



WOULD YOU PAY RENT FOR THIS?

**THE SLUMLORD MUST FIX UP.** At 220-222 Peshine, people need rats exterminated, plaster repaired, painting, lights on their steps, front door knobs, garbage removal. At 324-326 they need plumbing, plaster, steps fixed, door locks, glass in windows, a front door, garbage and filthy water out of the front yard.

**OR THE CITY MUST CRACK DOWN.** If Kaufman does not fix up, the City can fine and jail him, take his building and charge him the cost of making it livable. This would be a first step in defending human rights against the real estate interests.

ADVANCE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1965

# Picket in Suburbs

Members of the housing and Welfare committees of the People's Action Group—Area Board Three— plan to begin picketing Milburn home of an absentee landlord starting Saturday. A spokesman for the group told ADVANCE the action was conceived as a kick-off to an organizing drive of tenants in five buildings controlled by the same landlord. All are located on Peshine Ave. or Hunterdon St. in the lower Clinton Hill section of the city.

The immediate cause of the people's ire was the eviction by the landlord of a tenant and her family of seven children who had repeatedly complained to city agencies about conditions in her apartment.

Mrs. Emma Gaskins and family, formerly of 324-326 Peshine Ave., was last week forced to vacate her apartment. The week before she had received a curt note from the landlord's representative asking her to leave but offering no explanation.

That night, Mrs. Gaskins appeared before the membership of the Area Board and told her story.

She told the 75 members present how she and several other tenants had gone to the city Human rights Commission and the Board of Health last May. Armed with water beetles taken from the building and snuffed in a soda bottle, the protesting tenants persuaded the inspections of the building, Mrs. Gaskins said.

City inspectors found a total of 206 violations: inadequate plumbing, plaster falling from the ceiling, broken looks on doors, holes in the floor of the front porch. Before they even entered the house, the city's representatives came upon an enormous hole in the ground about ten feet in diameter which collected stagnant water, refuse, and mud. The smell was hideous.

But after the inspections were completed, Mrs. Gaskins told the Area Board members apparently no efforts were made to force the landlord to make the necessary repairs. Then after repeated inquiries of City.

In disgust, the tenants got together again and trekked down to City Hall again, this time to meet with Mayor Addonizio's new Human Rights director, James Threatt. They asked him when City Hall would make the landlord repair the house to meet the City's housing code.

"Why does the landlord own City Hall—he doesn't even live in Newark?" asked Morton Solomon-El, another tenant.

Threatt made four promises to the group of tenants:

- \* City inspectors would return to the building to make new inspections;

- \* The tenants would be told specifically about each violation;

- \* Threatt would personally follow through to guarantee repairs; and

- \* Tenants would be kept informed of progress.

After the inspectors had come and gone again, Mrs. Gaskins related, the landlord put a lock on the door of her apartment, has done plastering done on the ceiling, and put in a bathroom door. But, she said, there was still constant sea-passage through the ceiling from leaky plumbing, and no paint was put on to cover the plaster.

After hearing Mrs. Gaskin's story, the members of the Area Board decided to pay a visit on the landlord to persuade him to reverse his position. A special housing committee of the Board was formed with Mrs. Myla McClain of 141 Hawthorne Ave. as chairman.

Following a joint meeting with the Area Board's welfare committee, chaired by Mrs. Mattie Murray of 122 Avon Ave., the group paid a call on the landlord at his downtown office. They were joined by Father Everett of Blessed Sacrament Church and a staff worker for the Newark Community Union

Project, Miss Carol Glassman. "Why are you trying to get Mrs. Gaskins out?" asked Melvin Higgins, a neighbor. "Why don't you fix up the building properly?"

The landlord said Mrs. Gaskins only paid her rent in installments and this was inconvenient. He showed the group his rent collection book to prove his point.

But one of the anti-poverty board members noted the book showed other tenants paid their monthly rents in even more installments.

The landlord said he would allow people who were working steadily to pay in installments. "But not anyone on welfare."

When some of the tenants objected vociferously to this kind of distinction, the landlord replied in anger:

"If you don't like living in my building, why don't you just move someplace else?"

Mrs. Gaskins did. "I didn't want any mess at Christmas for my children," she explained.

Special Housing Committee and Welfare Committee of the PEOPLE'S ACTION GROUP, 188 Badger.

Newark Community Union Project, 471 Clinton

Dear Resident of Millburn;

The slum buildings you see on this leaflet belong to Mr. Phil Kaufman, of 66 Locust Ave., one of your neighbors. We are picketing him today to make visible his illegal and unfair practices as a slum landlord. Mr. Kaufman is a prospering man; we do not grudge him that. But must his prosperity be founded on the poverty of his tenants? Must it require that he violate the housing code of Newark? Must we increase the conflict between black and white, poor and rich, ghetto and suburb?

We are in conflict with Mr. Kaufman; we will continue to be in conflict with those who trample on our rights.

We hope that you will talk with Mr. Kaufman, and with your neighbors, about these problems. If you want to know more about our views, we'd be glad to meet any of you and talk. We represent a cross-section of poor community people in Newark, organized in the war-on-poverty and protest groups, with political and student supporters.