



tenant news

N.S.W.

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service fees

It's that time of the year again, time to ask members for service fees for 1981. The Tenants' Union needs your service fees to continue production of our quarterly newsletter and to cover postage. If your service fee is not forthcoming, we cannot guarantee that you will continue to receive the interesting newsletter and keep in touch with what's happening in and around the Union. Enclosed you will find a green form which you should return with your 1981 Service Fee.

The scale has not changed:

Unemployed pensioners etc\$1
Workers\$3
Organizations\$5

Also it would help if you included your membership number which you will find on the front of this envelope. We can then quickly find your name in the membership register.

THANK YOU IN ANTICIPATION OF YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT.

Donations always gratefully received.

NEWSLETTER

Partly due to Australia Post's organization, the Tenant News newsletter will now be produced quarterly.

Contributions on anything to do with housing and tenancy are most welcome but should arrive one month before the end of the quarter to be included at the earliest opportunity.

Therefore we look forward to a deluge of copy every February, May, August, and November.

Address manuscripts etc to Editor, Tenant News,

118 Regent Street, Redfern. 2016.

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE EDITOR.

keep chipppo cheap

Over the last three years the Chippendale Housing Action Group (CHAG) has been attempting to "Keep Chipppo Cheapo" by fighting evictions and arrests and organising squats, pickets, petitions, letters and submissions. But unfortunately, the light at the end of the tunnel seems to be dimming rapidly.

On Thursday, November 19, 1981, in Newtown Court, 2 long-term tenants were given notice of eviction warrants to be executed in January and February, 1982. The initial notices to quit were served on the tenants in November, 1980. Thus, the fight was worthwhile - it extended the tenancies by over 12 months - and may not be over yet, depending on possible appeals to be lodged with the Supreme Court.

BRIEF BACKGROUND

For those of you who don't know the history of the struggle, a "potted" version is presented below:-

1. Chippendale Estate - over 55 houses in the Chippendale area were owned by a large company called Hudson. In 1979, the Company decided to sell the estate.
2. Tenants - the great majority of tenants were long-term working class people. The sale threatened their very existence so they got together and attempted to establish a Housing Co-operative.
3. The Co-op. - The Co-op had the full support of South Sydney Council, local residents and even a permanent building society. But the State Government was unwilling to come to the party.
4. Sale of the houses - The real estate company, Mitchell & Cranston P/L of Abercrombie Street, Chippendale, had managed the estate for years and the owners (Hudson) asked them to arrange sale.

This is where it all becomes interesting (as if it wasn't interesting enough before), and details of the wheelings and dealings of a certain Mr. Bill Gilbert and various companies he is associated with became public during the eviction hearings.

INTERESTING FACTS TO COME OUT OF THE HEARING

- * A certain Mr. Bill Gilbert is managing director of the Real Estate Agents, Mitchell & Cranston P/L. He also happens to be managing director of a company by the name of Haven Cruises (the importance of this fact will soon become apparent - so don't get bored!).
- * Mitchell & Cranston were supposed to offer the houses to the tenants and then offer them on the open market. However, 4 of the houses (and as far as we know there could be more) were sold to Haven Cruises. At the time of purchase the company, Haven Cruises, had assets of just over \$400, yet was able to buy at \$144,000.
- * At a case heard before the NSW Council of Auctioneers and Agents, in early 1980, Mitchell & Cranston were fined \$600 for contravening sections of the Auctioneers & Agents Act.

Specifically the case of the tenants in 141 Cleveland Street was raised at the hearing. On November 4, 1979, the tenants offered to buy their house from Mitchell and Cranston for \$40,000. On November 9, 1979, Haven Cruises bought the house for \$36,000.

Mr. Gilbert must have made a pretty penny out of this deal. Only \$600 on fines and saved \$4,000 on just one of the houses. Mitchell and Cranston obviously "forgot" to communicate the offer made by the tenants to the Hudson company. How many other offers did they fail to communicate? The power of the "quick buck" obviously affects the memory.

- * Gilbert was asked to comment on these discrepancies, but he could only vaguely recollect the dealings of the company and the investigation into its affairs. The constant response to questioning about this led to the all too familiar, "I do not recall"!
- * Interestingly enough, the Certificate of Incorporation of Haven Cruises does not include any provision allowing the company to act as a landlord. It was suggested that Gilbert may like to open a marina at Chippendale Beach, and then tenant out boats to the lucky locals. Given the games played so far, the extension of Sydney Harbour to Cleveland Street should not be a real problem for Gilbert or one of his companies.
- * Despite all the sheelings and dealings they were unable to get the Notices to Quit right. Although they were accepted as valid, technically and legally, both Notices were invalid.
- * Haven Cruises proved to be an extremely interesting company. It has 2 members on its Board of Directors and they can't be rolled - there happens to be only 2 shareholders. Surprise, surprise, the 2 happen to be Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert of Woolwich. He is Managing Director, she is the Secretary. They took over the company in November, 1978, and have been straight shooters ever since.

The minute book of the company was presented in court. Since they had taken over the company, there had only been 3 meetings! The first meeting was to organise the transfer of the company to the Gilbert's in 1978. The second was their huge AGM of shareholders held in November, 1979. Fortunately, they were able to have their AGM at home because only 2 people showed up. The third and final meeting was held in August, 1980 - it was only short and there was a unanimous decision to move towards eviction proceedings against the 2 tenants. There were no other resolutions or minutes of meetings in the book!!

What happened about the AGM's or consideration of finances of the company? Don't companies have to organise at least one meeting per year by law? It would seem not. Gilbert has got away with so much, he probably thinks he is beyond the law.

Probably the funniest thing was hearing a court official at the end of the proceedings say in quite a loud voice: "I better give you the minute book back - you might need it".

SLOW DEATH OR REVIVAL OF A FIGHT

So despite all this the 2 tenants face eviction. But even though it gets dimmer all the time, there is a lot of fight still in us yet! If we can appeal to the Supreme Court on points of law, we will.

If you want to get involved, or simply need more information, give us a ring on 699 7605 or 699 7494.

CHAG

farewell and thankyou

Farewell and Thank you to Harvey Volke, our Project Officer. Your efforts will be sorely missed, however we look forward to a continuing and closer relationship with South Sydney Community Aid where Harvey will be working. South Sydney's gain. All the best from the Tenants' Union.

estate agents translated

The language of estate agents is a little tricky to negotiate, and sometimes you need an interpreter. Here are some examples (lifted from Frank Muir Goes Into):

ESTATE AGENTESE

Unique opportunity to purchase...

an interesting...

compact...

cottage-style...

residence needing some renovation...

situate...

in exclusive quiet area.

This unique property...

comprises spacious hall, 2 recept.,
2 bdms. and mod. kit...

and many preserved period pieces.

ENGLISH

We are having difficulty in
selling...

an ugly...

very small...

poky...

house, which is falling down...

situated...

a long way from shops and public
transport.

This house, which is just like all
the others in the road...

comprises small hall, 2 reception
rooms, 2 bedrooms and moderately
squalid kitchen...

with no bathroom or plumbing
and an outside loo.

Maybe you'd like to add to this list, and send it to us. Best entry gets the raspberry.

merry christmas !!

