and out - it was a unique experience. The close, personal, almost daily contact between all those involved resulted in a deep awareness of needs, many of which were unspoken.

Those helping the homeless at King Hill were not only obtaining information, collecting money, seeking legal advice, phoning contacts establishing relations with the press, addressing envelopes arranging transport and making posters. They were not only writing, typing, duplicating and distributing leaflets. They were not only discussing tactics and helping to organise demonstrations. They were deeply involved in dozens of other problems, considered marginal by traditional revolutionaries.

Temporary accommodation had to be provided, coal had to be obtained, clothes and toys had to be distributed to the children and parties organized for them. Medical help and advice about family planning had to be obtained when asked for. Tips had to be given on how to stand up to the local N.A.B. bureaucrats and how to obtain every penny to which each family was entitled.

Only constant attention to these problems has ensured the sustained cohesion of the homeless and of those helping them. A solid basis of mutual confidence has been laid for the next stages of the struggle.

In November 1965 the KCC contacted neighbouring County Councils to see what their practice was concerning the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless families. The answers speak for themselves:

<u>County</u>	<u>Number of Premises</u>	<u>Total Accommodation</u>	<u>Limit of stay</u>	<u>Exclusion of husbands</u>
Essex	2	34	None	Not where separate family units provided
Hertfordshire	2	23	None	Not where separate family units provided
Surrey	5	60	4 months, with extension as necessary.	No
East Sussex	1	8	3 months	Yes, but daily visiting by permission.
West Sussex	2	32	None	No
Kent	1	71	3 months	Yes, even where separate family units provided.

VICTORY AT KINGHILL

andy anderson

The King Hill Campaign has now been indefinitely postponed. It has been a great success. After 12 months of struggle, the main objectives have been achieved.

The K.C.C. has rescinded the rule excluding husbands from living with their homeless families in Part-III accommodation at King Hill Hostel. The rule limiting a family's stay to a maximum of three months will not be applied in future. The living conditions at the hostel have been improved. The huts have been redecorated. Marley-tile floors have been laid. The solid-fuel cooking stoves are being replaced. Some 30 or more properties have been acquired by the K.C.C. for housing homeless families.

There is no shred of doubt that all this has come about as a direct result of relentless pressure. Hitherto the K.C.C. had treated homeless families as second-class citizens, and the living conditions at the hostel were among the worst in the country. Kent held the national record for the largest number of children of homeless families taken annually into care. For over 14 years the rules about 'no husbands' and the 'three-months limit' had been ruthlessly applied.

During the twelve months of the campaign, not a single child was taken into care, husbands lived at the hostel in force, often in open defiance of Court Orders, and not one of the many families who overstayed the three months was evicted.

The campaign's success is no mean achievement. Its driving force was the feasibility of success, persistent activity, and determination to see it through no matter how long it might take. The campaign took many new and varied forms. So much heat was turned on individuals and groups in authority (from County Councillors and Council officials to Cabinet Ministers) - and we so embarrassed them by local and national publicity - that eventually they were only too glad to seek a real solution.

In our last report on the campaign (vol. III, No. 12) we described the events up to November 1965. This is briefly what has happened since then. (1)

During November the K.C.C. continued its attempts at intimidation. High Court writs were served on mothers who had overstayed the 3 months. The Council wanted a Court order to evict them. In the Maidstone High Court, on November 23, the case of Joan Daniels was the first to be heard. Her husband Stan so successfully presented their joint defence that proceedings had to be adjourned until January 8... when they were again adjourned to the London High Court. The K.C.C. had decided to make Joan Daniels a test case.

At the end of November Roy Mills and Brian Lomas were released from prison amidst a lot of ballyhoo from the Judge about Dingley Dell and the spirit of Christmas. During December and even on Christmas Day there were demonstrations and pickets outside the Maidstone home of Dr. A. Elliott who, as County Welfare Officer, was chiefly responsible for the administration of King Hill and had been the main advocate of evictions and 'discipline'.

On January 2nd, 1966, a vicious article about Roy Mills appeared in 'The People'. Most of it was maliciously untrue. An action for libel was begun immediately, and is still proceeding. The Friends of King Hill have pledged themselves to see this through.

January 8: while some of the Friends were running a party for about 120 King Hill children, others, with some of the children's parents, were again demonstrating outside the home of Dr. Elliott.

During January the first issue of the 'King Hill News' was produced. Although it contained 8 pages of news and information mainly for residents, copies were sent to all those who had shown an interest in the campaign. Two further issues were later produced.

Throughout February, Mrs. N. Lynch, the 'social worker' at the hostel, unsuccessfully continued her mischievous attempts to drive a wedge between the Friends and the residents.

(1) For a detailed account of the early phases of the campaign, see 'KCC versus the Homeless', a joint 'Solidarity' and 'Socialist Action' pamphlet (1/6 post free from Heather Russell, 53A Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent).

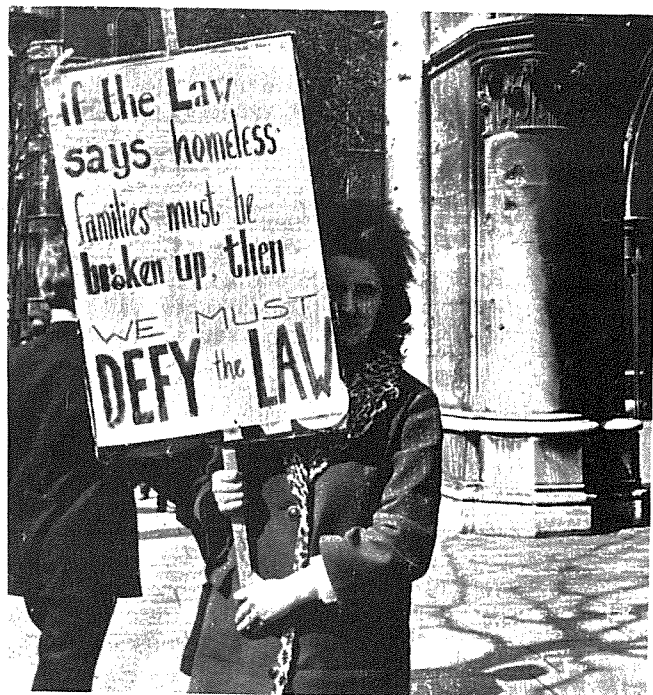
In March 1966 the K.C.C. resumed their attack. Writs were served on twelve King Hill husbands. On March 29, at the High Court in London, the K.C.C. were granted injunctions restraining these men from even visiting their families except between 10 am and 8 pm on Saturdays and Sundays. The K.C.C.'s evidence took the form of affidavits from the 'helpful' hostel staff (Mesdames Lynch and Lipscombe) and two Council officials. Injunctions were also granted to the K.C.C. restraining Jim Radford and myself from visiting the hostel. The only 'evidence' here was supplied by the ubiquitous Nan Lynch. She claimed that we visited the hostel solely for 'propaganda purposes'!

After the hearing most of the husbands continued their successful defiance and in fact proceeded straight back from the Courtroom to the hostel! For a time some of them disguised themselves by wearing hoods on entering and leaving. This made it difficult for the hostel staff to identify them and help send them to prison for 'contempt of Court'.

On April 2nd, another Open Day was held at the hostel. MPs, Kent Councillors and the Minister of Health (the minister responsible for the accommodation of homeless people) were invited. They all had 'good' reasons for their absence. But eight members of the St. Pancras Tenants Association turned up. They announced their intention of giving full support to the struggle. A private detective in the pay of the K.C.C. mingled with the people. He seemed embarrassed when pointed out during a speech from the platform.

The case of 'K.C.C. v. Daniels' began in the London High Court on April 25. This was the test case the K.C.C. hoped would enable them to evict the 33 families who had overstayed the 3 months. The case dragged on until May 3rd, with the K.C.C.'s lawyers scraping the bottom of their slimy barrel of innuendo, sarcasm and smears in an attempt to discredit the Daniels family. The K.C.C. got the possession order they wanted but it was a hollow victory. Mr. Justice Browne made it quite clear that this case was not to be used as a precedent in actions against hostel residents unless alternative accommodation had first been offered and refused. During the trial Council for the K.C.C. repeatedly expressed amazement at how the Friends had managed to secure and publicize various internal K.C.C. documents and correspondence.

On May 22, more than 100 people, including 30 from the hostel, marched from Kentish Town station to the home of the Minister of Health, Kenneth Robinson. Posters demanded action from Robinson to get Roy and Stan released from prison and to compel the K.C.C. to rescind the 'no husbands' and 'three months limit' rules. The police attempted to direct the march to a spot 250 yards away from the Minister's house, on the other side of the road. They were neatly out-manoeuvred by a very simple tactic. A message passed down the column and as we passed the Minister's house everyone 'dispersed', turned right, crossed the road, and individually converged on the Minister's doorstep. Several people made speeches over the loudspeaker.



April 1966. Families from King Hill Hostel demonstrate outside the Law Courts, London, during the trial of Mrs. Joan Daniels.

Six days later, during the Whitsun weekend, Robinson opened his front door to find hostel residents Marie and Cyril Mallabone and Charlie Pitkeathly sitting on the grass verge, not 10 yards away. They had ground sheets and sleeping bags and were surrounded by a sea of posters. The largest of these announced that they were holding a three-day fast in protest at the Minister's continued refusal to use his statutory powers (2) to change the King Hill situation. During the three days, thousands of leaflets were distributed to Mr. Robinson's constituents, many copies of the booklet (K.C.C. versus the Homeless) were sold - many of them to Robinson's neighbours - and hundreds of duplicated letters were signed and pushed through the Minister's front door. The press and television gave wide coverage.

On June 7, Roy Mills, Stan Daniels and Ron Moore were brought before the High Court. The K.C.C. wanted them committed to prison on the grounds that they had been seen at the hostel at 7.30 am on March 29 (An injunction had been granted to the K.C.C. on October 4, 1965, 'restraining' these three and eleven other husbands from living at the hostel). Despite the fact that the hostel Warden corroborated Roy Mills' claim that he had special permission to be in the hostel because of his wife's ill health, Roy was committed to prison. Ron Moore had to give various undertakings. Stan Daniels, who had now moved out of the hostel into a new home and was too ill to attend Court, was nevertheless committed to prison. A warrant was issued for his arrest. Three days later he was taken to Brixton gaol on a stretcher. The press again gave wide publicity and the image of the K.C.C. took another sharp knock.

On June 12, over 90 people (including many from the hostel) met at Lambeth Town Hall. We marched to Brixton prison to protest at the gaoling of Roy Mills and to demand his release. A special leaflet was distributed. It was in the form of an open letter from Mildred Mills (who marched with four of her six children) to Kenneth Robinson, the Kent County Council and Mr. Justice Blaine, the judge responsible for sending her husband to prison 'sine die'.

On June 14, the Ministry of Health headquarters was the object of what the press called 'an audacious raid'. Just after 1 pm, six soberly dressed members of the Friends of King Hill, each carrying a large bundle of papers, entered the three Ministry buildings at the Elephant & Castle. The 'papers' were closely-typed foolscap sheets. They bore a strange resemblance to the internal circulars in use in the Civil Service and were headed "The Homeless in Kent" - a summary of the King Hill situation'. There followed, in officialese, a detailed account of the cause and purpose of the campaign.

The six Friends calmly and systematically worked their way from the top floor of each building (the 16th in one case) down to ground level. A few days earlier two Friends had 'cased the joint', inviting themselves to lunch in the Ministry canteen. During the 'raid' they entered each office, showing an uncanny knowledge of the in-tray, out-tray system. With a few deliberate exceptions, every officer (from the highest large-lush-carpet, mahogany furniture grade to the lowest lino-floor, drab, cramped, six-position desk grade) received a copy of the 'circular'.

There were a few incidents. One high-ranking officer came out into the corridor, and in a very posh voice called 'I say!' after one of the Friends. The Friend thought the game was up. But the officer only wanted to point out that one side of his 'circular' was blank, that it had happened before, that it was a damned nuisance and that something ought to be done about 'that bloody duplicator', and could he have another copy, please? In his relief and haste to comply with the request, the Friend nearly gave the game away. He dropped his pile of leaflets.

After the job had been completed, it dawned on a few Ministry officials that they had been hoaxed. Perhaps the 'give-away' was to be found in the last paragraph of the 'circular' :

'It is not expected that Ministry employees will allow themselves to be influenced by facts, as put forward by the Friends of King Hill, who openly admit that they are prepared to defy the law if necessary in order to prevent homeless families from being broken up or evicted. Leaflets on this subject which are proffered in the vicinity of the Ministry should be refused'.

At 8 o'clock the same evening, a dense rash of stickers about the Minister of Health and the Kent homeless appeared on the walls of one of the staircases and along one of the corridors inside the House of Commons. The police violently manhandled two of the Friends, a girl and a man. The man was put into a cell until the House rose.

Earlier that day the Minister of Health had made a statement in Parliament about King Hill. It was in the form of a written answer to a question about the hostel from Hugh Delargy, MP. The statement was blatantly dishonest. The Friends immediately issued a detailed reply, in the form of an open letter to Mr. Robinson. Copies of the Minister's statement and of the open letter were sent to MPs and to the press. Copies are still available for anyone who wants any.

(2) National Assistance Act 1948, Section 36.

On July 1st, Stan Daniels was brought from prison and again had to face Mr. Justice Blaine in the High Court. After making a formal apology through his Q.C., he was released. What alternative did Stan have but to apologize? He'd been ill with a duodenal ulcer and other complaints for 2 years. He had spent the previous three weeks in the prison hospital. He, his wife and his 3 young children had been rehoused only a few days before his arrest. His help was badly needed at home. He had no alternative but to say that he was 'sorry' for something he patently did not regret.

On July 10, about 100 people, nearly half of them from the hostel, met at Notting Hill station and marched to the home of Roy Jenkins, the Home Secretary. A letter with several hundred signatures was delivered, demanding Home Office action to secure the immediate release of Roy Mills who was still in prison. Several speeches were made and the demonstrators then dispersed. But they did not go home. At a pre-arranged time and in twos and threes they converged on 10, Downing Street. In a matter of minutes, some 200 people were standing outside Wilson's home. Our crowd attracted others. The few policemen on duty were taken completely unawares. After we had knocked at the door of No. 10 and been told that the Prime Minister was not at home, we held a meeting on his doorstep. Before police reinforcements could be called, several short speeches had been made. This can't have happened very often before.

Roy Mills was released on July 14. He had been in prison for 5½ weeks and had adamantly refused to apologize to secure his release. In fact he did not apologize to the High Court even then. He gave an undertaking not to return to the hostel.

Shortly after this Roy and Mildred Mills and their six children moved out of the hostel to a large, well-decorated, detached house in Tonbridge. The house is owned by the K.C.C., who lease it to the local council, who rent it to the Mills family.

During the summer months about 30 of the long-stay families have been rehoused. People who had hitherto been considered by the K.C.C. to be the main 'troublemakers' (e.g. Stan Daniels and Roy Mills) now have decent homes. The K.C.C. was really in quite a dilemma. Either they did not rehouse these 'troublemakers' (and the 'trouble' persisted at the hostel) - or they did rehouse them (and everyone saw that 'trouble-making' paid off). This should encourage homeless

people in other parts of the country to face up to intimidation and threats by the authorities. There are places used for Part III accommodation (for example in Birmingham and Leeds) where the rules and living conditions are as bad or worse than what we first found at King Hill.

The success of the campaign is due to many factors. The homeless people had had enough and were prepared to go a long way in their struggle against being treated as second-class citizens. They were prepared to fight back persistently. They were prepared, if necessary, to break the law. The ideas and methods of those helping them (Solidarity, Socialist Action, various anarchists and others) were both extremely radical and extremely flexible. Our ideas fused completely with the instinctive reactions of the homeless themselves. The marxist groups were all left on the sidelines. The National Association of Tenants and Residents (a communist party front organization) not only did not help, but sought to prevent a full discussion of the King Hill issue at one of its Conferences on the grounds that 'it was not on the agenda'. In a struggle of this kind the assistance of such groups is often the kiss of death as it inevitably puts a brake on the movement and channels the struggle along traditional and ineffective lines.

On November 30, 1965, Mr. Justice Lawton had stated that 'the Courts are not sounding boards for political and social grievances'. The campaign has shown how successfully they can be used for precisely this purpose. Mr. Lawton had claimed that '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'. The repeated and open defiance of such orders by the husbands has secured the triumph of a higher justice and of a higher and more humane morality.

If husbands are now allowed to live with their families at King Hill Hostel it is because of the sacrifices of such men as Brian Lomas, Roy Mills and Stan Daniels. When thousands of other people refuse to recognize the legality of orders which reduce their status as human beings the foundation will have been laid of a higher order and of a better society.

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and SOLIDARITY PAMPHLETS

10/- for 12 (sixpenny) items.

HOMELESSNESS

'THE PEOPLE' EXPOSED

THE CRIMINAL HYPOCRISY OF A SUNDAY NEWSPAPER

Odhams Press Ltd., through its Sunday newspaper 'The People', makes a lot of money out of the 'exposure' technique. On the last two Sundays (January 15 and 22) and the next two Sundays, it is jumping on to the bandwagon of protest about the treatment of homeless families, with big, well-publicised articles by Jeremy Sandford, author of the BBC TV film, "Cathy Come Home." With the publicity that has been raging around this film, it has become respectable to campaign and protest about homelessness. Yet only 12 months ago, it was not respectable. At the time, while the great campaign for the exposure of and protest at the treatment of 60 homeless families in King Hill Hostel, Kent, was in full swing, "The People" published an article by their staff reporter Pat Elston, about Roy Mills, the husband and father of one of these families, who was taking a leading part in the Campaign. Through "The People's" sole concern about circulation figures, it is accidental that some of its exposures do indeed blow the gaff on rottenness in our society. Some expose the rottenness of "The People" itself. The Pat Elston article did precisely this. It was one of the most vicious, lying and distorted pieces of journalism ever to come out of Fleet Street.

The title, across two pages of the piece supporting the homeless in the January 15 1967 issue of 'The People' was "Cathy: now we PROVE Britain's shame". On January 2 1966, the title of their piece attacking the homeless was, "Don't waste your pity on this PHONEY MARTYR". Roy Mills began an action for libel against "The People". The Friends of King Hill, a group of people with very little money, who had worked with the homeless families throughout the campaign, pledged their support. Because of the lack of money, it has been exceedingly difficult to keep the legal action going. The inability of 'poor' people to

take legal action against powerful national newspapers which libel them is not widely enough appreciated. So now, because we can get no more cash, we are changing from legal action to direct action. What you are now reading is the first step.

NOW WE PROVE

'THE PEOPLES' SHAME

Roy Mills and his wife, Mildred, have six children, including twins who are epileptic. He went to prison on two occasions - for two weeks and 5½ weeks - because he defied a court order granted to the Kent County Council prohibiting him from living with his wife and family. When Pat Elston visited the Mills family just before Christmas 1965, she told them that she was writing a hard-hitting article describing the plight of their homelessness and the terrible condition in which they were living at King Hill Hostel. She pretended to show great sympathy and said that her article would most certainly get them a house. The Mills family talked. Pat Elston then visited KCC officials and so-called 'social workers' who were so embarrassed by the Campaign that they regarded all participants with the greatest animosity. In their attempts to discredit the Campaign, they were only too pleased to denigrate and lie about prominent campaigners like Mr. and Mrs Roy Mills. She visited people who had known the Mills She attributed to them statements which, as we shall show, were the opposite of the truth. "The People" needed a different angle on the Campaign which was getting a great deal of national publicity. The Goebbel technique was used. Amongst the downright lies were inserted a few 'distasteful' facts, e. g. Roy Mills was put on probation for 'fiddling' the electric meter to make ends meet.

We reprint here some of the most libelous statements contained in "The People" article of January 2, 1966, followed by the true facts.

Under the sub-heading: "Everyone was sorry for poor Mr. Mills, the man in the hostel row. But read the full facts", the article began with a sneering account of the King Hill Campaign:

"Everyone has heard the story of Mr. Roy Mills - the Queen, judges, MPs, the readers of almost every national newspaper in the land. And a most touching story it seemed to be.

"Mr. Mills was gaoled for refusing to leave the council hostel at West Malling, Kent, where his homeless family had been taken.

"How courageous it seemed of Mr. Mills to go to prison for the sake of his wife and six children.

"How callous the Kent County Council appeared in its treatment of this pathetic family.

"There were demonstrations outside Brixton Prison where Mr. Mills was sent for contempt of court in November.

"There was a banner-waving protest march to the home of Mr. Kenneth Robinson, the Minister of Health.

"An appeal fund was launched. A heart-rending plea was sent to 150 MPs, local councillors and social workers."

There followed a vicious attack on the background and character of Roy Mills. Even his wife was attacked. The object of this scurrilous and lying account was to hold up Roy Mills, the man known throughout Britain for the prominent part he was taking in the struggle to secure humane treatment for the homeless, as a completely worthless human being, a man who had ignored or abused every offer of help he had received, and who was himself prepared to cash in on someone else's misfortune.

"THE PEOPLE" SAID:

"At one time, the Mills family was renting a house at South Avenue, Rochester, Kent, for £4 10s. 0d. a week. Yet Mr. Mills had the nerve to charge a woman £5 rent for one room in the house."

THE TRUTH

(All the signed statements to which we shall refer under this heading were witnessed by at least two of four people. These were: a doctor (Psychologist), a school teacher (specialist tuition), a computer programme and a Civil Servant.)

The "woman" was a young unmarried girl - J.B. In a signed statement dated 11 January 1966, J.B. said "I, J.B. of (address), state that in about May 1962, and Mrs. Roy Mills were kind enough to let me and two children live in a room in a house at No. 6, South Avenue, Rochester, Kent, in which they and their four children were living when I became homeless after termination of the permitted three months stay at King Hill Hostel, West Malling.

"I was given full board in the Mills accommodation. The tenant of the house was a Mr. E. J. Scott. The Mills were his sub-tenants. There were several occasions when the Mills looked after my two children while I was away.

"The rent agreed between Mr. Mills and myself was reasonable and included full board."

In fact, nothing approaching £5 was ever paid as rent by J.B.

"THE PEOPLE" SAID:

"A woman social welfare worker called on Mrs. Mills to help her plan her household budget properly. When Mr. Mills discovered that this service did not include a lady doing the family's housework and shopping, he told her to go."

THE TRUTH

At no time has a "woman social welfare worker" or any other employee of the Kent County Council, visited Mrs. Mildred Mills "to help her plan her household budget properly", in spite of the fact that Mr. Mills specifically had asked (during the period mentioned in "The People") for somebody to come regularly to his house for this purpose. The only KCC employee who at any time came regularly to help Mrs. Mills was a Home Help Mrs. A.W. (address available). This lady stated that between April 8 and May 17, 1961, she had visited Mr. Mills each weekday to help her only with the housework. She stated that she was forbidden, under the terms of her employment, to help Mrs. Mills with her household budget. During this time, Mrs. Mills went into hospital (10.4.61) to have her third baby. Miss A.F. states that KCC regulations compelled her to leave on May 17, 1961 because Roy Mills "told her to go".

We have signed statements concerning the above dated February 2, 1966.

"THE PEOPLE" SAID:

"The Kent County Council found Mr. Mills a difficult person from the moment they came into contact with him. They gave him a council house."

THE TRUTH

The Kent County Council are not a housing authority. They have no council houses. They did not "give" or even let a council house to Roy Mills. Although we are glad that it is true that, when the KCC did come into contact with him at King Hill Hostel, they found him a "difficult person".

"THE PEOPLE" SAID:

"Then Mr. Mills had an accident and was off work. He received National Assistance - but that was not enough. So he stopped paying his rent so that he could keep up his hire-purchase payments ..."

THE TRUTH

The "accident" occurred when Roy Mills was digging in his garden. His spade struck an unexploded cannon shell. It exploded. Roy was badly injured*and was "off work" for nine months. He got no compensation from anybody, not even the local authority to whom the house and garden belonged. The family was compelled to apply for the measly sum given by the NAB.

*This was reported in the press.

"THE PEOPLE" SAID:

that a Mr. Brian Hopkins let the Mills family one room in his house. They quote Mr. Hopkins as saying: "When they left ... our new settee and the mattresses and bedclothes had to be destroyed."

THE TRUTH

In a signed statement, dated 9th January 1966, Mr. Hopkins said:

"I, Brian William Hopkins, of (address) have at no time stated that after Mr. Roy Mills and Mrs. Mildred Mills left my house, "our new settee and the mattresses and bedclothes had to be destroyed", as stated in "The People" on Sunday January 2, 1966, nor is it true that because of the Mills family I had to destroy a settee and mattresses and bedclothes."

"THE PEOPLE" SAID:

that when the Mills family was homeless, a Mrs Reilly said: "We decided we could let them have two top rooms in the house. The rent was 30s. 1 half the gas and electricity bills. The Millses st for six months, paid their rent intermittently and tributed a total of £1 to the gas and electricity bi

THE TRUTH:

In a statement dated 9 January 1966, Mrs. Riley (not "Reilly") said:

"I, Mrs. Molly Riley of (address) do hereby s that Mr. Roy Mills and Mrs. Mildred Mills were our tenants at any time and that there was never a question of them paying rent to me or my husband. Nor was there at any time any agreement about pa us for electricity. Both these questions were the affairs of the Simon Community who were the land of this house."

The rooms in question were in the attic. The 1 of 30s. per week was in fact paid to the Simon Community.

"THE PEOPLE" SAID:

that when the Mills family again became homeless "the council took Mrs. Mills and her children into 1 West Malling hostel for the first time. But Mr. Mi broke the 'no husbands in the hostel' rule and the family had to leave."

THE TRUTH

Through the context in which this was said, "The People" insinuated that Mr. Mills had committed 'another crime'.

The "hostel" is, of course, the infamous one known as King Hill. The KCC forced Mrs. Mills and her children to leave after they had been there for less than three weeks. Mr. Mills was with a Mr. E. Scott when they were caught by officials while in a room of the hostel occupied by Mr. Scott's wife. This was in broad daylight. They had visited her because she was pregnant and about to go into hospital. Mr. Scott wanted to get some idea of when the event would take place.

"THE PEOPLE" SAID:

(a) that when the Mills family again became homeless "Again the Council took pity on them and allowed Mrs Mills and her children into the West Malling hostel again ... she has been there longer than the three

months maximum period - so the council does not take the £1 2s. 6d. a week rent."

(b) "Her husband is staying with yet another kind-hearted well-wisher - and he pays no rent either."

THE TRUTH

(a) The Kent County Council refused to accept the rent from Mrs. Mills (although she offered it on several occasions) for, to them, very good reasons. They had instituted legal proceedings against Mildred Mills, and other mothers at King Hill Hostel, who had overstayed the 'three-month limit', for eviction. One of the KCC's grounds was that the mothers and children were trespassers. To accept rent would have made this claim, in law, null and void.

(b) In a statement dated 12 January 1966, the "kind-hearted well-wisher", Mr. J.R., with whom Roy Mills had been staying during the period referred to by "The People", says:

"Knowing that Mills was unemployed, I did not ask him for any money, but at the end of the first week, he insisted on giving me a pound towards housekeeping expenses, and in the second week, after he had succeeded in getting a local job, he gave me £2, and in fact pressed the money upon me, when I attempted to refuse it. The following week he paid me the same amount. The statement in 'The People' is a lie."

This newspaper, which would now have us believe that its motives in exposing the truth about the treatment of homeless families stem from its desire to help them, ended the January 2, 1966 article by telling the Kent County Council that it should take the Mills six children into care. "Then they should kick Mrs. Mills out of the hostel."

This vicious article badly hurt this family at a time when they were already suffering the misery of homelessness. The strain on Mrs. Mills was increased to breaking point. Her children were sneered at. The Campaign against the KCC suffered a setback.

It would need many more pages to write the true "full story" of Mildred and Roy Mills. If you knew it, most of you would pity them. Please don't. They hate pity. But they would not be averse to understanding and compassion.

There is something you can do about it. If you buy "The People", you could change to another paper. If you advertise in "The People", you could stop. If you are a trade unionist, working for "The People", you could discuss the possibility of a token strike in protest. If you believe in direct action, you may think of some other way in which to show your disgust.

24 January 1967

R E A D T H E T R U T H A B O U T R O Y M I L L S '

part in the King Hill Campaign in the booklet "KCC Versus the Homeless". This is a detailed account of a campaign which first put homelessness in the national headlines. It is the story of a persistent and tenacious struggle by the homeless families themselves against the Kent County Council. For many years this powerful local authority treated them as second-class citizens. In 1965 they rebelled. They refused any longer to remain passive while their families were systematically destroyed for the sake of administrative convenience.

The squalid huts of King Hill Hostel became a symbol of resistance to heartless bureaucracy. The example of this revolt provides encouragement for all opponents of official hypocrisy and double talk in the 'Welfare State'.

This 48-page, full, documented account including photos, has just been brought up to date and re-issued. It is available at 1s. 6d. plus 5d. postage from Heather Russell, 53a, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

APPENDIX 1

KENT COUNCILLORS!

HANDS OFF THE HOMELESS

'Kent County Council to evict about 80 homeless mothers and children from West Malling half-way house'.

'High Court injunction enables K.C.C. to force separation of 14 husbands from their wives and children'.

What do these headlines mean? At West Malling, in the heart of Kent, is a collection of dilapidated wooden huts, surrounded by a high wire fence. It looks like a Nazi forced labour camp. The Kent County Council call it King Hill Hostel. Many years ago this place was a workhouse. The living conditions then could not have been much worse than they are now. On entering, it's hard to believe that it's 1965 and not 1865. Yet the 43 mothers and over 100 children who are cooped up in the small partitioned sections of these huts are desperate to stay. They are homeless. They have nowhere else to go. This miserable misfortune enables the worthy Kent councillors to get from the families a signed acceptance of a degrading list of rules and conditions before being admitted.

No intoxicants. No animals. The communal toilet facilities and the large corridors must be scrubbed (no mops allowed) and polished every day. Uniformed staff inspect whenever they like. Some enter a family's living section without knocking. There is no privacy. If a mother or one of her children is ill, the 'Officer-in-Charge' decides whether a doctor is necessary. This 'O.C.' has no medical qualifications. Another rule is that a family must move after 3 months although the councillors will not help to find anywhere else for them to live. Many families have overstayed this 3-months limit. The councillors are taking court proceedings to turn them onto the streets. Much exalted 'British Justice' then goes a step further. The children are taken from their mother as 'being in need of care and protection'.

This alone is a good reason why husbands should break the rule which only allows them to visit during certain times at weekends. Although the penalty for disobeying is eviction of the whole family, 14 husbands recently moved in and are determined to stay. There are other good reasons. Their wives fear the 'prowlers' who knock on the windows at night. They have to pay the K.C.C. for their wives and children and also for their own digs. They have to pay fares to visit their families. They can't get work in the area - local bosses tell the employment exchange not to send anyone from the half-way house.

But how do families get into this apparently hopeless situation? The immediate reason is the greed of landlords who have evicted them. But they are really the victims of a rotten society. The bosses of the political parties all agree about spending £2,000 million on means for waging war. Shareholders make fantastic profits out of it. While thousands are homeless, millions of pounds are spent on luxury flats and houses, and gigantic office blocks. While all this continues apace, the homeless at West Malling must suffer the intimidation and blackmail of the local and County authorities. Take the case of Stan Daniels and his family.

They lived at 6, Sandford Road, Bromley, Kent. Earlier this year, the house was sold. On May 5, they were evicted by the new owner. Now homeless, they went to Bromley Council for help. All they got was an offer of temporary accommodation over 20 miles away at West Malling for Mrs. Joan Daniels and the 4 children only. They refused. They didn't want to be split up. Stan Daniels was then threatened with prosecution for not properly caring for his children - because they were homeless! King Hill half-way house with all its militaristic rules and conditions was accepted and Stan Daniels dejectedly sought digs elsewhere.

By the end of the 3 months, neither Stan nor Joan Daniels had been able to find anywhere else to live although they were prepared to pay a reasonable rent. Now Stan fought back. The family did not move out. Stan moved in.

On August 31, officials of the K.C.C. arrived to evict the Daniels. They barricaded themselves in. Intimidation was used. The water supply to all huts was cut off. Other residents in the Daniels' hut were told to leave so as to isolate them. Mrs. Carol Dore says she was given 3 days' notice to quit when she refused, although she had been there only 2 weeks. A Council official, Mr. H. Brown, said that 'thirty women and eighty children crowded into the corridor in a solid mass... and the entrance to the hostel had been barricaded by dustbins'. Mr. Brown concluded that efforts to force the Daniels out therefore had to be abandoned. With the solidarity of the other residents, Stan and Joan Daniels won the first round.

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

Appeals for help sent to the 'authorities' have been worse than useless. They have appealed to the Kent councillors. These

gentlemen replied with threats and Court action. MPs have no power and some have no desire to give positive help. The Labour Government's Minister of Housing, the Right Hon. R.H.S. Crossman, has not even replied to a letter sent to him weeks ago. Nor has the Tory Chairman of Bromley Housing Committee, Cllr. R.G. Foster, although many of the King Hill homeless come from that area. Through their distress the homeless in West Malling have learnt something of the political meaning of 'do-it-yourself'. But they urgently need YOUR help too!

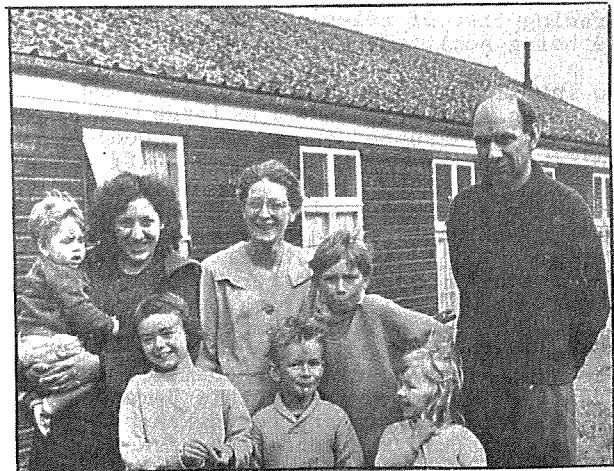
We say to the Kent councillors: STOP SMASHING UP FAMILIES! IF YOU CAN'T HELP REHOUSE THEM, KEEP YOUR HEAVY HANDS OFF! We call on all working people to make these facts as widely known as possible. These families are human beings, not things to be moved according to bureaucratic rules and regulations.

Show your solidarity. Hold collections at work. Help them in their defence and other costs. WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Will the Labour Government send bailiffs and hordes of police (as the Tories did in St. Pancras in 1960) to evict working people from their miserable accommodation? WILL YOU LET THEM?

Published on behalf of Kent Solidarity Group by Andy Anderson, 40 Tudor Close, Dartford, Kent.

Stan Daniels and family



APPENDIX 2

THE CHARTER

J.S. Gibbons

Notes

Mr. Skinner

C.A. Dore

We the residents of King Hill Hostel, West Malling, Kent, in the firm belief that to be homeless is not a crime, demand that the Kent County Council, recognizing our status as human beings, accede to the following reasonable requests:

*S.K. Bonham
A. Mantel*

- 1. Immediate removal of the threat of eviction and of the 3 month limitation of stay rule and the withdrawal of all writs. An acknowledgment of the fact that the constant threat of being parted from their children is making mothers sick with worry, and an assurance that no family will be broken up while accommodation is available at King Hill.

B. Elly Thomas

D. Neale

J. Hoyle

- 2. An end to the inhuman separation of husbands and wives which deprives children of their fathers and leads to the breaking up of families.

Mr. Murphy

*D.H. Kingdon
J. Blackman*

- 3. Recognition by the Kent County Council of a committee formed of and by, the residents to participate in the administration of the hostel. This committee to be consulted regarding the immediate revision of the rules governing residents.

*Mr. Dore
J.P. Daniels*

*H. Bailey
R. Dudgeon*

- 4. That the County Council should collaborate with the local authorities concerned and that these should be required to accept continued responsibility for rehousing the homeless from their area.

5. AMENITIES

S. Sullivan

An acceptance of the urgent need for improved amenities at King Hill, i.e.

S.H.M. O'Brien

*B. Lomas
M. Doyle
B.P. Moore
of Elements*

a) The provision of a trained nurse and the opening of the hostel sick bay with full facilities for preventive medical attention for over 100 children.

b) Provision of separate washing and toilet facilities for each family (existing facilities are often one bath and two basins for up to 19 people). Hot water to be available for baths and washing throughout the evening.

R. Thomas

c) The provision of gas or electric cooking facilities and electric power points. Removal of separate electric meters which charge electricity at 7½d. per unit. Ventilated storage cupboards for food.

S.A. Kitchen

*M. Radcliffe
H. Malabar*

d) The repair of all leaking roofs and walls and the many windows which at present do not open.

e) The installation of outside lighting throughout the camp.

A. Gwynne

f) In view of the isolated nature of King Hill, the G.P.O. should be asked to install a phone kiosk. A school bus should be provided for the many small children who now have to walk considerable distances along lonely and poorly lit roads in all weathers.

*W.S. Aumb
K. Abdulla*

*Mrs. Goslan
M. Horgan*

M.H. Winstanley

D.R. Sales

B. Reeves

W.M. Hawkins

D.V. Purdy

APPENDIX 3

DIXON IN THE DOCK

For the attention of
Mr R D Lemon
Chief Constable
County Police Headquarters
P O Box 11
Maidstone
Kent.

5 Clock House Road
Beckenham
Kent

24th October 1965.

Dear Sir,

Yesterday evening I visited the Police Station at West Malling to file a complaint against a Police Officer. Earlier in the afternoon I had been assaulted by this Officer (who I believe to be an Inspector), and a number of other people were bullied, threatened and abused in front of their children.

It seems probable that the officer in question is the senior officer at West Malling Station, and since I am quite determined to see that a full investigation of this disgraceful affair is properly carried out, I am presenting the facts to you personally, by registered mail, in order that an enquiry may be initiated without delay.

The incident took place at King Hill Hostel, West Malling. As you are, no doubt, aware, this is a hostel for homeless families, and there are currently accommodated some forty odd families with more than a hundred children. Most of these people are homeless through no fault of their own, and together with others who share my concern, I visit them to give them what help and encouragement I can.

The husbands are not allowed to stay with their families and must find accommodation for themselves where they can, but naturally they visit their wives and

children on Saturday afternoons. Recently, the camp has been in the news because some of the husbands have committed the "crime" of sleeping with their wives, and their families are now threatened with eviction from this hostel for the evicted!

I had been informed that there would be a meeting of all the residents, to discuss this situation on Saturday afternoon, and at the request of resident families I did open this meeting. I had also been specifically invited to judge a children's fancy dress competition, and to assist in the running of a children's party, and this is what I was doing when the police arrived.

The residents had finished their meeting, and I was attempting with the aid of a megaphone to marshall a large number of children in order that their fancy dress could be judged and prizes given out, when the police car entered the main gate. The officer, accompanied by two constables, made straight for me and without introduction or explanation attempted to wrest the megaphone from my grasp; saying as he did so - "You are trespassing. Get out of here." At the same time he stood on my right foot with the whole weight of his body. I did not relinquish the megaphone, and I answered him by saying - "I am not trespassing, and if you will get off my foot we can discuss the matter". He continued to try and twist the megaphone out of my grasp, and in order to prevent this I held it behind my back. The officer then put both his arms round me to continue the struggle for the megaphone, meanwhile keeping his weight on my foot, and in this unwelcome embrace, the following dialogue commenced:-

Inspector: "You are not allowed in here, this is Kent County Council property."
Myself: "I am an invited guest."
Inspector: "You are not going to hold a meeting here."
Myself: "I am not holding a meeting. I am judging a Fancy Dress parade."
Inspector: "You cannot come in here without permission."
Myself: "I have been invited, would you like to meet the people who invited me?"
Inspector: (now stepping back and releasing me) "Are you holding a CND meeting?"
Myself: "Certainly not."
Inspector: (waving his finger at me) "I shall take down everything you say in shorthand, and if you say anything against the law I will take you in."

The inspector then walked away from me and proceeded with the aid of his constables to eject the two or three press photographers present. I saw him trying to take a camera away from one person (not a press man), while I began to use the megaphone to restore some kind of order to the rapidly disintegrating fancy dress parade. As we had provided a prize for all the children, we abandoned the idea of judging, and once I had managed to get the children queuing for their prizes, which were being distributed by Mrs Duff and Mr Elliott, I went back to where the inspector was standing arguing with a group of residents and friends.

As I came up he turned away, saying quite loudly, "you are like the rest of this scum". The people around him, mainly women with children, were inflamed by this remark, and the inspector hurriedly climbed into his car, knocking over a small child as he did so. A number of very angry women began

to rock the car and open the doors, and the situation began to look rather nasty. I had to use the megaphone to make repeated appeals for restraint, before it was possible for the inspector to reverse his car out through the gates.

The two constables who were left behind will no doubt verify that we then proceeded with the sinister business of dispensing toffee apples, ice creams and woollen clothing, whilst entertaining the youngsters with guitars and folk songs.

I am completely at a loss to understand the blustering, bullying attitude of this policeman. It is true that I am connected with CND and well-known in this respect, but apart from the fact that CND is not yet, as far as I know, an illegal organisation, it seems to me that even the most unintelligent passer-by, watching me address a hundred children dressed as FAIRY QUEENS, INDIANS, and MEDIAEVAL WARRIORS, might have arrived at some more accurate estimate of what was taking place. Fortunately, the children enjoyed the party anyway, but some of the mothers were reduced to tears by the officer's overbearing and contemptuous remarks.

These incidents were witnessed by a large number of people. I am enclosing the names and addresses of those that I know, and some of these will doubtless know of other witnesses.

I demand an explanation and an apology, not only for myself, but for the many families at King Hill, who feel that they were insulted and humiliated during this unwarranted and officious intrusion.

Yours faithfully,

Jim Radford.

KENNETH'S CONCERN

The Minister has instructed me to express his concern at reading the latter part of your letter of 30th November. This could imply that your Council has in mind to enforce, whether by recourse to legal action or otherwise, their existing rules as to length of stay. The propriety of these rules has been called in question by the Minister and indeed by your Council, since they are engaged in reviewing them. It would in the Minister's view be wrong to operate them while the review is going on. He hopes - but would like to be assured - that this is not the Council's intention.

Letter of 7.12.65 from Ministry of Health to Clerk of K.C.C.
A demonstration had been held outside the Minister's house on 5.12.65.

APPENDIX 4

CALLING ALL COUNCILLORS

November 4, 1965

Residents Committee,
King Hill Hostel,
West Malling, Kent.

Dear Councillor,

You will already have received a copy of the Charter which the residents of this hostel have signed and sent to the Chairman and Clerk of Kent County Council. Since then, a Residents' Committee has been elected, containing one woman from each block, and several husbands as follows:

	<u>Residents</u>	<u>Husbands</u>
Block 11	Mrs. Sullivan	Mr. R. Mills
Block 1	Mrs. Daniels	Mr. B. Lomax
Block 2	Mrs. Hawkins	Mr. J. Gibbons
Block 3	Mrs. Clements	
Block 5	Mrs. Mills	
Block 7	Mrs. Mallebone	
Block 8	Mrs. Mentipty	
Block 10	Mrs. Blackman	
Block 12	Mrs. Gibbons	
Block 13	Mrs. Moore	

No doubt the Council will be considering the situation and conditions at King Hill. We urge you to use your influence to see that our Charter is properly discussed, and that a meeting of some kind is arranged between representatives of the Council and our Committee.

A communication addressed to any woman member of the Committee will quickly be relayed to us all, and we are ready at any time to meet with Councillors or Council officials, either at County Hall or in the hostel.

Yours faithfully,

Roy Mills.

APPENDIX 5

'SLEEP-IN!'

November 13-14 at King Hill Hostel, West Malling, Kent.

Because we are homeless, our wives and children are forced to live in the Kent County Council's squalid and regimented King Hill Hostel.

We have already protested against the callous and completely unnecessary rules which forbid us from being with our families except between the hours of 10 am - 8 pm on Saturdays and Sundays and which therefore prohibit normal marital relations.

Because some husbands have visited their wives in defiance of this rule, the K.C.C. has taken legal proceedings against them, and two men now face prison sentences for the crime of visiting their wives.

We have discussed the situation and we are agreed that it is our primary duty as husbands and as men, to be with our wives and families during this period of great strain and humiliation. We challenge the K.C.C. to justify the bureaucratic restrictions which split families at their hour of greatest need.

To draw attention to this monstrous denial of common humanity we have decided to remain with our families this coming weekend, and to sleep with our wives, in King Hill, on Saturday night (November 13).

We shall be contacting other husbands and calling upon them to join us in this Sleep-In.

P. Blackman
J. Gibbons
J. Hawkins
J. Kitchener
B. Lomas
R. Mills
R. Moore
W. Neal
W. Peck
K. Sullivan
A. Winstanley

P. Blackman
J. Gibbons
J. Hawkins
J. Kitchener
B. Lomas
R. Mills
R. Moore
W. Neal
W. Peck
K. Sullivan
A. Winstanley

(Released to the press on behalf of the abovesigned by Joe Gibbons. Mr. Gibbons can be contacted by phone at WEST MALLING 3301 between 4.30 and 5.30 pm On Friday, November 12)

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WIRE FENCE

APPENDIX 6

This is part of the Quarterly Report of the Health and Welfare Committee submitted - on November 17, 1965 - to the meeting of the Kent County Council, held in County Hall, Maidstone. The full report is published in the 'Blue Book'. Our extract is section 18, pp. 71-72.

The County Council has a duty under the National Assistance Act, 1948, to provide temporary accommodation for persons who are in urgent need thereof, being need arising in circumstances which could not reasonably have been foreseen or in such other circumstances as the Council may in any particular case determine.

Such accommodation is provided at the King Hill Hostel, West Malling.

Since 1952 it has been the Council's policy to provide temporary accommodation for women and children only and to limit their stay to a maximum period of three months. The exclusion of husbands and the three months' limitation of a family's stay was then decided upon because experience had shown a marked element of abuse in that some families were making no efforts to obtain housing accommodation and husbands were not seeking employment or were content that their families should remain in temporary accommodation for indefinite periods.

Earlier this year the Minister of Health invited the Council to review its policy and in particular the inflexibility of rules which prevent husbands from occupying temporary accommodation with their wives and families and which, in any circumstances, restrict the stay of a family in such accommodation to a maximum period of three months.

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.

However, the Council adopted a proposal put forward by your Committee designed to assist a family who had received from a responsible landlord a written guarantee of the tenancy of housing accommodation but was unable to enter into occupation until after the date of normal discharge from the hostel. A detached building at the hostel is being adapted to provide initially two

units of living accommodation to which such a family will be able to move during the waiting period.

On admission to temporary accommodation, each family signs a document in which the before-mentioned principles of stay and exclusion are stated and undertakes to comply with the County Council's rules and conditions relating to the provision of temporary accommodation.

At the end of August, 1965, a man, whose wife and four children were due to leave the hostel after a stay of three months, moved into the hostel and thereafter there was a mass refusal of families to leave the premises when the permitted period of stay expired unless they had been offered rehousing by the local authorities concerned. Thirty-four of the thirty-six families then at the hostel signed a statement that they would so refuse. It was stated on their behalf that they had no complaint against the hostel or the hostel staff and that their grievance was against the housing authorities.

Later, in contravention of the rules, other men joined their families at the hostel presumably with the object of resisting or impeding any action by the Council to secure the eviction of families required to leave. Requests made that men who were there as trespassers and families whose permitted period of stay had expired should leave the hostel were ignored and efforts by the Council's staff to secure their eviction had to be abandoned because of the hostility of the families and the risk of injury to individuals, especially children.

In all the circumstances therefore, your Committee decided that the most effective means of dealing with the situation was the immediate institution of proceedings in the High Court seeking (a) an injunction restraining the men from trespassing, and (b) an Order for possession against those families who when called upon to leave the hostel after the permitted stay of three months were refusing to do so.

On the 4th October, 1965, the County Council was granted a mandatory injunction requiring 14 men to leave the hostel before noon on the 8th October and restraining them from returning to live on the premises until trial of an action against them by the Council. An application by the men for a stay of execution of the injunction was dismissed by the Court of Appeal on the 8th October and costs were awarded to the Council.

At the date of your Committee's quarterly meeting it was stated that a

number of the men were still at the hostel but were claiming to be there as visitors. If satisfactory evidence can be obtained that any of the men are in fact continuing to live on the premises, the fact will be reported to the Court with a view to the issue of a Committal Order for contempt.

With regard to families who have failed to vacate their quarters when required to do so at the end of their three cases the necessary Writs have been served and the outcome of the proceeding is awaited.

APPENDIX 7

UNDERTAKINGS WITHDRAWN

. To: Mr. Justice Lawton,
Queens Bench Division
Court No. 5.

November 19, 1965.

Your Lordship,

The reason why I wish to withdraw the undertaking I gave you on November 1st is that I have since then experienced what exactly it implies.

On Thursday, November 4th my daughter Lorraine, aged 4 months, was discharged from hospital, following a serious eye operation for cataract. She had been in hospital for 2 weeks. I hadn't seen her for a fortnight and wished to see her and be with her.

I went to West Malling Police Station shortly after mid-day and it was after 3 o'clock before a Police officer could escort me into the hostel. The child needed a lot of attention as she was badly upset and my wife had difficulty in coping with her, as well as my other little girl.

Under these circumstances, I just could not leave my wife to cope alone.

I would like to draw to your attention that I am nearly blind (congenital cataract and nystagmus) and that I have been on the Blind Register for many years. I have therefore to rely on my wife for help in reading and writing, including the correspondence relating to our desperate attempts to find alternative accommodation.

We assure you we do not wish to stay in King Hill one day longer than necessary. Incidentally, I have now been found Council accommodation in Maidstone and hope to move in within the next fortnight.

Your Lordship,

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Brian Lomas

November 19, 1965.

To: Mr. Justice Lawton,
Queens Bench Division
Court No. 5.

My Lord,

I am withdrawing my undertaking not to visit my family at King Hill Hostel between 8 pm on Sunday and 10 am on the following Saturday.

It may be asked why I changed my mind between November 1st, when I gave the undertaking, and November 5th, when I gave Your Lordship the statement setting out the reasons why I could no longer abide by the undertaking.

The first reason is that on November 1st I had no intention of giving such an undertaking. During the ten minutes we had with our Counsel before the proceedings began, we were so distressed and confused by Counsel's insistence that we must apologize and promise not to do it again, that I for one was still confused when I came before Your Lordship. I then found that I had given the undertaking not to visit my wife and children between 8 pm Sunday and 10 am the following Saturday without having had time to think about it. I did not have time to think about how such an undertaking might affect my wife. In fact she was very upset indeed.

We have six very young children. Two of them are twins of 1 year. Some of my children are not well and need careful medical attention. The stresses and strains of looking after the children would be great enough on my wife even if we had somewhere decent to live. The strain was increased by the fact that we became homeless. It was increased by being forced to go into the bad conditions of King Hill Hostel. It was increased because I am not allowed to live there. The strain was further increased when the Kent County Council served her with a writ for eviction because she and our six children have overstayed the three months allowed by the K.C.C.

The strain is further increased when Your Lordship insists that I give an undertaking not to visit her and the children between 8 pm on Sunday and 10 am the following Saturday. It is as if we are being punished. It is as if our homelessness was a crime.

As I said before, when I gave the undertaking about visiting, I had not had time to think about what it involved. My wife was very much against my giving such an undertaking. I think she was right to be against it. A few days ago, she wrote to Your Lord-

ship to try to explain how she feels. I hope Your Lordship has read her letter and will treat it with sympathy.

But I would now like to refer Your Lordship back to November 1st when I came before you accused of contempt of Court. I feel you came to the conclusion that I was in contempt because I openly admitted that I had been visiting my family regularly. I do not think that the position regarding visiting was adequately explained to you by Counsel. I would like to try to explain this to you properly now.

The interim injunction granted to the Kent County Council in the High Court on October 4 restrained me and others from living at King Hill Hostel. It did not restrain us from visiting. On October 8, we appealed against the granting of this injunction. Lord Denning, Master of the Rolls, rejected our appeal but he obviously felt he had a very strong reason for doing so when 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 any time, but they must not sleep there.' This was reported in the 'Evening Standard' of October 8.

A further reason for my continuing to visit my family after October 8 is that there is a notice concerning visiting at the main entrance to King Hill Hostel. This notice measures about 4 foot by 3 foot. In letters 2 inches high, it states: 'All enquiries to the warden's office unless visiting a family quarter at the occupant's request'. According to this notice, anybody can visit my wife - except me!

There is further evidence of the confusion on the Kent County Council about visiting times. On Wednesday, October 20th, the Health and Welfare Committee met, under the Chairmanship of Dr. A. Elliott. The Committee amended rule 5 of the King Hill Rules of Conduct. The old rule 5 used to read: 'Normal visiting at weekends only. Special visits can only be made by prior arrangement with the Officer-in-Charge'. It was amended to read: 'Visiting between 10 am and 8 pm on Saturdays and Sundays only. Special visits can only be made by prior arrangement with the Officer-in-Charge'.

Notification of this amended rule was given in writing to most of the mothers at King Hill, on October 22. But not one husband, nor any other possible visitor was notified. The notice at the main entrance remains in its original, to this very day.

We feel that the Health and Welfare Committee of the K.C.C. have openly flouted Lord Denning's statement (quoted above) about visiting times. We feel that it was reasonable for me to believe, as I did, that Lord Denning's statement as quoted in the press carried more authority in the matter than the confusion shown by the K.C.C. and its Health and Welfare Committee.

Finally, my Lord, I would like to stress again that my wife and children, because of their homelessness, were in a distressed condition even before entering the hostel. In spite of the appalling conditions there, this was somewhat lessened as long as I could visit them daily, or at least several times a week. When I am only allowed to visit them at weekends, their distress is heart-breaking. Two of my children fret for me so much that they become ill. My wife is getting near to a nervous breakdown.

My family have committed no crime. The fault for our homelessness does not lie with us. We have tried everything we can think of to get somewhere decent to live.

On carefully reconsidering my actions of the past weeks, I am convinced that I have committed no crime either. On the contrary. I think it is my duty as a good husband and father to visit my family as often as possible. I have no disrespect for the law, but I must continue to visit my wife and children at this time of great difficulty and strain, to comfort them, to encourage them not to give up hope, and to help them.

I ask you, my Lord, not to send me to prison for a 'contempt of Court' which I do not have. It is simply that I feel most strongly and deeply that my first duty should be to my wife and children.

Roy Mills.

APPENDIX 8

ACTION, MR ROBINSON!

- This letter was handed over personally to Mr. Robinson by the signatories, during the demonstration described on p. 25.

5th December, 1965.

Dear Mr. Robinson,

On behalf of the homeless families at King Hill Hostel, West Malling, Kent, we have come to ask you for help.

Until we became homeless we did not know that this would automatically make us second class citizens. We did not realize that the worst we could expect from the Welfare State was three months temporary shelter for women and children only, before again and finally being put on the street and having our children taken into compulsory 'care'.

We did not know that it was possible in 1965, for men to be sent to prison for having been found with their wives and children at a time when they were desperately needed.

We know that you have professed concern for our situation and that you have already asked the Kent County Council to revise their archaic and inhuman rules, but it seems clear from the statements made at the last meeting of the K.C.C., from the latest report of the Health and Welfare Committee, and from the reports that have been issued that they are not inclined to pay much attention to your request.

We are not asking for the impossible, nor do we feel that our requests are unreasonable. None of us want to stay in King Hill, but if we have been unable to find other accommodation and so long as there is room to spare, we think it obviously in the best interests of the community as well as ourselves that we should be allowed to stay and keep our children, and we can see no valid reason why husbands should be excluded.

You have the power to help us, Mr. Robinson, but the K.C.C. need a more forceful directive than you have so far given. Show us that Labour's promised 'freedom from eviction' applies to King Hill. Words cannot help us now - we need action.

For the Residents' Committee,

M. Mills.
J.S. Gibbons.

