

Landlords cash in on rent loopholes

Last year Mr L P Clarke, director of Dampco, condemned a hard core of students for evading "their moral responsibilities" when renting flats.

Their sin, he said, was that they were applying to the Rent Tribunals to have fair rents fixed on their flats.

But since then Mr Clarke has found an ingenious way of stopping students from using the 1965 Rent Act to have a reasonable rent fixed.

He is cashing in on a loophole in the Act to obtain up to £936 a year in rent from the furnished terraced houses he lets... and there's nothing his tenants or rent tribunals can do to stop him.

For the government's Francis Committee pointed out that under the Act a fair rent could only be fixed if occupants held an exclusive tenancy.

Some idea of the profit Mr Clarke makes by using the loophole is shown by the fact that the Rent Officer registered a fair rent at a similar house in Garmoye Road at £3.25 a week. This house was unfurnished, but furniture hardly costs an extra £15 a week.

Now Mr Clarke doesn't let this happen. Instead, the parents of each student who shares the house have to sign a contract. Under this, their son or daughter only has 'use' of the house. He is not a tenant.

Mr Clarke, who is also a director of Merseyside Mortgage Consultants, was so anxious to protect his 'unearned' income that he copied almost word for word the contract that is used by Standfield (Realmead) Properties, one of Merseyside's biggest slum landlords. They were among the first companies to exploit this loophole.

Clearly, Mr Clarke was upset when students decided that £18 a week was rather extortionate for his three or four-bedroomed terraced houses.

Hard core

In a letter to the Echo, of August 20, 1971 he thundered: "A hard core of students have in recent years been taking advantage of current legislation on furnished accommodation so as to have rentals reduced."

This letter did a great deal of damage, because it came at a time when the university were searching for flats and bedsits for their next term's students.

One of Mr Clarke's houses is 80 Garmoye Road, which has four bedrooms, a lounge and a kitchen. This until recently was shared by six students, whose parents had to agree to pay over £156 a year (for each student).

Considering he is using a loophole which was condemned by the Francis Committee, Mr Clarke has quite a nerve complaining about students evading their "moral responsibilities on a lease, if not their legal responsibilities," when they were given the right by Act of Parliament to have a fair rent fixed.

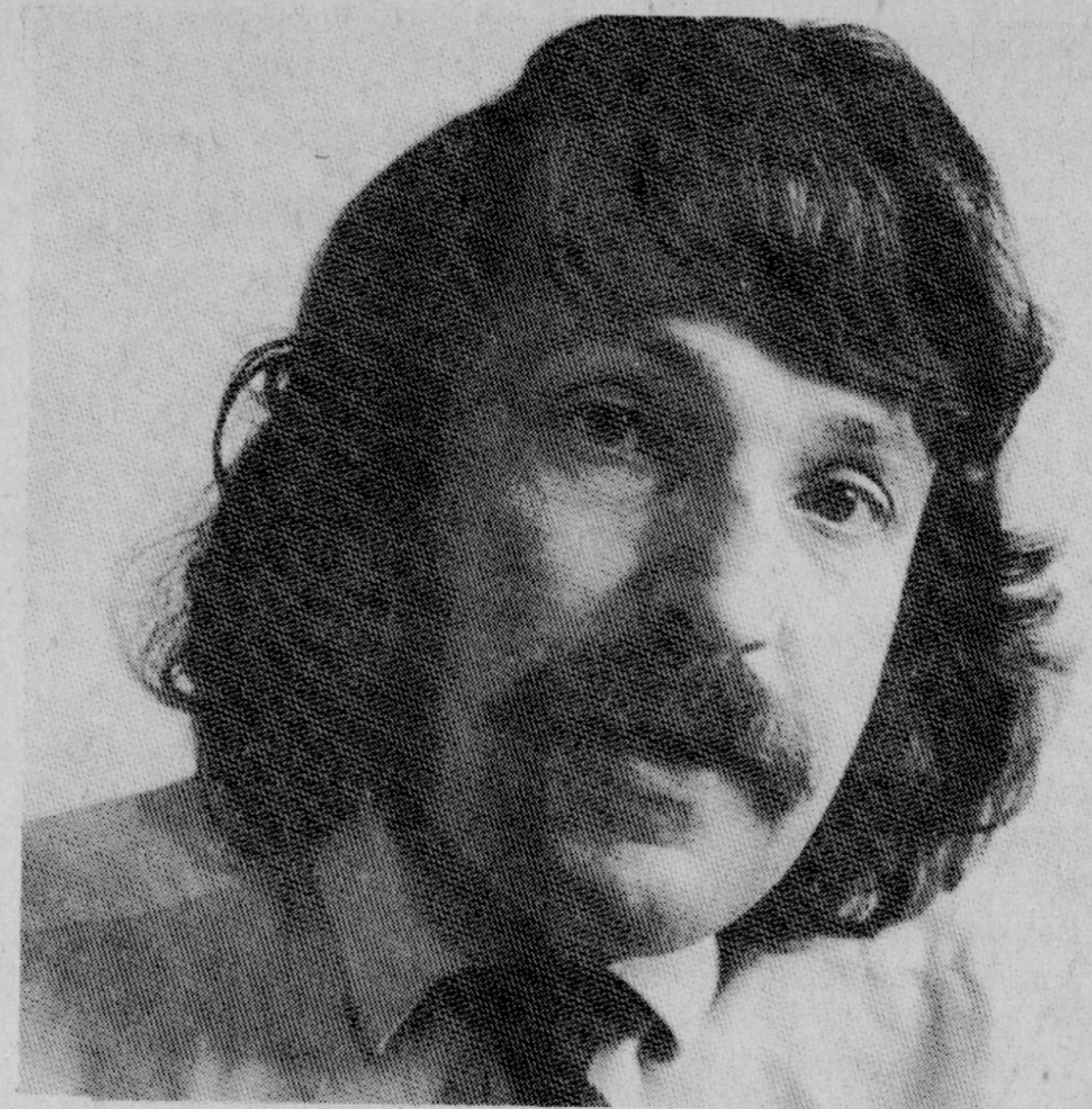
Clarke is just one of a growing number of landlords who are using this loophole to stop tenants having their rent lowered.

Mr Grodner, of Barkfield Properties, 96a Duke Street (who is a friend of Mr Clarke) uses the same loophole to gain £18 a week from students at 74 Blantyre Road.

Another firm cashing in is Hilbre Securities, which also follows the Standfield agreement very closely.

Bothe Chris Graham, President of the Liverpool University Guild of Undergraduates and Geoff Pick, President of the Polytechnic Guild have advised students to think very carefully before entering into an agreement under which they may be unable to exercise their rights under the Rent Act.

And a solicitor has said: "I doubt very much whether any person in his or her right mind would seriously consider the proposals... In my view the agreement is an open invitation to a parent to be exploited."



CHARLES WAKSTEIN

picture by Ron Vaughan

Evidence against lecturer secret

THE learned academics of Liverpool University would find the description 'Kangaroo Court' applied to a Senate committee distasteful.

But that is a fitting description for the committees which have decided to press ahead with the sacking of Dr. Charles Wakstein, a lecturer in the mechanical engineering department.

And they have shown total disregard for any of the elementary principles of justice.

Dictated

During the year and a half in which Professor Roy Penny, head of the design and production department, has tried to get rid of Charles Wakstein no written statement of the charges has been produced.

The only charges Dr. Wakstein has heard are those put to him verbally at a meeting of the engineering faculty staffing committee.

At this meeting he asked for the charges to be dictated to him. Only part of the charges was read out to him, and this part related vaguely to poor standards of teaching and research.

Wakstein has never been allowed to hear all of the evidence against him.

A letter from the faculty dean Professor Derek Hull, setting out the procedures followed and the evidence heard has been withheld from Wakstein, along with other evidence.

Mr H. Birchall, the registrar, confirmed in a letter dated July 7 that this documentary evidence would not be shown to Wakstein and stated emphatically that it was not their intention to show it to the University Council Appeal Committee either.

No evidence, no charges. But Dr. Charles Wakstein is being sacked.

The evidence he put forward in his defence against the vague charges has been ignored.

An appeal last year for independent assessors of his teaching, to be appointed from other universities, was refused.

The university have denied Wakstein a fair hearing in their determination to support a professor's personal and political prejudices.

Under the Industrial Relations Act, even if the courts find Wakstein has been unfairly dismissed the university are not obliged to re-instate him. Maximum compensation for a ruined career will be around £4,000, which is equivalent to less than two years' pay.

Dunlop look to the Far East

ABOUT ONE THIRD of the Dunlop/Pirelli plant at Speke is lying idle. Nearly 1,000 jobs have vanished in the last three years.

So Dunlop workers could be forgiven a hoarse laugh when they read a headline in the Echo on July 3 which said: "No jobs threatened, say Dunlop".

The company were denying a report in the Times that they planned to concentrate more production in the Far East, where labour is much cheaper.

Charles Levinson, secretary-general of the International Federation of Chemical and General Workers warned that the company planned to do this by extending their link with the Japanese conglomerate Sumitomo.

"It could mean a switch in production and a transfer of emphasis

with the inevitable consequences of growing unemployment, plant closures and redundancies," he reported.

Workers at Dunlops had only to look at the outcome of the recent tie-up between Dunlops and the Italian firm Pirelli to take the company's denial with a pinch of salt.

Short time

The merger between these two multi-national companies had been followed by 'rationalisation' which for the employees meant redundancy, loss of overtime, and short time working.

Since the merger in December 1970, 8,500 workers at Dunlop/Pirelli have lost their jobs.

Workers in Britain and Italy weren't slow to react to this new threat. In fact, the Dunlop/Pirelli workers have shown the way forward for other employees whose livelihoods are in danger because of the policies of multi-national companies.

The stewards have set up an international steering committee - one of their meetings was held in Liverpool - which has already led the first one-day European strike to protest about closures and sackings.

This shop-floor committee of British and Italian workers has now made contact with stewards in French factories owned by Dunlop, and even with representatives of 30,000 Michelin workers.

They say the only way to defend jobs against a multi-national company (which last year made a profit of £50.9 million and has 210 plants in 23 countries) is to prepare for unified action.

For Dunlop say quite openly in their recent public relations hand-out that employers are ready to play off one worker against another.

"Competition is between people. For every moulder, machinist, tyre builder, craftsman, salesman, store-keeper, technologist and manager, there is someone competing with him in a competitive company in Germany, Japan, or the United States," they warn.

These are the very countries where Dunlop own factories. Production can be shifted when and where they like.

In Britain alone in 1971 they made 4,276 workers redundant, while 2,148 weren't replaced.

Cheap labour

Clearly they find it more profitable to produce in countries where labour is cheap and disorganised. Inner tubes for cycle tyres were once made in Speke. This work has now been shifted to the Dunlop factory in India.

As Stan Pemberton, Joe Mc Gough and Charlie Parker, Speke convenors and stewards on the International Steering Committee point out, this kind of manipulation will only end when Dunlop/Pirelli employees organise themselves internationally.

Police inquiry: the same old story

TWO YEARS after being arrested by Liverpool police, the city's community relations officer Jimmy Rogers has heard that his complaint against the police has been rejected.

Jimmy - who was police basketball coach at the time - said the police planted cannabis on him before charging him with being in possession of drugs.

He was acquitted at Liverpool Crown Court and then made a formal complaint against the police.

Now, more than a year after the complaint, the usual reply has come from the Director of Public Prosecutions - almost word for word the same as that sent to Lennie Cruickshank (see Free Press No 8).

"Having carefully considered all the evidence I have reached the conclusion that it is not such as to justify the institution of criminal proceedings against the officer concerned," says the letter.

Deputy Chief Constable Dalzell wrote to Jimmy, exactly as he

wrote to Lennie Cruickshank: "I have carefully considered all the evidence in this case and, whilst it is regretted that you had cause for complaint, I do not propose to take any further action."

And word for word, the same criticism stands: The cries of whitewash will continue until complaints against the police are investigated by independent inquiries and not by the police themselves.

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