

NOW THAT Liverpool Liberals have "declared war" on private landlords, they should turn their attention to the Globe family, who own some of the worst slums in Liverpool.

One of the directors of the family's six property firms is Albert Globe, who is vice president of Liverpool Liberal party. He is also a former chairman of the local party and has stood -- unsuccessfully -- as a Liberal candidate for the council several times.

The Globe empire was founded in the 1930s by Baron Tobias Globe ('Baron' was his first name, not his title) -- and is now carried on by his sons and daughters.

The companies are very wealthy (total assets well over £1m) and they haven't had to borrow a penny since 1949. The main company, BTC Trust made £53,852 profit in 1972 -- so there's no question that they can't afford to do repairs.

But what is life like for their tenants? Here we take a closer look...

No electricity but the houses are shocking

MRS MILLS, who moved into her house two years ago, is expecting a baby. But there will be no washing machine or bottle warmer for her. No mains radio or television. And no electric lighting.

The electricity has not been cut off... her landlord has simply never installed any.

Mrs Mills is a tenant of BTG Trust and there are other tenants who would have no electricity if they had not installed it at their own expense.

BTG have an appalling record in Toxteth. Many of their houses in Claribel Street, Grinshill Street and Foxhill Street have no bath, inside toilet or hot water system. And very few of them are without serious structural defects.

Complaints about the lack of repairs are largely ignored unless backed up by the Public Health Department or solicitors' letters.

Dr Cyril Taylor, Labour councillor for Princes Park, was so disturbed by the number of complaints he received that he called a meeting of BTG's tenants last September. A Public Health Inspector and representatives of the City Building Surveyor also attended, but BTG refused to send anyone.

"We feel that any representative

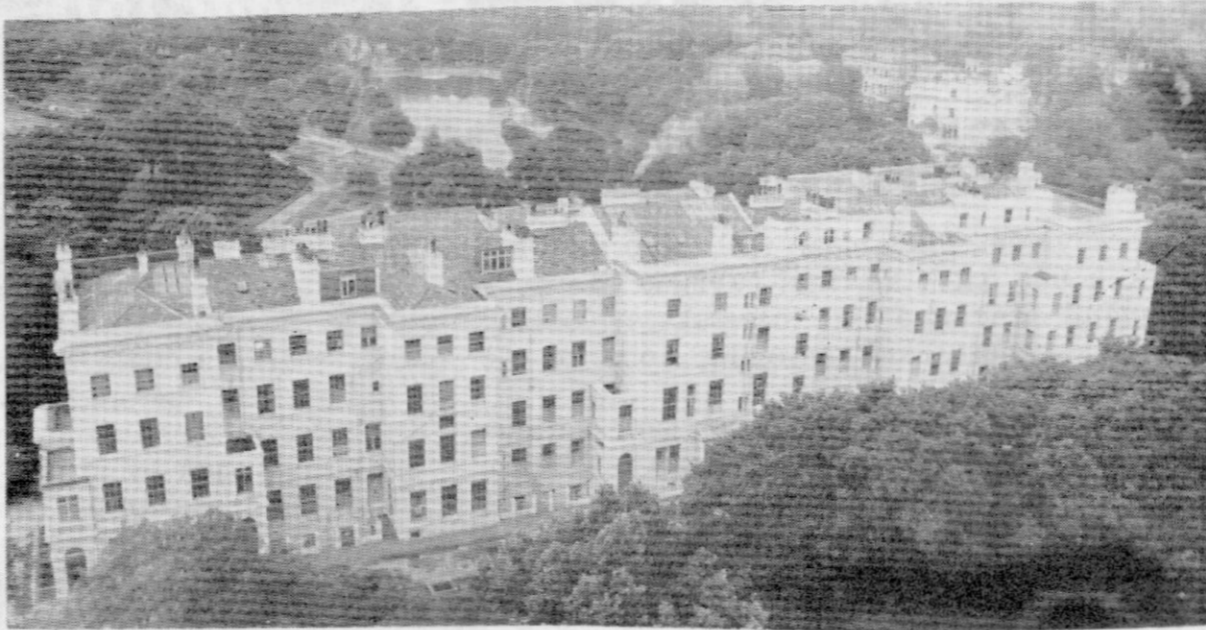
of ours would be so outnumbered by our tenants as to make any meaningful discussion of the complaints difficult, if not impossible," they said.

Under pressure from the Public Health Department they did do some minor repairs. Even this was quite an achievement. And at 13 Claribel Street it was almost an historic occasion: the second time in 32 years that workmen had visited the house.

As a result of these half-hearted repairs BTG felt they were entitled to rent increases. But they withdrew their applications after the rent tribunal inspected the properties. Mrs Marie Dawrant of 11 Claribel Street was so worried about the state of her house that she called in a firm of architects. They estimated it would cost £3,250 to make the house habitable.

As a small concession BTG agreed to send a man to fix her back door. He took the door off its hinges and disappeared. That was six months ago.

All this would be understandable, but not excusable, if the houses were in a demolition area. But neither Claribel Street nor Shallot Street are in the Stage II clearance area, which means the houses could



IF YOU NOTICE a strange smell when you pass Princes Park Mansions, don't worry. It's just that some of the tenants may not have washed their socks.

For the rules say: "No household washing of clothes or linen may be carried out at the flat except with the landlord's permission."

The people of Princes Park Mansions are just about the only tenants the BTG Trust take much interest in. And what

an interest they take!

Tenants are forbidden to hold auctions on the premises (as if they would!) -- or to do anything "immoral or improper".

The landlord decides whether it's immoral or not, and just to make sure, claims the right to enter flats at any time.

And if he doesn't like your friends it's just hard luck. Tenants must not permit "persons of a character objected to by the landlord to resort thereto."

be up for another 15 years... providing they don't fall down in the meantime.

BTG have also annoyed tenants in Coltart Road. Under the Tories' Fair Rents Act the rent has been increased by between 200 and 300%, bringing most of the rents up to £2.40 a week.

The rent officer seemed to think this very reasonable and commented that you couldn't expect to rent a garage for that amount nowadays. (Though it is doubtful if he would trust his car near some of the crumbling houses in Coltart Road).

The tenants say they would not object to the new rent if the houses had been properly maintained.

William and Winifred Carter, of 37 Coltart Road, have tried over the years to keep their house in good repair themselves, even though this means completely repapering the walls every year.

A notice of disrepair, with a long list of faults, was served on their landlord in 1955. Nearly twenty years later they are still waiting for some of the work to be done.

When some slates fell off their roof, causing water to leak through, the Carters did stir BTG into action.

But what action! Workmen arrived with a roll of grey felt similar in colour to the slates, and then cut slate-shaped pieces out of it. They laid six such felt 'slates' on the roof and left.

The next morning Mrs Carter found four of the pieces in her back yard.

Many of the tenants in Coltart Road are annoyed at the firm's policy of keeping houses empty. Instead of re-letting, BTG try to escape responsibility for repairs by offering the houses for sale.

Previously, married children of tenants were given first choice to rent a house when one nearby came empty. This ensured that families could live close together and helped reduce overcrowding.

The houses BTG refuse to re-let are not necessarily the worst ones, though they are often badly boarded up and in a year or two become derelict.

The result is that other houses become overcrowded and tenants have to live in terrible conditions until they are rehoused by the Corporation. Meanwhile houses across the road, which were recently in better condition, fall into ruin.

Legal help scheme gets a spanner in the works

THE NEW Duty Solicitor scheme at Liverpool magistrates court seems designed to ensure that it is used as little as possible.

There are several of these schemes in other parts of the country and their purpose is to make sure that those accused can get advice and be represented, whether or not they were legally aided before going to court.

Under a lot of Duty Solicitor schemes anyone appearing in court can approach the solicitor for advice. But not in Liverpool.

When asked to set up the scheme, Liverpool Law Society originally refused. Later they reluctantly reconsidered and finally agreed to a system which would only permit magistrates to refer cases to the Duty Solicitor.

This was not a big step forward. Magistrates have always had the power to adjourn and recommend that an accused person seeks legal help. And since last year they have been able to ask any lawyer in court to represent the accused. Magistrates rarely use these powers.

It is in those cases regarded as trivial by the magistrates (such as shoplifting) or where the police advise a person to plead guilty, that legal help is most badly needed.

Not only can an accused person not consult the Duty Solicitor, but probation officers and social workers cannot refer anyone to the solicitor or ask his advice.

The scheme works on a rota. The solicitor whose turn it is goes to court and waits for the magistrates to give him a case. He is paid by the legal aid authorities according to the amount of work he does.

As there are only a couple of referrals a day, he is likely to spend most of his time waiting to be called for. This means that those solicitors willing to spend their time providing this potentially useful service earn much less than their colleagues who stay in the office.

Some accused people complain that lawyers do not prepare their cases adequately, either because instructions are received at the last minute or because the lawyers are working under the pressure of a large case load.

The Duty Solicitor scheme ought to make it easier to get an adjournment for proper preparation and spread the cases more evenly amongst those solicitors willing to do the work.

Both the government and the solicitors' governing body, The Law Society, approve of Duty Solicitor schemes, but have left it to local law societies to set them up. It is a pity that the local body should not allow a genuinely effective scheme to operate when there are plenty of solicitors keen to run it.

Women picket factory

ON JULY 2 Mr Croft, a director of Wingrove and Rogers, manufacturers of radio and TV components in Old Swan, announced to his 250 female employees that a bonus they had been waiting a year for would not be paid. Neither would the promised threshold agreement.

He wanted no argument. They could like it or lump it. The women lumped it and all of them were sacked.

Since then the women have had a regular picket outside the factory gates. This brought further problems at first when male lorry drivers ignored their picket lines.

But the women are learning as they go along, and now have more control

over things, and lorries no longer attempt to make deliveries.

Support, which was slow at first, is now growing. The Trades Council recently organised support for the pickets as those still working were going through the factory gates. The police arrived to make sure they got there. The police are now keeping a regular watch on the place.

Seventy women are still working, but only twenty of those have abandoned strike action -- the other fifty have refused to come out from the beginning.

Below is an interview with shop steward Rita Smith, recorded a few weeks ago by Cathy Clarke.

Cathy: Can you say a bit about what sparked off this particular strike?

Rita: Well yes, because we wanted the threshold. We're only on the basic minimum pay of £18.66. This is all we've ever received: the basic pay. We've no bonus scheme operating in this factory at the moment. They promised us one twelve

months ago in negotiation with the union and we're still waiting for it -- and they couldn't come up with figures. Naturally when the threshold agreement began to be settled everywhere in other factories we seized on this, you know, as an opportunity to give us better pay. And they refused to pay the threshold, asking us still to wait for a bonus, after waiting twelve months anyway. So this sparked off the present strike.

Cathy: So the specific demands are the bonus, the threshold. Is there also a demand about a rise in pay?

Rita: Well, anything at all, more or less, because when you're on basic pay you must have more money. The basic pay is no use to anybody, and that's all Wingrove and Rogers have ever paid.

Cathy: What about the role of the male workers in the strike?

Rita: Well, the factory is mostly made up of women. There aren't many male workers in the factory. There are a few unskilled men, semi-skilled -- and the toolmakers. And the toolmakers have been called out by us, been drawn out by the union. The other men in the autos came out voluntarily with us, but they are in a minority.

Cathy: And what about Wingrove and Rogers in Kirkby?

Rita: The factory in Kirkby has been called out now, after we've been out four weeks. They've been called out by the union in an effort to achieve something for us.

Cathy: We were at a mass meeting when we heard the AUEW official, Mr Broderick, and he said, "What you need in this strike is money, more than publicity." But that's not what we've heard here. Can you explain what you're doing about publicity



● Pickets at Wingrove and Rogers

and money?

Rita: As regards publicity, we've been in touch with Granada Reports three times and we've had no help from them at all. We've had a few small articles in the Daily Post, thanks to Women's Lib. But other than that we haven't had publicity, probably because we're not very militant picketers. The women are very strong they've never had a strike here before, a union strike, ever, and the women are strong. This is our fifth week and the women are still determined to fight. So I'm very pleased with them, really. But they're not women who are going to batter the scabs that are going in, you know. They don't swear at them or anything like that as far as I know, and I'm here most of the time.

Finance, yes. Some engineering factories have been very good, you know, local engineering factories. But we've got a strike committee going now and we've had leaflets printed, and we've got plans to go around to outside of the engineering unions to collect more funds.

Cathy: Is that mostly to collect funds or is that also to explain the situation about thresholds: do you think this is a strike of significance both for women workers (because, as you said, it's quite good for the women and the union in the factory) and also for other people about conditions and thresholds, and issues like that?

Rita: Yes, because we're women workers,

and we haven't got many men in this factory, we're being victimised. Most of it's local subsidised labour and so this firm have played on this fact, that probably a little pay suits women for a long, long time. But it won't go on for ever because you cannot live on the basic minimum rate.

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