

# ce to live!

landlord would be around to collect the rent once a month. Despite the obviously depressing surroundings, the people were trying to make the best of their existence.

It is obvious that many landlords are making good money in this racket. Jack Kussen, has had his apartments described as depressing, soiled and dirty, unpainted and uncleaned with hallways inadequately lit, indicating "a landlord ... that didn't care." Social workers were so appalled by living conditions in some of Jack Kussen's apartments that a portfolio of pictures was supplied to the Provincial Minister of Welfare two years ago. They say nothing was done. Mr. Kussen lives on Valley View Drive.

Many violations of the law are known but the city seems to prefer to be unaware of the problem. The renting of rooms in the Bigson Block downtown, (96 & Jasper) where people are living in basement rooms without windows, is a clear violation of the law. The city Health Inspectors seem to be blind about this one. Ald. Ron Hayter has described places as fire-traps with fire-escapes that would require the skill of Houdini. Places advertised as furnished, having furniture that seems to have been picked up at the local dump.

In view of the city center are the "Flats Areas" of housing where there is no water and the outdoor bathroom is the proverbial 330 yd. dash. Why doesn't the Health department act? Why doesn't the city act? Why are all the atrocities unpunished??

## LAWS FAVOUR LANDLORD

The laws concerning the renting of houses and rooms are all in favor of the landlord. The landlord, following legal procedure, can throw out a tenant for any reason. He can terminate the lease if you complain too much, or if he wants his relatives to move in.

Cracking down on these landlords would be a first step. Up until now the landlords had a good thing going. High rent, guaranteed rent, minimum maintenance, and a clientele of all the people on social assistance. A good business venture with almost guaranteed results. In fact the Health department would probably leave you alone because it wasn't worth it to try and prosecute.

The Health Board has four inspectors, The Medical Health Officer, a couple of aldermen, and citizens. These inspectors are frustrated because many of their recommendations are never implemented. Some recommendations are over 30 years old.

The legal system is also to blame in the Housing situation. There are too many loopholes and not enough legislation.

But if we tear down all these places that have been condemned and those that aren't fit for human habitation, what will we do with all the people that are left homeless? At the present time the city rents 757 housing units and owns considerable amounts of commercial property.

Yet when Ald. Dave Ward tried to find out from Social Service how many of these places were rented to welfare recipients he was told that there was "considerable difficulty in obtaining the information". Surely the city knows the addresses of the welfare recipients, and they must know the addresses of the homes the city owns. Where is the problem?

Mr. Ward's inquiry of whether the rent was raised

# Or is it?

for people on Social assistance was answered in this same way. Social Service said, "The policy of the Department is that the client is responsible to locate housing and that the agreement is between the landlord and the client, not the Department. Our experience in having claims from landlords for rental arrears, damage, etc. indicates the *soundness of that policy*."

Not only should the city get more involved in public housing but they should set standards for rent, enforce those standards with stiffer legislation and start proceedings immediately. Things like Omnplex, newer freeways and other projects should become secondary to the issue of a fellow human being's plight. How can you place priorities when a man's family and life are endangered by such an environment. Why can't the city prevent the tax-payers' money from being WASTED on these high-priced hovels.

## TO DATE

Under the urging of Ald. Ron Hayter nine aldermen from city council went on a tour of some of the houses. His comments on Welfare and slum housing had some strong feelings.

These slum landlords are being treated too kindly by the city. It's time we cracked down and that time is now. Many of these slum landlords have refrained from fixing up terrible premises for one simple reason--why spend money when you don't have to?

Greater pressure from the city would simply activate the vast majority of landlords to improve their premises because they don't want the money to stop flowing in.

In an inspection of slum housing, the indignities seem only physical. But in reality this sort of condition warps the mind and soul as well as the body. It creates an army of people without hope, caught in the clutches of a system that exploits them for being poor, needy, or uneducated.

The money given to the people on welfare is tax money collected for the purposes to do with as the government sees fit. The people are represented by the elected representatives. These representatives act many times on the opinions of the professionals in a certain field. Inquires by Aids. Ron Hayter and Ward to Dr. Ball of the Health Department resulted in a report from Ball which was very aptly described by Eddie Keen as "a series of excuses on why the Health department cannot do its job".

Provincial studies and recommendations are needed; they come about out of public pressure, your pressure.

## ELLIS DEVELOPMENTS CO.

One of the biggest rip-offs Gary and I encountered were the three homes we visited owned by a firm known as Ellis Development Company. The company is owned by Dr. Adler, an Edmonton dentist.

At the first of these homes we visited (10506 - 149 St.) we were greeted by a young woman who was wearing a winter parka because her house was so cold.

She stated that Dr. Adler would not fit her place with storm windows because "to get the windows fitted for storm windows would be too expensive." The place is very drafty and the only heat register in the place is located in the living room. It's about one foot wide.

She also told us that about a month after she moved in, the roof collapsed. It took the landlord a month before it was finally fixed.

The basement floods and has very poor drainage every time it rains. The place is rented for \$155 a month plus about \$30 for utilities. Part of this cost resulting from having to use the stove as an additional heating source.

The house is rented un-furnished but the young lady has a remarkably clean and pleasant home, not at all like the pictures of lazy slouches and living room garbage heaps which are usually represented as the welfare environment.

The next house we visited was a home rented by Dr. Adler which has as the only heating in the whole house, a space heater about three feet high. The thermostat for the heater was hanging from the roof on a wire, out of the reach of anyone.

The lack of heating resulted in the lack of anything from the cold water tap, and the cold spell two weeks ago froze the hot water pipe. The man had to furnish the place himself.

The bathroom tap drips constantly. The ceiling was painted but the paint is chipping. There are large cracks all along the outside of the house and it seems that half of the house is sinking.

The man fixed up the hole that is given the name of basement, and, for the improvement, Dr. Adler raised the rent. The house also boasts Dr. Adler's money saving idea on storm windows.

The third house located at 10502 - 149 St. was rented to a woman, who, when we visited her, was glad to talk to us to register her complaints with someone.

She was required to pay a \$50 damage deposit which she thinks is ridiculous because "the place is so damaged that it is impossible to fix anyway." She said that the rent is \$145 and she doesn't know how much utilities will cost. There is no basement, only the hole that is actually a three-foot cul-de-sac at the end of some dubious stairs.

The wiring is a nightmare and if the door is slammed or if the wind blows too hard, the power goes off until you slam the door again. The house has a gas stove in which the oven doesn't work. The woman has her own stove, but the house is not wired for a 220 circuit. The kitchen has no cupboards, the floors are worn almost through both linoleum and wood, the outside needs fixing, never having been finished in the first place, and the inside needs painting and patching.

This house, like its neighbors owned by ELLIS DEVELOPMENT CO., had no storm windows, only plastic.

The people in these three houses complained about both the dust, and shaking, traffic outside caused. All three houses were cold and the last house particular was unfit for human habitation. Congratulations, Dr. Adler, I hope you enjoy the money.

