

The changing thoughts of Sefton

"Even the Tory-controlled Association of Municipal Corporations are on record, almost unanimously, as calling for drastic changes in the bill."

"Failing these changes, the Government will be told that Liverpool will not foist these measures on Liverpool."

— pre-election promise, 28 April, 1972

"Our policy is still non-implementation."

— after sweeping victory at election, 5 May, 1972

"The Government are intent on foisting upon the people an unfair measure. I am not in a position to prevent the Government from doing that, but I am certainly not going to be part of it."

"The bill has been a major factor in the election, in areas of council estates."

— Daily Post, 5 May, 1972

"We in Liverpool took our decision on non-implementation. It is on this policy that we will stand."

— Tribune, 19 May, 1972

The Labour movement should not take any steps which might lead to implementation of the bill, Sefton told a meeting of northern Labour Groups, 12 June, 1972.

Sefton gives a free vote to Labour group, knowing the Housing Finance Act will be implemented with the willing help of Tories and Liberals, 18 August, 1972.

"We will fight this act through the courts, to the High Court, and call on the

support of the Association of Municipal Corporations and T.U.C."

—Daily Post, 19 August 1972

In September, 26,535 tenants received notice of rent increases of £1, 48,667 of 85p, and 6,395 of 49p.

"I knew the Labour party had shortcomings when I joined in 1940."

— Echo, 6 May 1972.

ANTI 'FAIR RENTS' ASSOCIATION

Representatives from twenty tenants' associations and community councils met in Church House on September 5.

After discussion it was agreed that the level of increased rent to begin with was immaterial; and that the long-term effect of the Act would be to divide the city into rich and poor areas.

In an effort to clog the administration by full exploitation of the rebate scheme, some members wished to see the efforts of the Neighbourhood Organisations Committee directed to making sure that everyone entitled to a rebate would get one.

Four motions were proposed and carried:

1. "We declare our total opposition to the Housing Finance Act."
2. "A home is a right, not a privilege."
3. "We call for a total rent strike." (Amendment: "We call on groups to withhold the increases demanded by the Act").
4. "We call for industrial support and action to protect tenants from victimisation, and will work for this support."

It was suggested that the increases withheld should be banked, but decided that as there was no intention of paying them there was no good reason for banking the money.

The meeting also decided to carry out further action independent of the Neighbourhood Organisations Committee, under the name of A.F.B.A.

A smaller meeting of tenants' associations was arranged to discuss strategy. The next full meeting is on September 20 at 7.30 in the Salisbury Centre, Salisbury Street.

No meeting with Alderman Sefton would be held, as there was nothing to be gained.

RENTS —



THE NEXT MOVES

ALL BOOTLE RENT ACTION COMMITTEE

This recently formed group of shop stewards, tenants and housewives, was publicly condemned by local MP Simon Mahon, who said: "I have been Bootle's MP longer than any other person and I know my constituents are very responsible people. I trust they will have no time for irresponsible bodies who intend to take action against lawful authority."

As the action committee point out:

"We have had to break the law in the past in order to get justice, like blocking main roads to get traffic re-routed. Sometimes it's the only way."

They intend to withhold the increase in rent and ignore the rebate forms. A flying squad of supporters is on hand to stop threatened evictions. Printed leaflets have been distributed giving phone numbers that tenants in trouble can call.

On Sunday October 1 at 3 p.m. at the junction of Marsh Lane and Stanley Road, rebate forms will be

publicly burned and the ashes taken to the Town Hall.

TOWER HILL UNFAIR RENTS GROUP

Residents on the Kirkby estate gave 85% support to a petition calling for a total rent strike after Kirkby council's decision to implement the Act. Seventeen councillors had signed tenants' request not to vote for the Act.

Housewives and the unemployed will form pickets to follow rent collectors and give support to other tenants. All the rebate forms will be collected and returned to the council. They have asked NALGO for support by refusing to handle any paperwork connected with the Act.

BRONTE NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL

All the residents except three have signed a resolution refusing to pay the increases.

Residents from the Falkner Estate have decided to withhold rent, but need support from other areas of the city.

LABOUR PROTEST SILENCED

WITH ONE SIMPLE MOVE Labour leaders have silenced opposition to the Housing Finance Act in the city council.

From now on dissenting councillors will not be able to oppose the Act or condemn the way it is implemented. Their only right will be to ask questions.

This is because the council not only agreed to implement the Act, but also gave the chairman and deputy chairman of the Housing Committee (acting as a special committee) all powers to give effect to the Act.

The importance of this section slipped by during the angry debate.

In future Alderman Joe Morgan and Joe McPherson, deputy housing chairman will have total powers over the way the Act is implemented.

Aspects of the Act will come before the council in the form of minutes, for information purposes only. No-one will be able to speak or vote against them.

The way Sefton and his cohorts have taken the Act from the floor of the council into committee, makes a mockery of his appeal to the 21 labour councillors who left the official Labour group in protest.

He has told them in two letters that the Labour group is 'democratic' and that they can continue their fight against the Act from within.

There is only one slim chance of reversing the decision to give automatic powers to Morgan and McPherson.

Under the rules of the city council, no matter what has been decided upon can be brought up for twelve months. But there is a loophole, which allows the matter to be raised by a motion from the Housing Committee. This is the only way it can be changed.



How Labour voted . . .

FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Aldermen: Caplan, Cleary, David Cowley, Brian Crookes, Morgan, M Josephine Powell, Sefton.

Councillors: Millicent Aspin, Francis Burke, Gardner, Leo Hyams, Vincent Hyams, Jacobs, Ellen Kelly, Lee, Ian Levin, Livermore, Mitchell, McDonald, McManus, McPherson, Shaw, Margaret B Simey.

The attitudes of Councillors Winter and Johnson are not clear from the official voting lists.

AGAINST IMPLEMENTATION

Aldermen: Hugh Carr, Dunford.
Councillors: Ackers, Edward Burke, James Burke, Doswell, Doyle, Leslie Evans, Mabel Evans, Finnegan, Fletcher, Gorman, Hamilton, Higgins, Francis Hughes, Doreen Jones (Gillmoss), Kathleen Jones, Lloyd, Maloney, Maudsley, Mooney, Moorhead, McGurk, McLean, Orr, Owens, James Parry, Robert Parry MP, Perry, Pratt, Terence Roberts, Shields, Short, Stewart, Cyril Taylor, Thorne, James Walker, Geoffrey Walsh, Westbury, Andrew Williams, Len Williams.