

Wave Of Fear Sweeps Area In Rent Crisis



IS THIS THE START of an eviction wave in Central Area? Last Friday Mrs. Maggie Moore, her husband, Percy and three young sons, were evicted from their home at 2625 E. 61st Street. The family was literally "put in the street." They had no place to go—no relatives to bunk with, even temporarily.

BY SIMEON BOOKER, Jr.

Hundreds of Central Area families, trapped in a vicious housing shortage, are nervously awaiting the first move of greedy, money-hungry landlords this week following the hesitant signing of the new rent control bill by President Harry Truman.

The entire area is tense, as explosive as a "keg of dynamite". What will result because of the relaxed rent regulations may be alarming.

A terrific undercurrent is sweeping the already-overcrowded section as one of the ghastly fears—the threat of eviction—hovers over the roofs of many rickety tenement houses.

Central Area, long the scene for wholesale exploitation in rents, now becomes virtually an "open territory." Rents far out of proportion to the benefits received can now legally be increased through tenant-landlord agreements.

Families, victimized during the lush war years, will face higher rents than ever before as the solid grip of OPA rent enforcement is loosened.

Already, the Apartment House Owners Association has offered instructions to its members regarding the correct way to go about increasing rents. Many of the real

estate men who own long strings of reconverted tenement houses in Central Area are members of this group.

Landlords, according to reliable sources, have been schooled concerning methods of raising rents a full-quarter instead of the bill's fifteen-percent. Landlords first ask the local housing expediter for a ten-percent increase because of hardship and then after this is granted, if it is, the owner is free to offer the fifteen-percent lease.

It is going to take the stubborn resistance of every civic fraternal and religious organization in Central Area to keep hundreds of families in their homes. The main strategy, the Call and Post learned, will center on these fronts:

MUNICIPAL COURT: Over 4,000
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Rent Crisis

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eviction cases, many involving Negro families, are on file in this court. According to the new rent control bill, landlords may evict families—within three days— for any of the following reasons—want house for personal use, behind in rent, or nuisance complaint.

It may develop that if tenants refuse to sign voluntary rent leases, the landlords will attempt to carry out any of these means to evict families.

As yet, Municipal Court judges have made no comment regarding its forthcoming policies in eviction cases. Evicted families in Central Area HAVE NO PLACE TO GO.

LOCAL RENTAL BOARD: The new rent control bill sets up local rental boards comprised of citizens, appointed by the Governor, to consider special hardship cases, decontrol of rental area, and the adequacy of the general rent level.

Central Area citizens will have the task of petitioning Governor Thomas Herbert to give them representation on this board in order that the story of suffering and sacrifice may be heard and known.

MORE HOUSING: The critical housing shortage is Cleveland's number one problem. Central Area is one of the most overcrowded sections in the city. The situation has been serious for years and City Fathers have refused to cope with the problem. Residents must take the gospel of support of more housing bills to City Council and the legislature, both state and national.

Area's Council At Work

The housing committee of the Central Areas Community Council under the chairmanship of Mrs. Hazel Mountain Walker has established an eviction survey bureau at its office, 4590 Scovill Ave. where distressed families may register their complaints.

According to Mrs. Katherine P. Williamson, executive secretary of the council, the office will be open daily and families who face eviction are urged to register. The information will be valuable for future use, Mrs. Williamson pointed out. She said that advice would be given regarding the new bill.

The Areas Council, a veteran of many years in the drive for better housing, will have the support of local organizations, the Call and Post learned.