

K.C.C. VERSUS THE HOMELESS

THE
KINGHILL
CAMPAIGN

1/6



INTRODUCTION

Daily Mirror,
Jan. 26, 1966.

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.

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
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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.

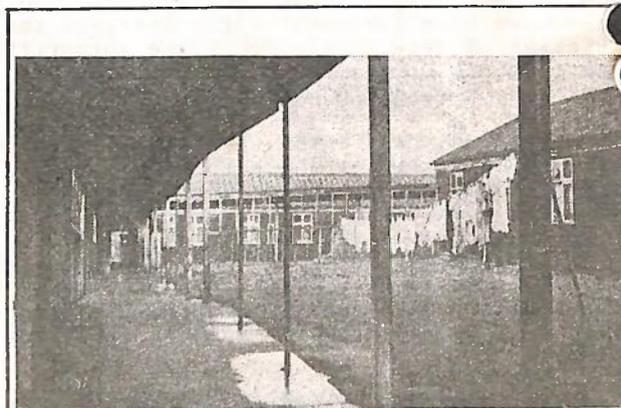
When questions at last began to be asked, the answers given concealed a good deal of the truth. The public was told that fathers were no longer admitted to reception centres because when they had been (and just when that had happened is not at all clear) they had caused endless trouble. One authority 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 and '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.

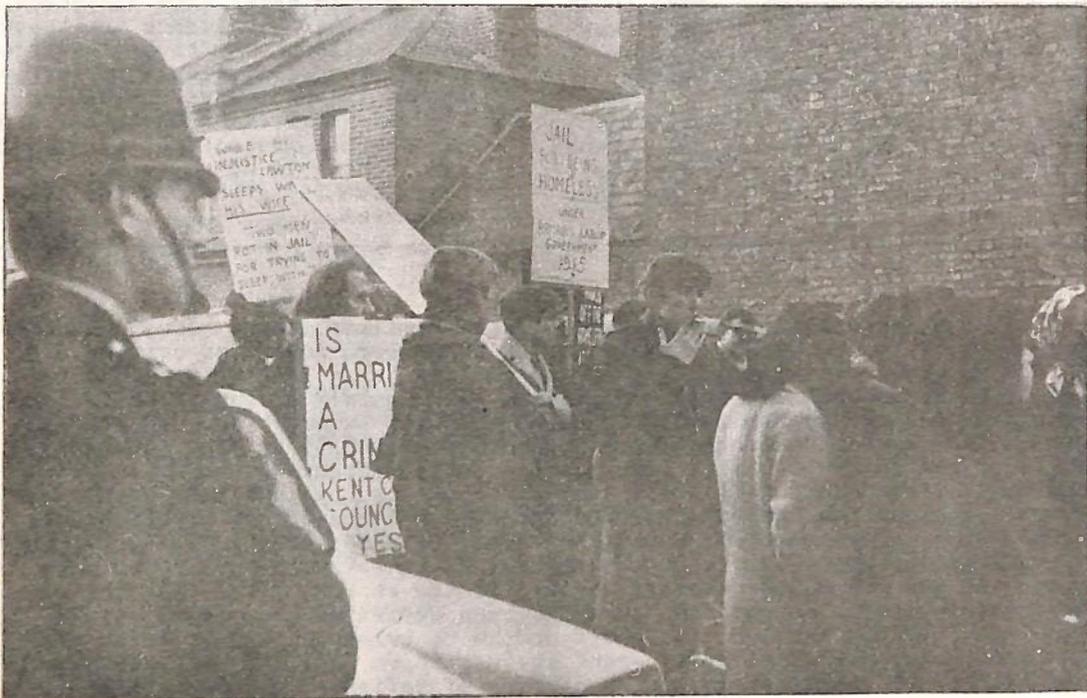
Whilst no generalisation applies to these families, there always has been a minority of adults with low standards of behaviour, sometimes criminal, who are nevertheless apparently able and willing to exploit private individuals and public bodies. Such individuals, fortunately a tiny minority, cannot 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 misadminister 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 Hydleman, 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 Daniels 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. Mills' accommodation had been visited some time after 7.30 am on October 20. When the officials eventually got in they found Roy Mills 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 allright 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 the 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 expected!

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 seats 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 times 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 Kensing 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.'

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.

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 'proglers' 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 collection 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

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:

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.
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.
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.
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

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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

S.S. Gillbrows

Woods

Mr. Skinner

C. a. Dine

B. J. Thomas

D. Neale

McMurphy

G. P. Daniels

S. Sullivan

J. H. M. O'Brien

R. H. Cook

S. A. Kitchen

A. G. G. G. G.

W. S. G. G. G.

K. G. G. G.

S.K. Bonham

J. Haugh

D. H. Kington

J. H. H. H.

H. G. G. G.

B. G. G. G.

M. Doyle

B. P. Moore

M. Radtke

M. G. G. G.

M. G. G. G.

M. G. G. G.

D. R. Sales

B. Reeves

W. M. Hawkins

J. V. P. G. G.

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 marshal 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. Mentiplay	
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. Kitchener
B. Lomas
R. Mills
R. Moore
T. C. Hawkins
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 APPENDIX 6 SIDE OF THE WIRE FENCE

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 at 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 life 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 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 most 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 at 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 writs 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.

