

# Actions center on immediate issues

(cont'd from p. 5)

notice to quit. If the dwelling is rented on a yearly basis, notice must be given three months before the year's end. If rental is monthly, notice must be three months in advance by the landlord and one month by the tenant. Weekly rental dictates four weeks notice by landlord and one by the tenant.

Magistrates may refuse to make an eviction order if it appears that notice to quit was given because the tenant resorted to government authority or attempted to enforce or secure his rights.

The resolution order of a landlord tenant may require: payment of money by either party, that either party perform or cease and desist any action, that tenancy be terminated, and/or the landlord be put in possession of the premises. (He may enforce this himself, with all reasonable means.)

Rent for tenant dwellings cannot be increased without written notice of his intention and the proposed amount, at

least three months previous to the change. This does not apply if the lease contains a contrary clause.

No security deposit can exceed half the monthly rent. It must be held in trust by the landlord and used only for repairs necessitated by actions the tenant is responsible for. Interest on the full amount of the security deposit at the rate of 6% per year must be returned to the tenant within ten days of termination of the lease.

In a dispute, the tenant should ask the Residential Tenancies Board to hold his rent in trust, payable to the landlord upon performance of legally required acts.

No legal action may be taken against the tenant while this rent is held in trust.

When a tenant faces his landlord and demands certain rights, he is usually walking on foreign soil. That is why they MUST know their rights and insist on their fulfillment.

It is not the fault of the poor that they must live in

tenements; overcrowding is rapidly making this a reality. These conditions are advantageous to the ruling class because they create the desire to be "better", which means utilizing the established methods of achievement: money, status, better jobs and homes. This process keeps the lower classes in a static position because they must eat, feed their families and have a place to live; there is "no time" for the development of an organization to implement their demands. Thus the poor stay poor while the landlords gain wealth and control.

There are uses for tenants' unions, legal aid departments spring up everywhere and a Residential Tenancies Board exists in the Metro area. Organizations like these cannot achieve the truly necessary demands through the regular legal system — the law has too many loopholes that help those who know it or can afford to hire someone who does.

There is a much greater need

for participation by groups that are closer to the people. Student legal-aid, the ombudsmen and recent law graduates can offset the "token" legal tactics of the other organizations through effort and understanding.

Although the Residential Tenancies Board could effect some required changes, they cannot and will not: their class is the upper echelon, the owners, the landlords of society. No matter how utopian their desires, peer pressures prevent them from becoming truly active and meaningful.

Tenants Unions are another attempted answer, but are incredibly slow they tend to become embroiled in legal disputes that result in frustration and stalemate between tenants and landlord. The small measure of speed they CAN muster is gained at the expense of tried legal practitioners; successful lawyers will rarely risk their reputations supporting these small groups against the monied people who could be their next clients.

The basic prerequisite for tenant groups is quick, forceful action by a specific group.

The basic prerequisite for a successful movement is a number of tenants who have come together out of frustration and are capable of quick, forceful action on specific issues. In this way the long-range aim of "humanizing" their con-

ditions can be quickly reached.

The tactics of these scattered groups are not complicated — they work steadily to get what they want, but are more effective than the usual union-type organizing process. One method is refusing to pay rent (regardless of legal implications) until repairs are effected; if enough people become involved, the repair costs will be far outweighed by the bad publicity given the owner.

Call campaigns are also among the favorite techniques: teams staff the telephones at odd hours calling owners, agents, aldermen and Board of Health officials to impress them with the seriousness of the matter and to ask for their support.

More recently, tenant groups have begun to advertise detailed accounts of the housing conditions and their complaints in the media, through picketing and with posters erected near the owner's home and business. These show prospective tenants what could be their lot, as well as keeping the problem before the larger audience and the owner.

The general criteria for all this is to make it hard for the owner NOT to effect repairs, and to ensure that he will be more responsible to the tenants in the future. If he forgets, many eager tenants will remind him.

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