

"WE ARE NOT FOR SALE"

PART 1

**10 POINT ACTION PLAN
TO FIGHT
ESTATE SALES**



This is the first part of a two part pamphlet on fighting estates sales. The second part contains:

- ★ detailed histories of tenants' campaigns and the lessons from those campaigns
- ★ a look at the Cantril Farm disaster
- ★ background information on the Urban Housing Renewal Unit, Urban Development Grants, Derelict Land Grants and Community Refurbishment Schemes.
- ★ a detailed look at some of the companies involved.
- ★ a checklist of fiddles and myths involved in estate sales
- ★ a stage by stage chart of how a sale might take place
- ★ a profile of who gains and who loses
- ★ arguments why council housing is so important
- ★ brief details on legal action
- ★ useful information on housing associations and co-ops

The second part is designed to fit closely with this pamphlet and provide invaluable ideas, information and arguments to strengthen any tenants campaign.

(SCAT) is a national housing, planning and public services project. Its work includes advice and assistance on campaign organising and strategies, research and analysis, educational workshops, and workers and users alternatives for a wide range of local and national labour movement organisations. SCAT Publications publishes Public Service Action, the anti-privatisation newsletter for the labour movement. It also produces a wide range of reports, pamphlets and broadsheets covering privatisation, public services and house.

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SCAT
SERVICES TO
COMMUNITY
ACTION AND
TRADE UNIONS

THE TEN POINT PLAN

Fighting privatisation isn't easy. However where tenants have been well organised estate sales have already been defeated eg Honeybroom, Basford and Runcorn or seriously threatened eg Walterton, Yet not all tenants groups have been successful, some groups have started to organise too late, whilst others have found little experience to draw on.

The aim of this 10 point action plan is to help change this situation, it is firmly based both in past experience of fighting all types of privatisation and in the lessons from many tenants campaigns.

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN STRATEGY

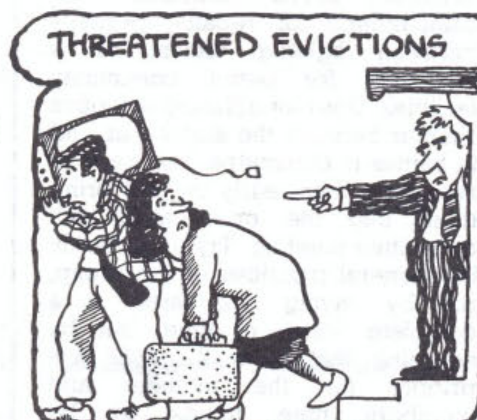
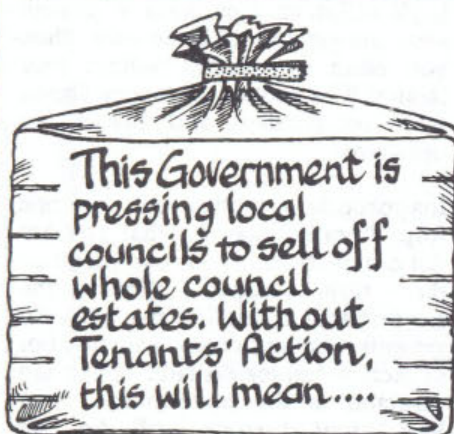
It is not a shopping list from which you can choose. Every campaign must consider all 10 elements, although how far each is used will depend on local circumstances. Success will depend on using all 10 points in combination.

It's important to start with basic tasks which you have the resources to complete — don't initially take on more than you can achieve or action your members will not support. Above all it is essential to start organising now. Since key features of privatisation deals so far are their secrecy and their speed.

TEN POINT PLAN

The 10 point plan includes:

1. Planning a effective campaign
2. Finding Information
3. Gaining local and national publicity
4. Launching a counter-offensive against contractors
5. Developing your own alternatives
6. Taking direct action and other tactics
7. Building alliances with trade unions
8. Building alliances with other organisations
9. Developing a strong tenants' organisation
10. Forging national links.



1. PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN

The threat of privatisation can often appear overnight and you may feel it's all too late or that any reactions will have to be quickly or poorly prepared. Yet tenants experience shows its essential to make time to discuss exactly how you are going to organise.

Immediate public attacks against any sale are important but don't get panicked into a campaign where you are not sure of your aims or directions. It's never too late to organise a campaign thoroughly. Time spent at the very start discussing how you are going to organise and campaign will prove invaluable later on. This section looks briefly at the overall planning of a campaign and some of the pitfalls you may meet.

STARTING

An obvious starting point is for your committee or group to take the time to read and discuss this overall 10 point strategy! And decide which steps are most important for your situation. Apart from this you need to decide:

1. Who you are aiming your whole campaign at?
2. Who is going to do what?
3. How you are going to keep control of the direction of the campaign and discuss its progress.
4. What further information do you need and where do you get it from?

PROGRESS

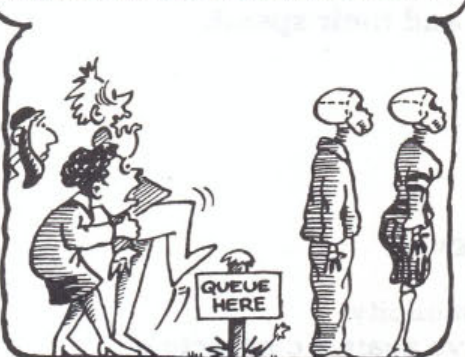
Every few weeks, or even every few days if the pressure is on, you need to analyse how the campaign is going:

- have you achieved some of the things you set out to do. If not why not?
- what new arguments, facts or forces have you come up against. How can you counter these?
- How strong is your organisation and how could this be improved?
- are present tactics working or should they be changed?
- what have been the reactions of the other side, how does this affect you now?
- what are the most important next steps?

GOODBYE TO FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS



EVEN LONGER WAITING LISTS



DANGERS

There are many lessons to learn from past tenants campaigns. Many groups find themselves taking on too much. Committee members find themselves divided perhaps between social activities and campaigning for repairs, perhaps between fighting racism or a campaign for better community facilities. Don't let different priorities simmer beneath the surface or end in battles in committee. You need to recognise them early on and bring them into the open at a full committee meeting. Try to agree on the general priorities of the group, not by saying one issue is a complete waste of time, but by agreeing that 1 or 2 issues are priority for the moment and members time needs to be concentrated on them.

Moreover plan to avoid splits in your group and on the estate between those who may want to move and those who don't. Support those who want to move eg fighting for good compensation, whilst making it clear that the estate should provide good quality public rented housing for all those that want to stay and others in the area who need that housing.

WRONG TACTICS AND WRONG TARGETS

It's very easy to think you're running fast and not notice you are standing still. Regular reviews of the whole campaign should reveal this and prevent you from wasting further time on certain actions. However remember certain actions like gathering information may take time to produce results. Providing you're confident that what you are after will be useful, it will often be worth continuing.

Also media attention may not have an immediate effect but 3 or 4 news items in a short space of time may begin to get the opposition to move from silence to start saying "We're going to have to deal with this, or perhaps we need to react in some way."

However it may be that your tactics do not bother the Council in any way. Difficult letters are dealt with daily by every Council. They can see a complaint to the ombudsman as a distant flea bite or a threat of legal action as something to sort out after the estate had been sold. Then you need to quickly rethink your tactics. The section on tactics shows ways to increase and sustain the pressure.

Inappropriate tactics can be one trap. Another may be that you are not concentrating your campaign on the right target. Whilst the government is behind the push for privatisation and there are a number of tactics suggested later which are directed at the government, **your key local targets will be the Council and the developers.**

DIVISIONS IN COUNCIL

The Council, of course has the ultimate decision about whether or not to sell the estate and on what terms. The Council likes to present itself as one unit with everyone working together. However within any local political party there are major differences between individuals and groups of councillors. Whilst the chairpeople and leader are usually the most influential, other councillors may have a lot of influence.

There are also wars and jealousies between officers in departments. In each Council different officers and different departments are more important than others. Some departments have stronger political support from councillors than others. At the same time may chief officers will proudly claim (in confidence!) that the chair of their committee does 99% of what they want them to do!

So the key question is who has the real power to decide about your estate? Is it the Council leader? The

Director of Finance? The Chair of the Finance or Policy Committee? The Director of Housing? Or which group of people has the most power? Try and find out as much as possible from every contact you have within the Labour Party and other political groups, amongst council officers, journalists etc as to who is supporting privatisation and who is resisting it?

LOSING THE INITIATIVE

Developers will usually want to act quickly, partly to defuse criticism and opposition and partly to steamroller the Council from setting standards and making restrictive demands on them. This can have an alarming effect with the Council acting at a speed you have never seen before.

So they will be trying to gain the initiative and force the pace. Your aim must be to slow the pace so that you gain the initiative. So you can gain the offensive and put them on the defensive, to be one

step ahead instead of two steps behind.

The tactics section shows various delaying tactics you can use whilst the questions checklist can help force a public argument, both of which help you buy time. Moreover by putting forward alternatives as early as possible you can turn round the whole political argument into a question of political choices rather than the sterile argument "we have no choice".

ALL IN ONE BASKET

Many members of the group will be searching for the most effective tactic. Discussing these ideas is positive. **However there is one danger, that you rely too much on one tactic and all your eggs are in one basket.** Perhaps there's a legal loophole which might prevent the sale. It may certainly be worth following up, but don't rely on solely that or any other tactic for in later weeks that tactic may fail and you are left with nothing. **So always be aiming to build as much mass support for your campaign and as wide a range of tactics as possible.**

DECIDING ON KEY DEMANDS

Past tenants campaigns shows that the exact wording of demands is crucial. Your demands are what you want. You need to build your campaign round them, to use them as a focus and as a way of building support. So it's important to get them right.

Your demands shouldn't be confused with 'slogans'. Slogans are brief, hard hitting phrases which catch the attention eg "modernise don't privatise" — "keep developers out" — "public yes, private no". Slogans are useful for posters, leaflets and banners.

Demands on the other hand need to be more detailed. The main pitfalls faced by tenants in the past include:

demands that are too easy or vague. For instance if you demand you should be consulted, without saying exactly how, the Council may well hold one public meeting and say "that's it, you've had your consultation, we've done what you asked".

● demands which divide. For instance Fulham Court TA argued strongly against privatisation but their demands did not include the option of moving for those tenants who wanted to. This caused divisions.

Councillors and officers have had years of experience sweating over the exact wording of motions and reports. So you need to take some care yourself. This doesn't mean endless meetings drafting and redrafting. But it does mean a group of people trying to draw up a list which:

1. Takes into account local needs and feelings
2. Can be put to a public meeting
3. Can form the basis of the campaign.
4. Will commit the Council to meeting tenants needs.

2. FINDING INFORMATION

Information about who is doing what and why is crucial for a successful campaign. Successful tenants campaigns have exploited the weaknesses and divisions of the other side, and tried to keep one step ahead and prepared for any surprises. Your campaign will need to defeat as many of their arguments as possible, cast serious doubts on the developer's plans and motives and to take the initiative wherever possible. To do all this demands information and 'intelligence' about the other side. The more you know and the quicker you get this information the stronger your organisation will be.

BEFORE ITS ANNOUNCED

The most dangerous time is when you haven't heard anything! All developers and most councils will try to keep everything secret for as long as possible. During this time there will be 'informal talks' where people 'float ideas' and the developers try to put together a plan or a 'package' which they will shape around that particular council. The early warning checklist (see box) is designed to help you assess whether your estate is in danger.

If you tick any of the boxes you will need to find out more. Methods can include:

- alerting all tenants to watch out for strangers on the estate visiting, measuring up or taking photos. Encourage tenants to go out and find out exactly where they are from and what they are doing.

- find sympathetic councillors and get them to find out more, to ask questions in their political group or to ask questions in full Council.

- use trade union contacts and members of NALGO in the town hall and GMBATU/NUPE/TGWU/UCATT/EEPTU etc to see if anything unusual is happening or if they have been asked to do anything that might mean a developer coming in.

- watch carefully yourself for anything unusual eg stopping lettings on the estate, or certain repairs being stopped.

- contact sympathetic journalists (get contacts from other tenants

association, Tenants Federation etc) and explain why you think a developer may be interested and persuade them to phone around checking it out.

- phone the local offices of developers and say "We're hear you're interested in x,y,z".

- if you are fairly sure something is happening but not sure exactly what then take a leaf from the politicians' book and 'fly a kite'. The idea is for people to look at the kite and for you to watch their reactions! For instance issue a press release along lines "Regalian to buy whole estate for £1" This may help flush out the truth. Even if no-one admits that this is true you can usually tell something is up by the way they deny it eg 'No comment' or 'nothing is happening at this stage'. Analyse their words carefully.

- get hold of the Council's Housing Investment Programme statement which sets out their planned policies and spending each year.

EARLY WARNING CHECKLIST

How many boxes can you tick?

1. Is your estate physically run down either inside the housing and/or the environment outside? ☐
2. Have the Council been leaving dwellings empty and not reletting? ☐
3. Has the repair service been considerably run down in past few years? ☐
4. Are there structural problems which will be expensive to put right? ☐
5. Have councillors or officers publically (or privately) said they're not sure what to do with your estate? ☐
6. Has your Council considered selling off any other estates? ☐
7. Would the estate be attractive for young buyers eg near open country, near a large employer eg university/hospital or conveniently close to the central area? ☐
8. Has the council been classing it as a 'dump' estate and rehousing tenants there who they want to get 'rid-of'? ☐
9. Has the Council talked about changing the image of the estate? ☐
10. Is the Council keen on privatising other public services? ☐
11. Is the Council considering rehousing everyone anyway? ☐
12. Has UHRU visited your area? ☐

The more ticks, the more likely you will be to face an estate sale. However even one tick could mean privatisation is being considered.

IF IT IS ANNOUNCED

- **find out as much as possible about the companies** involved, where they have done other schemes, what has gone wrong.
- **keep in regular contact with sympathetic councillors** for a flow of information. Find out exactly which sub-committee and committees will be discussing the issue when and where.
- **keep in regular contact with one or two journalists** who have an interest in the story. Whilst being careful they don't pass on your ideas and plans, try to get them to pass as much information as possible on to you.
- **get in touch with some of the specialist press** (eg ROOF, Construction News, Public Service Action see list at end) will all have a direct interest in finding out more. Get them to phone key people and pass back their responses
- **monitor all relevant committee and sub-committee minutes** and reports on a regular basis.
- **if it's a Labour Council considering plans**, use Labour Party members in local branches who are willing to find out more.
- **continue to get tenants to report anything** that might be connected with the plan to the tenants association.
- **do the obvious eg write in continually** to the most appropriate department eg Housing Department or Chief Executives demanding to know what is going on. Publicise the reply or lack of it.
- **use the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985** (see box) from the very start to demand consultation and full information at an early stage. If this information is not immediately available constantly attack the secrecy in the media.
- **if the developer has purchased an estate in your area recently then find out the financial details.** One method is to use your limited rights to see council accounts.
- **use the question checklist constantly.**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

This new Act comes into force on April 1st, 1986. It should considerably strengthen your rights to find out what is happening about your estate.

The main clauses say:

- ★ you have a right to attend all meetings of the Council, its committees and sub-committees
- ★ a notice giving 3 days warning of any Council meeting and its committees and sub-committees must be posted at the main Council offices
- ★ 3 days before any meeting you can see the full agenda and all the reports to be discussed in public
- ★ the Council must supply the names and addresses of all councillors and which committees and sub-committees they sit on
- ★ most importantly you can, before and after any Council Committee or Sub-Committee meeting, see any relevant internal documents used for the preparation of the report
- ★ you can photocopy (for a 'reasonable' cost) any publicly available document
- ★ you might have to pay to see internal documents but any charge must be 'reasonable'
- ★ if anyone prevents you from gaining access to the information listed above then you should immediately report them to the police and tell the press. They are committing a criminal offence and if found guilty they can be fined.

Footnotes

Unfortunately you have no right to see information before April 1st, 1986, you can also be excluded from some committee meetings but must be told exactly why and allowable reasons are listed in the Act. However none of the old excuses of "confidentiality" or "in the public interest" can be used.

Potential

It remains to be seen how councils will attempt to block and abuse this Act. However it seems clear that if a report goes to committee on your estate then some or all of the following documents may have been used and should therefore be available to you.

1. Technical reports (environmental health officers, surveyors, architects, structural engineers, heating engineers etc)
2. Housing management information — statistics and information on lettings, condition of properties, tenant complaints, relative popularity, general environment etc.
3. Correspondence between the Council, the Department of Environment, UHRU and developers. Records of meetings and phone calls and memos involving these organisations.
4. Minutes of meetings, notes of phone calls, memos between all council departments. Letters from any council department to outside organisations eg District Valuer.
5. Calculations and financial assessments on all aspects by the Councils Treasury Department.
6. Plans, briefs, proposals, budgets, schedules of work, design ideas and specification etc by developers.

N.B. Any information supplied by a Government Department is still confidential.

3. GAINING LOCAL AND NATIONAL PUBLICITY

It is in the interests of most Councils and developers to keep details of estate sales as quiet as possible. They know the deals are so questionable and the results so devastating that the last thing they want is publicity.

Tenants, on the other hand, have every interest in making all the issues public. It's your estate, your future, your homes. Moreover publicity has proved one of the key weapons that tenants groups possess.

Any campaign must therefore make sure there is a continuous stream of publicity — within the estate, in the local borough or city and also nationally. This would have a number of aims:

- to expose the facts and explain the arguments
- to win public support
- to increase the 'strength' of the group
- to embarrass and harrass the opposition.
- to flush out additional information and the real motives behind the deal
- to possibly put you in touch with other sympathetic organisations and individuals.

PUBLICITY ON ESTATE

A continuous succession of leaflets or newsletters on the estate is needed as a back up to public meetings on the estate

Leaflets should:

- show how tenants are under attack in other areas and what's happening on other estates
- show how the promises of quality work and a fair deal for tenants do not materialise
- show all the disadvantages of estate sales (eg use and develop cartoon ideas in the centre of this pamphlet)
- show exactly who will gain from estate sales and at whose expense.
- focus on the advantages of housing as a public service.

Council tenants fear deal to redevelop estates

By Geoff Andrews,
Local Government
Correspondent

A private letter from an American architect to an old friend who works as architectural development officer for Westminster City Council has become the centre of a furious row with 900 of its tenants, who fear that they will be moved out to make room for the redevelopment of the estate for private sale.

The tenants also believe that a tower block on the estate is to be sold to Trusthouse Forte as an hotel to pay for stringing asbestos out of a second hand living in the... The letter, leaked to the press, was written by a company providing a redevelopment company advised, "I really do think we can do something there," Mr Lewis wrote in the letter that caused all the trouble.

The council is adamant that no decisions will be taken before February, that all tenants will be fully consulted, and that none will lose their homes. The local action has amassed evidence August an urban... pany provide

However poor or good that service may have been in the past you do have access to councillors, there is greater accountability and social need comes before profit. A private company or trust makes its own laws and will have no duty to meet public needs or social obligations.

■ spell out what action the tenants' association is taking

■ make sure an action section is included which spells out what action tenants can take and how they can become involved

■ explain what the council is trying to do and its tactics

■ reproduce key letters, documents or quotes. For instance Walthamton reproduced the letter from a very friendly developer to the borough architect!

■ explain that there are alternatives and how these could be taken up.

■ include contact names, addresses and phone numbers.

These leaflets will be designed for tenants. However with little extra work they can be adapted for councillors and management. For this group you need to think yourself into their position — what are their real concerns, what are their real interests?

■ select some of the points raised above but particularly concentrate on the failures and who will lose and who will gain.

■ give details of the problems that will continue to be laid on the Council door step. Selling off estates doesn't make them go away eg homeless, waiting and transfer lists, debt charges. Also the problems that continue after sales eg Knowsley keeps getting requests for more money, Salford flats that have been sold are now damp etc.

■ show how politicians can only expect bad publicity and an unfavourable image and less votes from privatisation moves.



Where Do You Go From Here?



As you may know there are plans to sell the Towers to a private concern. It seems more than likely that they will be sold without tenants. Tenants held a Public Meeting to discuss the future of your home. 80 people felt the only way to get at the truth was to ask your Councillors 'What future have the Towers, OUR HOMES?' Will you be notified of any plans affecting you?

'Outrageous' bids halt sale of council estate

By Geoff Andrews
Local Government
Correspondent

The Government's first attempt to sell a council estate has hit a snag because three private developers put in bids described as outrageously unrealistic.

The developers were told to prepare new offers just hours after Sir George Young, the junior environment minister, announced that the Abbey Park estate would be the first to be sold by the Department of the Environment.

country are likely to be partially sold off to private developers and more councils are considering this solution to run-down housing.

Calderdale council has had considerable problems with the 691 houses, flats and maisonettes on the 18-year-old estate, which suffered severe damage from wind and snow in 1984.

The council worked out a programme by the housing renewal authority to see renovation of the area, by the housing renewal authority to see renovation of the area, by the housing renewal authority to see renovation of the area.

DoE's urban regeneration unit would see renovation of the area, by the housing renewal authority to see renovation of the area, by the housing renewal authority to see renovation of the area.

Homes may hit the poor

AMBITIOUS improvement plans for a Salford crisis housing zone could leave many tenants worse off than they are already, it is claimed.

requirements of people removed from the zone which meant the city would have to pay no rent.

There will be no time to wait for council housing, it is claimed, and tenants will be made worse off than they are already, it is claimed.

Council awaits go-ahead to give estate away

By Geoff Andrews,
Local Government
Correspondent

A Conservative-controlled council is likely this month to sanction the giving away of a block of 820 council flats and maisonettes, said to be worth £5 million, to a developer.

Barratts is waiting to hear whether Mr Kenneth Baker, the Environment Secretary, has approved its offer to sell the flats to a private company.

sell a proportion of the existing units outright after refurbishment, and make the rest available through a housing association or a mix of shared ownership and fair rent.

The Labour minority on the council opposes the transfer and says that the city would have to pay out £300,000 in interest on the transfer.

PUBLICITY LOCALLY

Many of the ideas from your leaflets can be translated into news or press releases. One easy way to cut down work is to make up a short press release to send to the press when you release a leaflet.

However you must also plan a stream of press releases or news stories whenever there is the slightest opportunity. Discuss whether each piece of information or news you come across can be released to the press. If so how is it best used, which local media would be most interested and how you can time it for maximum effect eg before a key Council meeting.

More information on how to gain publicity is available in High and Dry page 22, or in far more detail in Denis McShane's book. "Using the Media". Many groups however make the mistake of missing opportunities. So think carefully what can be turned into news this would include:

results of surveys, the treatment of individual tenants, release of a report (even a page long!), information about developers elsewhere, visits to other estates or from other estates, planning of a public meeting, results of a public meeting, tenant attendance at Council meetings, release of a leaflet, preparation of alternative plans, reaction to council statements or plans, taking legal action, various forms of direct action.

The checklist of questions is designed to be a constant source of publicity.

Apart from particular tactics you are planning for other reasons also think up 'media events' which are solely

designed for publicity. For instance the developer may be planning to leave in asbestos or not deal with cracks and other defects. So organise an open morning aimed mainly for television where you show the press round a few flats pointing out where faults won't be dealt with. Or dress up in a mock asbestos suit to illustrate dangers and problems that won't be tackled by private developers. Or organise a visit to an estate which has already been improved but where there are problems.

NATIONWIDE PUBLICITY

Don't forget nationwide publicity.

Whilst the national media will be more choosy about which estates they consider particularly newsworthy, the 'trade press' may well be interested in giving you more coverage. Journals like Construction News and Building Design consistently cover faulty estates and building contractors of all kinds and do cover tenants stories. They are read by professionals within local government but also the news filters back to the government itself. Contacts have also been made through the columns of these papers. Also don't forget to send copies of your news to magazines with a special interest in privatisation of estates like Community Action, Public Service Action and Roof.

SHELTER has released a considerable number of press releases based on tenants campaigns and can help you aim for national coverage.

However don't ignore other national media. Programmes like "That's Life" "For What Its Worth", "TV Eye", "World in Action", "Open

Door" and others have all taken an interest in tenants campaigns in the past. Some people hope that by obtaining the interest of one of these programmes their problem will be solved. However this is rarely the case so don't expect too much. Hopefully national co-ordination against sales will help create interest for national programmes. The programmes then need to be followed up locally with press releases, additional pressure on the Council, and local viewings of the programme.

THE JOURNALISTS' ANGLE

Journalists are always looking for a 'peg' to hang a story round. The fact that you are clearly 100% in the right and the Council and developers are acting in a totally vicious way does not interest them as much as the 'angle' and the 'peg'.

If you recognise this you can help get stories by thinking what kind of news may interest them. For instance the family who won't be rehoused and will be out on the street, the person taking the council to court, the pensioner who has just decorated and can't afford to decorate again, the story of what's happened to all the millions of missing rent, the developer's poor record outside your area, the Star Chamber secrecy of the Council

Above all though there is one theme that needs to be emphasised. The story of public subsidy to the private sector. Of robbing the poor to give to the rich. Of creating a new property developers boom, only this time it's not office blocks, its public housing that's being sold to line the pockets of just a few individuals. The Great Estates Robbery.

4. LAUNCHING A COUNTER OFFENSIVE AGAINST CONTRACTORS

START NOW

Motorways are breaking up, hospitals crumbling, tower blocks being demolished — even Scotland Yard has scaffolding round it! Yet we are meant to believe the private construction industry is efficient, effective and gives good value for money. Contractors have always seen council estates as a source of profit new profit source in terms of land, buildings and building contracts. This section shows how you can go on the offensive against contractors and how tenants and trade unionists can start to expose what is happening and to organise to stop this process.

The ways in which developers will make their profit vary from scheme to scheme but will include:

- getting the land and buildings below its real market value

- squeezing extra flats or houses within existing buildings or on extra land

- attracting a range of public subsidies

- getting very favourable financial arrangements from the Council

- disregarding some major problems and keeping renovation work to the minimum necessary to secure the initial sale

- using lump labour, relatively few permanent staff, cutting corners on health and safety etc

- not having to meet the same standards as the Council sets for itself

- not having to meet the social costs of the scheme.

COUNTER ATTACK

Any counter offensive needs to take these issues into account. This section shows:

- what demands should be made of your Council in relation to contractors

- how to expose their past failings and present motives

- how to monitor standards and failures

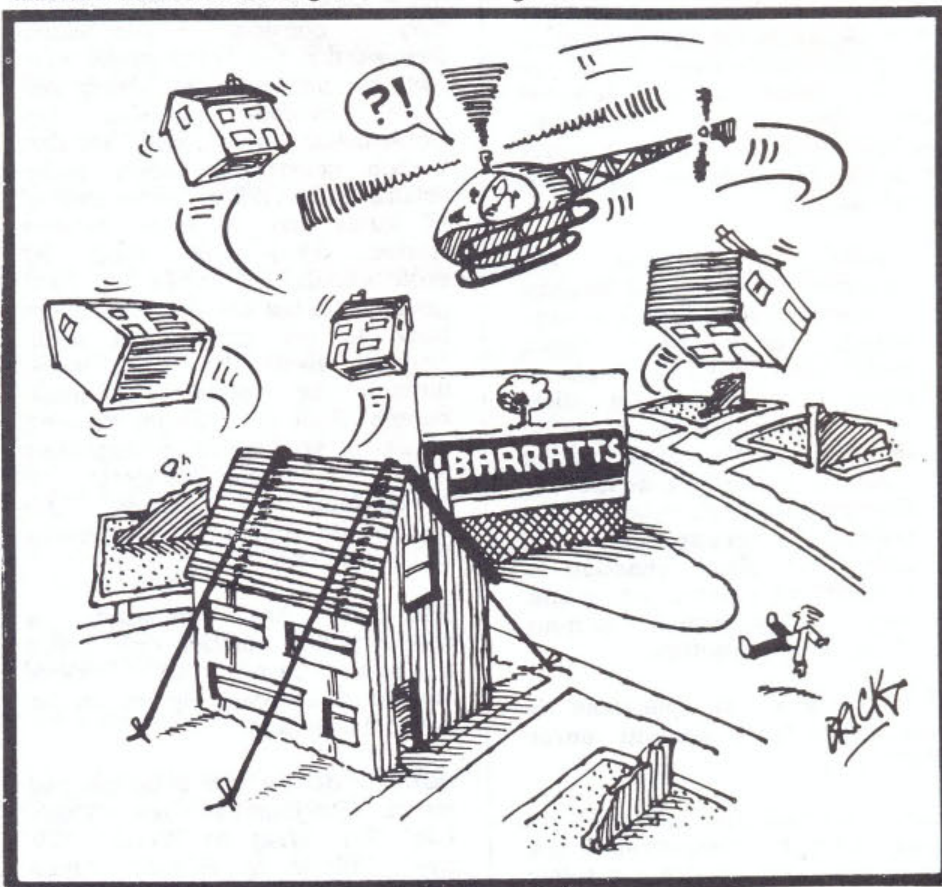
- how to bring in outside bodies when standards are not being met.

Experience of other forms of privatisation eg school meals, street cleansing, hospital cleaning etc is that once standards are set and enforced private contractors find it hard to operate.

Much of what follows can be undertaken jointly with the trades unions involved in housing work.

The battle against developers is very much a propaganda battle, a battle of ideas. The developers and council will play down the privatisation side and say what they are doing is about transforming the image of a rundown estate. Developers will try to create the image of themselves as knights in white armour taking hard to let properties off the hands of hard pressed councils, refurbishing the properties at their own expense and bringing back confidence to the area by selling housing to young upwardly mobile professionals.

They will constantly promote their professionalism, their experience, and their resources. They will use sophisticated advertising, promotion and marketing techniques to present their plans. The last thing they will present is their failures, their inadequacies and their financial gains.



The key tactic must therefore be to undermine confidence in their schemes to benefit tenants and the estate.

Collect details of building company failures in your area and from round the country. Local building workers will not only know this but local employment practices and conditions. Collect cuttings, facts and visual evidence if you have time, especially from any privatisation schemes nearby. Make widespread use of all the examples collected by Public Service Action, Roof and SHELTER press releases. Part 2 gives more details. Make sure of your facts. This evidence can be used to argue that private contractors should either not be used at all or if the council insists, that they be very strictly controlled both in terms of the offer they make for the estate and in the work that they carry out.

CLOSING LOOPHOLES

You can start by aiming to close down the developers loopholes even before privatisation is mentioned! A number of steps that can be taken immediately include:

1. Organising meetings with trades unions and discuss how you can jointly go on the offensive.

2. Finding out what conditions your Council imposes on contractors. Every council has a set of standing orders and will impose conditions on contractors. Many councils have realised in the past few years that their standing orders need strengthening and the conditions they impose on contractors need to be far more stringent.

This alone is not enough. Standing orders and contract conditions need monitoring and enforcing. A number of Councils have set up contract compliance units. These units can play a crucial role concerning the quality of service from contractors, organising penalties for failures, setting standards for wages and conditions of employment, training and equal opportunities.

Having found out what your Council is doing try to persuade them that they must agree to, and then police, stringent conditions if they are not to be exploited by developers.

3. Try to persuade councillors to

decide that they will not attempt to privatise estates in any way whatsoever, before any developer, council officer or councillor starts the process.

4. Whatever the outcome of this pressure get an agreement that there will be freedom of information concerning privatisation of any kind undertaken by the Council. Use the questions checklist to select information that should be made public.



CONDITIONS ON CONTRACTORS

The actual agreement with the contractors is often left with officers. Councillors generally only concern themselves with the broad terms and conditions. Campaign for this situation to be changed. **Argue that councillors and the public should know exactly what is in the small, medium and big print of any proposed deal.**

If a Council is **insisting** on an estate sale insist it should go through a two stage process in choosing a contractor. Firstly by choosing suitable developers and secondly by choosing suitable schemes from a select list of developers.

Argue that all developers fill in a form similar to the application a contractor would make to be on a council's approved list. Obtain a copy of the application form used by Middlesborough Borough Council which is very thorough (available from NUPE, 83 Borough Road, Middlesborough TS1 3AA). This form requires firms to give full details of the company, its financial status, its capacity to undertake different types and sizes of work, health and safety record, training and so on.

Also argue that all the questions on the checklist relating to past privatisation schemes, their problems and past references should be included at this stage.

CONTRACT AND PERFORMANCE CONDITIONS

Demand early on that the conditions which apply to developers must be made public and campaign for a similar list to the one below.

1. The parent company of any subsidiary company bidding for contracts must **guarantee the contract**. A deed of guarantee will be part of the tender documents.

2. The developer must not assign or sub-let any part of the contract to any other firm or individual whatsoever without written approval of the council committee that originally approved the development.

3. The contractor should employ sufficient people at all times with sufficient abilities and skills to properly perform and supervise the work in accordance with the terms of the contract.

4. The contractor must be **bona fide** and registered with an appropriate professional association and directly employ all those people who work for it and any sub-contractors ie no self-employed. All wages earned by workers engaged on work under the contract must be paid directly to them.

5. Developers must provide **written evidence to the council of having public liability and employers liability insurance cover** and must indemnify the council in respect of any claim arising from the acts of the developers, his/her employees or equipment. If the developer uses council premises, land or facilities then the developer must show evidence of adequate cover for hire and property insurance.

6. The developer will pay rates of wages and observe hours and conditions not less favourable than those established for the trade or services in the area where the work is carried out.

7. Developers must employ a reasonable amount of apprentices or trainees genuinely receiving training based on the best known practice in the trade or service.

8. All those employed by the developer at the site or at their premises related to the development must have the

opportunity and every facility for being a member of an appropriate trade union. The authority should demand a commitment to recognise and negotiate with an appropriate trade union.

9. **Developers must fully comply with government legislation against racial and sexual discrimination** as covered by the Equal Opportunities, Sex Discrimination and Race Relations Acts. They must provide details of any prosecution for failure to comply with the relevant legislation, together with details of any Industrial Tribunal claims brought against them by any present or former employee under current legislation.

10. **Developers must comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and submit an acceptable policy statement** on how they intend to implement it on the development, ensure that there are properly recognised and elected safety reps and permit the council's chief safety adviser to inspect all parts of the development at any time. Failure to meet health and safety standards will lead to being struck off the list of developers for a specific period. Developers must produce copies of any reports made about their activities by the Health and Safety Executive.

11. **Developers will face automatic disqualification if they lobby or canvas for the contract** during the tendering process. (You should ensure that the council demands complete disclosure of any councillor's or officer's interests in the firms tendering.)

12. **The developer should use the local Department of Employment and local newspapers** for recruitment of workers after the option of employment has been given to any staff losing their council jobs through the development.

13. **The developer must display a copy of these conditions** together with the performance specifications in at least 4 places on the site of the development. This display must continue throughout the period of each development and where the public have easy and regular access.

14. **The developer must pay in full for its use of any council land, property, site or storage facilities.**

15. **All these conditions apply equally to sub-contractors.**

STANDARDS

If the Council is arguing that private developers are going to improve standards on the estate, they should then be clear as to what standards they think acceptable eg NHBC etc. A timetable must also be agreed. **They should also make clear demands on what environmental works should be done and to what standard.**

MONITORING AND POLICING

It is all very well setting conditions and standards if they are not monitored and policed. Any Council should set out:

- how it intends to monitor the development and deal with any complaints
- how it should have access to the site at all times
- a time period for remedying failure or poor standards
- penalties for infringement of standards
- a system for reporting all failures and complaints to a council committee or sub-committee
- how any proposed changes to the original plans must be reported back to councillors for discussion.

A BARTER DEAL?

Insist that any estate must not be sold off on a negotiated deal arguing this can lead to corruption, a sale where few key questions on issues are publically debated and where the council is totally exploited.

It is obviously in your interest that no negotiated deals or offers to buy are invited. Once either step is taken the likelihood of privatisation becomes much closer. However if the council is **insisting** on inviting bids argue that that they must proceed by going 'out to tender' ie setting strict and stringent conditions and standards and then inviting bids. Going out to tender doesn't necessarily make the 'offers' any better (eg developers can decide who goes for which estate, fix prices etc.). However it should help slow down the process of privatisation, give time for tenants

to organise, help get key issues made public and make it more difficult for developers to make an easy killing or deal behind closed doors.

Therefore demand that at least 6 developers (who have been approved after the first stage) are asked to tender. **You may wish to argue that the tenants groups must also be included on the developers list at this stage.**

Do not reveal what plans you will be putting forward but say you are working on plans which will give all tenants the best benefits. If the Council look like refusing, publicise this complete bias towards developers and total disregard for tenants. Threaten to take the whole issue to the District Auditor since the Council is not considering every proposal and could lose financially.

Getting yourself on the tender list does not mean either that you support privatisation or that you have to put forward a plan to privatise the estate. **However it does give the opportunity to present an alternative plan at the highest level and amidst much publicity.** It also gives you access to detailed documents which the Council will send out about the site and buildings.

It is often the practice to interview developers for big contracts:

- demand that there is trade union representation at these meetings
- demand that there is tenant representation (although this may be difficult if tenants are presenting their alternative)
- try to make sure you have at least one councillor sympathetic to tenants and trade unionists involved is on this panel. Make sure that s/he has a list of key questions to ask.
- use the questions checklist to draw up questions that are still unanswered and which you say must be answered at these interviews. Circulate it, with publicity to all councillors and officers on the panel.
- circulate details of poor performance of the developers involved.

Britain is among the richest twenty countries in the world. There is sufficient cash to improve and renovate council estates. Private developers are merely cashing in on the government's failure to provide that cash. At the expense of council tenants throughout the country.



5. DEVELOPING YOUR ALTERNATIVES

Throughout the country, Councils have been pushing privatisation as the only answer and often aiming for as quick a sale as possible. It is tempting to organise a campaign around such slogans as "Developers Keep Out" or "Save our Estate". There is nothing wrong with such slogans yet this purely defensive line is not enough.

Clear lessons have already emerged from fights against estate sales and from campaigns against other forms of privatisation.

■ **Firstly** that many people will be reluctant to fight to save housing they know is in poor condition and which they have little control over.

■ **Secondly** being defensive is to accept the opposition's arguments and hands the initiative to them.

■ **Thirdly** it hides the facts that there are alternatives which the government and many councils would rather we forgot.

■ **Lastly**, because the whole future of an estate is up for discussion, privatisation, ironically, presents a real opportunity to argue for the kind of housing we want and the need for more resources, more control, more jobs and better community facilities.

Some tenants will argue that presenting alternatives is a diversion from the main campaign. However tenants campaigns (see part 2) have found that presenting an alternative is a crucial part of any campaign. Basford tenants for instance found presenting an alternative was the turning point in their successful struggle, whilst tenants from

Cantril Farm recognise they were rail-roaded into the one plan presented to them. Yet if they had had alternatives they could have hoped to have changed the whole political argument.

During the 1970s many tenants groups, usually in areas of terraced housing, who faced clearance or improvement schemes organised to present positive alternative plans often

making significant gains. Now we have to do the same on council estates.

Presenting alternatives forces the Council to justify their plan and undermines the whole basis of privatisation. This section looks at:

- the range of alternatives the Council should consider if they wish to 'do something' about the estate.
- different ways you can present an alternative
- how to publicise and use your alternative plan.

'Peoples' plan' for Walterton goes on show

THE stormy five-month history of the controversial plan to redevelop the Walterton and Elgin estates in Paddington will be chronicled at an open day on March 17.

It has been organised as the first step in the preparation of a 'Peoples' Plan for Walterton' by the local

action group' which has been fighting Westminster Council's plans ever since they were first revealed last September.

It will feature a special exhibition that tells the story so far, with photographs, posters and the first showing of a video film made by the action group.

Action group co-ordinator Jonathan Rosenberg said: "We are totally dissatisfied with

the way the council have treated the residents of the Walterton and Elgin estates.

"The Peoples' Plan for Walterton will be a way for the residents to put forward their own views and suggestions about the future of their community.

The open day will take place at the Labour Rooms at 39 Chippenham Road, W9 on Monday March 17 from

10am until 8pm.

The next day (March 18) the action group has organised a coach trip to Middlesbrough to visit tenants on an estate who may become the first victims of the new Housing Bill which will make it easier for councils to evict tenants.

The coach will leave at 9am from Walterton Road, and arrive at Spencerbeck, Lanbarngh, Teeside at 2pm.

COUNCIL OPTIONS

In part 2 the various advantages and disadvantages of co-ops, housing associations and council ownership are examined. **It is argued that, for many reasons, council housing should remain in public ownership.** However included in the list below are all the options that a Council could actually consider rather than privatisation.

1. CAMPAIGN FOR MORE MONEY TO IMPROVE THE ESTATE

Many councils have simply accepted government housing cuts with little opposition. For instance Birmingham councillors didn't even attend the first national conference on systems defects in 1984! Apart from organisations like the AMA and a handful of Councils there have been relatively few resources put into actively campaigning against government housing cuts and to expose the current housing crisis. Compare this with energies some councils have put into rate capping or abolition campaigns. Many Councils have not even exploited the fact that they do not have enough money to carry out their legal duties.

If your Council hasn't organised an active campaign (not just a few letters to Whitehall) for more housing money, demand that they start one now.

2. DEVELOP PART OF THE SITE

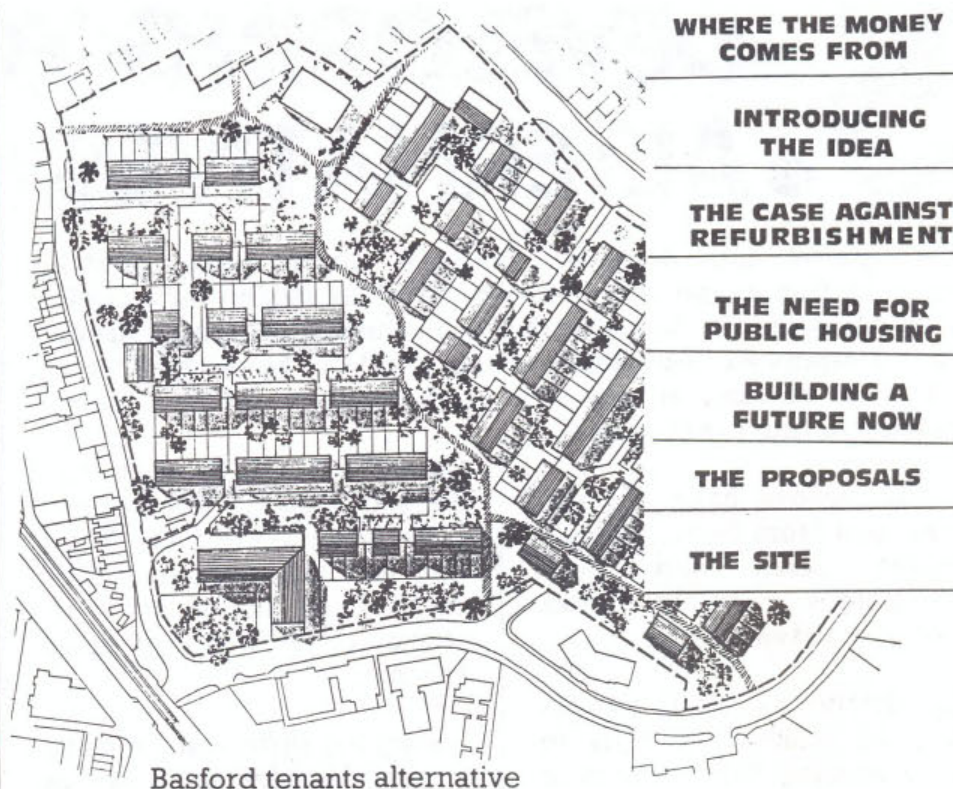
In many cases whole blocks or estates are being sold off as if we have returned to the days of slum clearance. Where there is insufficient money to deal with the whole estate **a phased programme of full renovations could be started.**

3. STOP THE ROT

Similarly where major problems exist Councils could agree to start a **phased programme where certain critical works are done** to the whole estate eg new roofs, eradicating damp etc.

4. FORMING COUNCIL TRUST

The Trust 'model' is being used to support the private sector. **Councils could investigate this idea to form their own trust** and try to get round spending restrictions from central government. Greenwich proposed this at the last minute for Thamesmead. The Trust



Basford tenants alternative

WHERE THE MONEY
COMES FROM

INTRODUCING
THE IDEA

THE CASE AGAINST
REFURBISHMENT

THE NEED FOR
PUBLIC HOUSING

BUILDING A
FUTURE NOW

THE PROPOSALS

THE SITE

could involve tenants in real control and at the same time link closely in with existing policies on transfers, waiting lists etc.

5. WAIT

If conditions are so bad that demolition is needed, Councils can rehouse all tenants and go ahead with demolition and yet still keep the site for future development when money becomes available. However the government is increasingly putting pressure on Councils to dispose of 'surplus' land under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980. However this does prevent privatisation for the moment at least. Alternatively the council could rehouse all tenants, secure the properties and then use the physical evidence as part of their campaign for more money from the government. Or if the properties are so defective then they could be demolished and the site kept in public ownership and developed in stages.

6. HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Housing associations could be involved in developing part or all of the estate for general housing with 100% nominations from the council waiting list or perhaps with some sheltered housing according to local needs. **This option could have severe disadvantages**—see part 2 for problems involved.

7. HOUSING CO-OPS

Either existing tenants or existing housing co-operatives could take over part or all of the estate. This option could have severe disadvantages—see part 2 for problems involved.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Money could be sought from the Urban Programme for environmental improvements to the estate. Some Councils, including County Councils, have specific money set aside for environmental improvements.

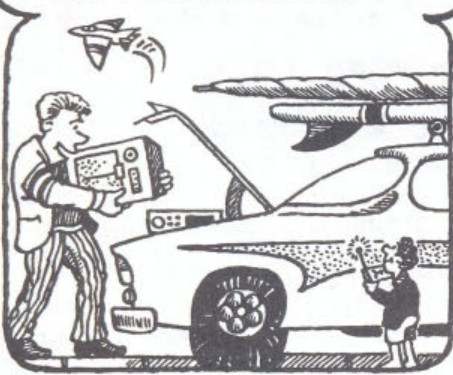
THE TENANTS ALTERNATIVE

Preparing your own alternative plan does not mean a 500 page report but trying to present well argued ideas and facts based on tenants needs. At the start you will not want to go into every detail but to present an overall plan that you can then campaign for with the aim of stopping privatisation and moving on to detailed discussion.

Your plan could include (sources of information in brackets):

a) the needs of tenants on the estate for different sizes and types of housing (your own survey;

THE NOBS MOVE IN



b) either **details of the repairs and renovation work needed** and its cost or plans for how the estate could look after demolition (contacting sympathetic architects, surveyors, heating engineers, direct labour workers etc for a short visit, information and estimate of costs)

c) **adopting a charter of what you want from your housing**

d) **looking at housing needs throughout the borough or district** (council's HIP statements, waiting lists, local SHELTER/CHAR groups etc/housing advice centres etc)

e) **showing the need for rented accommodation rather than owner occupied housing** (local unemployment figures, rising mortgage default, rising property prices on privatised estates, few people who can afford them etc)

f) **showing how management and repairs service could be improved for the future**

g) **listing community facilities needed on the estate**—a developer would be uninterested in providing these

h) **setting quality standards and space standards** for new housing and not accepting the rabbit hutch standards of developers

i) **if possible show where the finance might be raised** for your plan

j) **show how developers plans would disrupt the present community** whilst your plan would not

k) **show how the Council has at least 7 different options to privatisation.**

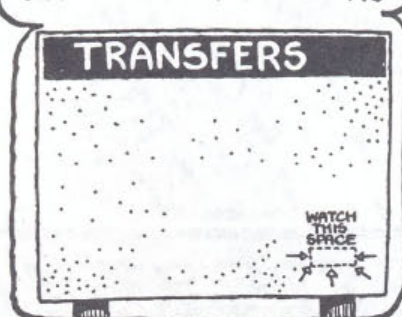
Throughout your plan it's important to remember that any developer will be looking to maximise their profits,

cut corners and provide the lowest cost housing possible to a select group of buyers.

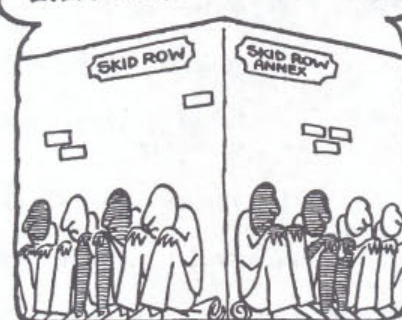
Remember many tenants may wish to move not because they dislike the estate but either because they want improvements, they want a different size dwelling or they want to live in another area for various reasons. Better allocations would solve some of these problems, privatisation doesn't have to be the answer.

Your plan needs to present a vision of how things could and should be. How housing must meet social needs not private profit. Not accepting the Tory version of welfare services, of making continual sacrifices, of making do and of expecting to get third best whilst others have their cake and are able to eat it!

EVEN FEWER TRANSFERS



EVEN MORE HOMELESSNESS



PRESENTING THE PLAN

Limited time and resources together with the speed of the Council's move may mean you can only draw up a few sheets of ideas at the beginning. This could form the basis of a 'provisional plan' which you could expand and improve as time allows.

Make sure your plan reflects the real needs of the estate and committee members understand and back it.

Developers sell their plans through glossy brochures and fancy words.

You may not be able to reproduce the seductive coloured architects plans of Barratts but try to make the plan look as professional as possible. Try to: choose an effective title; double space the typing or typesetting; include photos, drawings or other illustrations to add interest; use bold titles; design a hard hitting front cover. Councillors rarely read very long documents so a summary at the front is useful.

RELEASE

Before releasing this plan publicly, discuss it with as many organisations as you have time—local pensioners groups, mums and tots etc.

- Release the plan with the maximum of publicity, contact TV, radio and newspapers. Make sure they have a copy a few days before release to set up their TV crews or special features.

- make sure all councillors get a copy.

- demand that it goes on every possible agenda and you should be allowed to speak to it.

- demand a freeze on any negotiations with developers whilst this takes place.

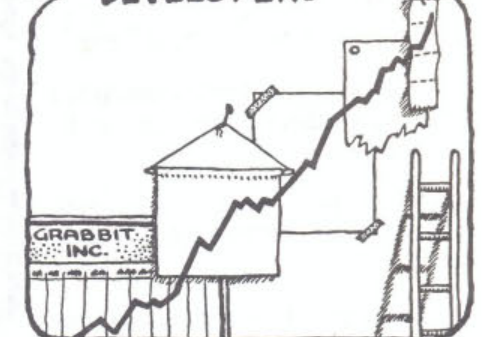
- lobby and meet with as many councillors as possible.

- try and keep track of which councillors and officers begin to support or oppose bits.

- get sympathetic councillors to ask questions designed to support it at a full Council meeting.

Above all use alternatives to turn the political arguments away from the negative option of privatisation to the positive vision of how housing can meet tenants needs.

HUGE PROFITS FOR DEVELOPERS



6. TAKING DIRECT ACTION AND OTHER TACTICS

Direct action can play a key role in any campaign in helping build local support and attention for your campaign whilst undermining the opposition. "Should we have occupied the local housing office or the Chief Executive's Office or the councillors bar? Or picketed the developers offices? Or gone on rent strike? Or just used stronger action?"

These are difficult questions asked by tenants who feel they could have done more. Direct action is a means of escalating and strengthening any campaign but it cannot be a substitute for taking action on all the other parts of this 10 point action plan as far as possible.

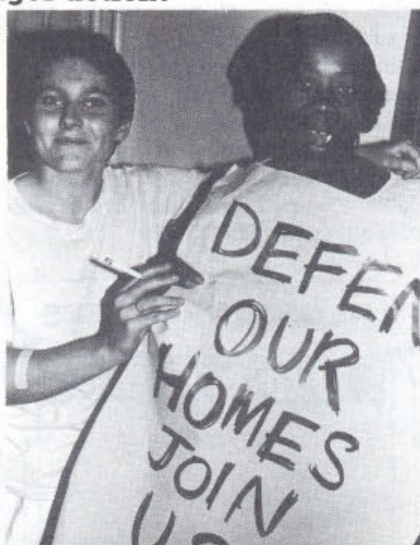
Direct action however frightens the authorities more than anything else. It helps expose how they are actively supporting the private sector and destroying working class housing whilst trying to appear responsible and to be acting in the interests of ratepayers and tenants.

You are breaking the unwritten rules of their game. A game where they claim the right to make the agenda, where smooth letters are written that say next to nothing, where there is continual secrecy and where every excuse is found why tenants needs cannot be met.

What councillors and officers dislike most is to face a united group of tenants to have the arguments debated in public, to be faced with demonstrations, pickets, occupations and publicity, to face bus loads of tenants at their meetings. The myth of the smooth running city machine is then exposed.

In this section we list some ideas for direct action as well as other possible tactics. Success however will depend on many factors including:

- ★ how strong your association is
- ★ how well you have established links with other tenants and trade union organisations
- ★ the effectiveness of your education and propaganda work so far
- ★ the kind of direct action you choose.



Remember, how well things are organised is equally as important as the kind of action you take. Action could include:

picketing and lobbying of Housing Committee, Council, Sub-committee and other special Councillors meetings. Start as soon as there is a threat of privatisation. To be effective a good turnout is needed (just tell the press there will be a lobby; don't promise a mass turnout) Continue picketing at every subsequent meeting. Use your contacts with other tenants organisation and trade unions to encourage representatives from other organisations to attend. Make sure you have leaflets to hand out to councillors, supporters and the public.

Remember important decisions will have been taken before these council meetings so consider

BEFORE TAKING ACTION

Before deciding on any action examine the following questions:

1. What effect will it have politically? Will it make it more difficult to privatise — if so, how?
2. Can other aims be achieved by taking this particular action?
3. What effect will it have on tenants and the wider public?
4. Have you planned how to counter attempts to make you look unrepresentative or 'militants'?
5. What support can you attract from local trade unions and other community and labour movement organisations?
6. Have you the resources and enough people to carry it out?
7. Will it help to draw more tenants into your campaign?
8. What are the likely responses from the Council or developers and how can you respond to these?
9. How can the action be timed to have maximum effect eg before an important Council meeting?
10. Is taking this form of action the best use of your resources at this point in time, or could other action be more effective?
11. What kind of follow up action could be taken afterwards?

picketing Tory Group meetings or key meetings of the Labour Party eg general Management Committees or District Party meetings as well as Labour Group Meetings.

- occupying or packing out Housing Committee and Council meetings. Organise buses or vans to get as many people round the table or in the gallery as possible.

- occupying Council property. Choose the property (local housing office, chief executive's office etc) which will cause the maximum embarrassment and secretly organise an occupation. Make sure the press only know when you are in. You may choose to stay just for a few days or just a few hours but don't let them know your plans.

- marches and demonstrations should be jointly organised with other organisations wherever possible to ensure maximum support. They can be an effective way of showing strength of feeling and political support (or lack of it!) remember there is often resistance to joining a march. Plan the route to cause maximum embarrassment.

NO FUTURE HOMES FOR OUR CHILDREN



- organise a rent strike. This is now very difficult to organise because many tenants are on housing benefit. However you may choose to organise a small group who would be involved and make the maximum propaganda especially around financial issues around this. eg "They're trying to steal our estate why should we pay them to do it?". "We've paid £4 million in rent in last 4 years — where's it gone? Not for improvements!"

- picketing or demonstrating outside developers, building society

or housing association offices. Make it clear what is in for them. Make sure you have plenty of leaflets and you are there long enough for press to respond.

- Setting up a tenants enquiry into the estate see alternative plans

- encouraging other community organisations and the wider labour movement to take direct action themselves. You should aim to have every possible trade union, Labour Party organisation and other community organisations doing as much as possible with you.

- organising members to investigate private developers. If Barratts or other organisations have been doing work locally, visit these sites, spend a morning talking to people who have bought and publish the results.

- exploiting every opportunity to put your case. Tenants have used such tactics as getting on the coach when the Housing Minister was touring; interrupting councillors tours of the estate; forcing Council meetings to be abandoned.



OTHER TACTICS

1. SET UP A COMMUNITY ENQUIRY

Set a time for a full enquiry into the estate. This could look at the present position, what it could be like, unmet needs, control by tenants, standard of management, the finance of the estate, etc. You may wish to invite an 'independent person' who you can trust to chair this. Or to organise it entirely yourselves. Invite tenants along to give their views, perhaps link this with a questionnaire. Invite other community organisations and trade unions to give their views. Aim to get a full picture of what is wrong and what could be done. This could form the basis of your alternative plan. The results can be published with the maximum of publicity and then use them as a central point of your campaign.

2. OMBUDSPERSON

File a complaint with the ombudsperson. This is unlikely to have a great effect on its own. However it will have the publicity value and together with other tactics it helps increase the pressure a little more.

You need to try to get a local councillor to support your case and the grounds you can complain on include failure to take into account matters which should have been taken into account. It can take 6 months or more for them to report so start early. Details are contained in a free leaflet from: Commission for Local Administration in England 21, Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9BU 01-222-5622

3. RATES REDUCTION

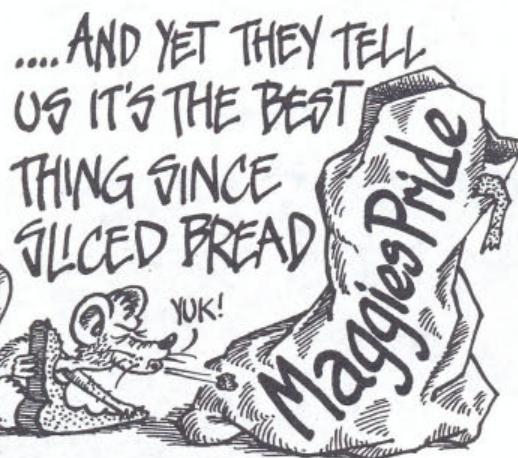
Rates are based on the rateable value of a flat or house. This in turn is based on factors such as the size, age and condition of the property, where it is situated and what facilities you have nearby. If the estate is in a poor condition you may be able to get a rates reduction. Fulham Court got offered 20% whilst a systems estate in Nottingham which was demolished got 50%. The process is long winded but many groups have done it so talk it

through with someone first.

The advantages are:

- it brings a cash benefit to a lot of people — it can be backdated
- it's a good way of involving new people and building the tenants group

The main disadvantages are that if **tenants are likely to get rehoused they will lose some of their Home Loss Payment** which is based on 3 times the rateable value (although Councils may make pay an ex-gratia payment equivalent to a full home loss payment). So a reduction may mean one cash sum wiped out by another loss. It therefore needs careful thought.



4. LEGAL ACTION

In part 2 the relevant laws are briefly set out. Even knowing the limitations of the law you can decide to:

■ challenge the consultation procedures

■ go on the offensive by taking legal action to secure repairs and modernisation eg by taking action under section 99, 1936 Health Act or action under section 32, 1961 Housing Act.

5. ORGANISE OPEN DAYS

Apart from tenants most people deciding the future of the houses or

flats will never have seen inside. Organise an open day inviting the press, key councillors and officers and others to look at a few flats. Show them what is wrong and how it could be put right. Explain your plans for the estate. Seek their support and pump them for information whilst they are there. If they don't come you can use this to challenge them afterwards — "they couldn't even be bothered to visit the estate!"

6. USE THE POLITICAL PARTY'S OWN MACHINERY.

Each political party has its own methods of taking decisions. Use these to feed in questions, motions, problems. The Labour Party should have a local branch covering your area. You should have members on the estate, make sure they attend meetings and get the branch to oppose privatisation. Get invited to speak at a one or more branch meetings. Get motions of opposition passed through as many branches as possible and then passed on to the District Party (this covers the same area as your Council) and General Management Committee (covers just one constituency of one MP)

7. STANDARD TACTICS

Don't forget the time tested tactics of persistent harassment and pressure by bombarding the Council and developers from every angle by phone and by letter.

★ Constantly raise questions in letters to every possible officer and councillor

★ get councillors to send in written questions frequently

★ get questions raised at full council meetings

★ phone up some officials and councillors. They may say a lot more on the phone than in letters although they may never repeat any of it in public.

Saving the estate is a serious matter however that doesn't mean all you tactics should be dull or serious. Imaginative ideas and a sense of humour can be powerful ingredients, not only in furthering your campaign but in attracting local support.

7. BUILDING ALLIANCES WITH TRADE UNIONS

Making alliances with trade unionists involved in housing work will add a wider strength to your campaign. Initially the process can be difficult as tenants voice their discontent over repairs services and housing workers voice their own past grievances. This section looks at the jobs likely to be affected by estate sales and management hive offs and how positive links can be made with trade unions.

It's not just homes that will be lost through privatisation, but thousands of jobs. There are 55,000 jobs in housing management, over 150,000 more in housing repair, maintenance and improvement work carried out by the direct labour force and further jobs in looking after open space, playgrounds etc.

A study of Sheffield's capital spending in 1984/5 found £43 million was spent on capital housing projects. This actually created 2,139 on-site jobs and a further 127 jobs to do with designing and planning the improvements. This in turn had a ripple effect on the local economy, since almost everyone in these jobs spent money at local shops and on local services creating a further 716 jobs!

THE JOBS INVOLVED

The jobs involved include:

- ★ bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, plumbers, electricians, labourers
- ★ recreation department workers
- ★ caretakers, cleaners
- ★ clerks, secretaries
- ★ counter staff, lettings and allocation staff, housing managers
- ★ rent collectors, welfare staff, administration of rents and rent books
- ★ architects, surveyors, quantity surveyors, heating engineers, structural engineers, other technical posts
- ★ legal, personnel, computer staff.

The management and maintenance of council estates nationally cost

£2,040 million in 1983/4. It's not surprising that the private sector see this as a huge market ripe for exploitation.

MAKING CONTACT

The actual unions involved include NALGO, NUPE, GMBATU, TGWU, EEP TU, UCATT, ASTMS. Accepting that some union officers, officials or stewards may be more interested in meeting you than others may be, it is worth asking around to try and find names of active trade unionists before making the initial contact. Some unions have branch offices either in the town hall or nearby. So try the main council number and ask for the union offices. Failing that use the yellow pages to locate the nearest union office and ask for the

name of the appropriate branch secretary. Alternatively contact the local housing depot and ask to see a shop steward or contact the Housing Department and ask to speak to a NALGO (or other union) rep.

Having made contact you may find the need not only to explain your concern but also to point out what estates sales could mean for local jobs.

If a meeting is set up it is best to keep it relatively small. Be prepared for some distrust and hostility on both sides. Most tenants have no idea how a job ticket can go half way round the world before it results in a repair. All they know is that delays happen and the direct labour force get blamed. On the other side getting blamed for tenants complaints day after day when you're trying to do your job can get you down.

Misunderstanding about what powers and problems face counter staff, the direct labour force, caretakers or any other jobs may come out in initial meetings.

Community action against Tories' privatisation

Tenants and unions defend council homes



GRAND MET

TENANTS and trade unions have joined in action to fight Tory plans to hand over the management of tens of thousands of council homes in London to a multinational.

Wandsworth is being used by the Thatcher government as the testing ground for implementing their strategy of privatisation of all the vital services provided by local authorities.

The Wandsworth Tories have already put to private contract road sweeping, refuse collection and gardening as well as shutting down libraries, day centres, law centres and slashing grants to voluntary organisations.

Now they want to bring in Grand Metropolitan, the catering, brewing, food and leisure concern with operations as far away as Venezuela — to administer the running of 8,000 council homes.

office in the Rushmore district after a move by the council to allow Grand Metropolitan to carry out a feasibility study.

Peter Harnage, NALGO branch secretary at the town hall, told News Line yesterday. 'The tenants and NALGO and NUPE have organised a joint campaign over the last three or four weeks and this picket is the first fruit of that activity.'

We went to the tenants in the first instance and

tion, focussing on service quality rather than cost cutting, said Harnage. 'And the unions and the tenants are absolutely hand in glove.'

About 1,500 of the flats are on the massive Alton estate, where the district housing office has been picketed three days running.

Picket

Tenants out on the picket line yesterday spoke to

Prelude

However once both sides appreciate each other's problems, the ground for co-operation can be laid.

JOINT ACTION

Besides mutual support in direct action, links with trade unions can involve:

- **workers reporting any dangers of privatisation**, suspicious changes in estate management or maintenance, private companies coming round, initial discussions in the legal or admin sections of how an estate might go out to tender, committee papers in the course of preparation. Equally tenants can

report any news they have to the trade unions, through their local or national contacts.

- **assisting in preparing an alternative plan.** For instance the real reasons for the poor repair service and lack of improvements could be revealed and a plan for a new improved service outlined.

- **joint publicity.**

- **assisting in scrutinising** any plans or specifications by private developers.

- **using union offices** for printing leaflets and posters and for the production of joint materials.

- **contributing towards tenants campaign expenses.**

- **using positions on joint consultative committees** and other bodies to raise the issue of privatisation.

- **using connections within the Labour Party**, where possible, to mount additional pressure against sales.

- **pressing for stronger conditions and controls over private contractors.**

- **refusing to co-operate with any private firm or government official from UHRU.**

REPAIRS
» end delays
REPAIRS
» cut the paperchase
REPAIRS
» a local service

Tenants and Trade Unionists proposals for a direct service by Direct Labour

BUILDING TRADES OPERATIVES
SHOP STEWARDS' COMMITTEE

**Hackney
Building
Workers
& Tenants
REPAIRS
REPORT**

Federation of Hackney
Tenants' Associations

**AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN
FOR
CARETAKING SERVICES**

A Proposal by
Roehampton District
Tenants Associations
and Caretaker Stewards



8. BUILDING ALLIANCES WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Links with other local organisations can bring you political support, experience and information. The previous section discussed trade union links this section briefly raises ideas for further contacts.

Some or all of the following bodies may prove helpful to you in one or more ways:

- ★ Trades Councils
- ★ Labour Party (Ward, District or Constituency) and other supportive political organisations.
- ★ Federation of Tenants Associations
- ★ Local community printshops
- ★ Local community and trade union resource centres
- ★ Law Centres/Housing Aid Centres
- ★ Other tenants groups
- ★ Active pensioner groups
- ★ Womens Centres

Some of the organisations above will only be able to give advice and information, others will be able to take a more active part in your campaign.

If you find difficulty with contacts use the Yellow Pages, Council for Voluntary Service, Council Information Service or Citizen Advice Bureau.

However joint action won't just happen — it has to be worked for. You will have to take the initiative in making contact and may need to try several times before effective links are built. Often it is best to meet one or two members of an organisation first before going to a full meeting.

You will have to argue why there should be joint action and explain the benefits:

- the threats facing you are part of a wider attack which threatens all jobs, services and the quality of our lives.

■ whether people are owner occupiers or not, **there is a desperate need now for good quality council housing for our children, friends and relatives.**

■ we need to share experience and information and learn new tactics.

Moreover you will need to have clear ideas of how other organisations can help. Joint action can't just be built on words and resolutions. It means:

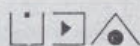
- supporting your meetings, pickets and demonstrations and also you supporting them

- help with the basic work of your campaign — information gathering, leafleting, organising meetings

- publicising your information

- lobbying councillors and MPs

(Make sure when you send members to other meetings that they report back in full. Then you can decide which organisations are worth pursuing links with). **In particular you need to build links with other tenants groups in your area. Privatisation threatens every estate in the country. The government has made it clear that in their minds council housing has no future.**



Architecture
Urban Design and Planning
Interior Design

UDA Architects
Urban Design Associates

1133 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
15222-4205

(412) 765-1133

4 March 1985

Sheila Tribe, RIBA
Architecture Department
City of Westminster
88 Victoria St.
London SW 1

Dear Sheila:

It was marvelous to see you again after all these years. Didn't we pick up exactly where we left off -- like a couple of kids -- as though there were no gap of time in between!

But what a lot has really happened to us both in between. Your achievements are remarkable. I am serious that you should write a book. It would be a great inspiration to young architects, particularly women, entering the profession. You must do it.

I was fascinated by our morning tour of Walthamton. I really do think we can do something together there, and I am enthusiastic about meeting Mrs. Kirwin, Mr. Sabatini and others concerning the project.

I look forward to your advice on how we might proceed. Perhaps it would be best, on this first effort, to consider UDA as consultants to your Housing Committee and staff, and through your staff to the developers you choose to work with. In this way we can learn the ropes with your guidance without making too many horrendous procedural gaffes along the way. Then, if Walthamton proves successful we can deepen our involvement on the next one.

Do let me know what you think. Perhaps we can talk on the 'phone?

A big hug!

Yours sincerely,

UDA ARCHITECTS

David Lewis, FAIA RIBA AICP
Principal

DL/k
Enc.

9. DEVELOPING A STRONG TENANTS ORGANISATION

Without a strong local group your campaign cannot succeed. A few people shouting can form a pressure group for a short while, their lack of accountability will soon be challenged by any council or private company. Moreover a small group of people runs the dangers of losing contact with the whole estate and also of running out of steam. Instead a fully representative tenants organisation is needed involving as many people on the estate as possible.

If you do not already have a tenants organisation follow the steps in the box to form one. If you already have one remember some of the key steps in building its activities and local support.

INTERNALLY

Most tenants organisation have a main 'committee' which carries out most the day-to-day work. The success of this committee will depend on:

- holding regular group or committee meetings
- making sure everyone is accountable to this group and all decisions as far as possible are taken collectively within the group.
- agreeing a system where action can be taken between each committee meeting whether by the committee officers or by other group members.
- making sure women and the black community take part on a completely equal basis. Meetings need to be held at a time and place which suits everyone.
- encouraging new members to join your committee at all times, new people means new ideas and new enthusiasm.
- avoiding becoming a clique and always remembering that the committee needs to be accountable and responsive to the wider membership on the estate
- welcoming new members and involving them carefully
- explaining to new members the issues, background to the campaign and how the group works

- deciding together who talks to the press and how you collectively agree on public statements
- sharing as much of the work as possible to involve everyone
- keeping tight control over the group's money

STARTING A GROUP

1. Encourage a few friends to get interested and decide what the main issues are that a new tenants group should tackle. Talk to your neighbours.
2. Contact any local Tenants Federation, Resource Centre, Advice Centre or any local tenants group to see if they could offer any help or any advice
3. Book a meeting place on the estate or as near as possible. Make sure the date doesn't clash with other local events or popular TV programmes.
4. Consider inviting someone to speak from outside who has been directly involved in fighting estate sales and organising a tenants group.
5. Make as interesting a leaflet as possible which clearly explains the purpose of the meeting to go through every door. Get it translated into different languages (contact Community Relations Council, black community organisations etc for help) so every tenants can be involved.
6. Don't just deliver the leaflet, knock on as many doors as possible. Let all other community groups know about the meeting.
7. Put up a few posters and tell the local radio station and newspaper all about the meeting.
8. Choose carefully who will chair the meeting (perhaps someone from another tenants group who has experience?). Meet with the chairperson and discuss carefully how you want the meeting to run and what you want out of it. Don't expect too much — the key aims will be to let as many people as possible say what should be done and for the meeting to agree to setting up a tenants group.
9. Don't invite councillors and other outsiders to the first meeting, unless you are sure they are 100% on your side and will not dominate or mislead the meeting in any way.
10. At the meeting choose a steering committee/action group to get things going (this group can sort any constitution etc). Make sure exactly when they will report back to another public meeting. Set up the first meeting of this new group with a few days.
11. Get names and addresses of everyone attending and ask for offers of help from all those who don't want to be on the steering group.
12. Now you're organised. Don't forget to let the local media know what happened at the meeting. Use the publicity to attack the privatisation plans and announce the launch of your campaign.



● **avoiding** the situation where **one or two group members know all the facts**, all the contacts and get all the jobs

● **avoiding jargon** and formal procedures which others may not understand

These are some of the issues to consider. Looking after your active members and building your organisation is so important it can't be left to luck. Openly discussing the way you want your organisation to work, the way you will share work, take decisions and involve men and women on an equal basis is crucial to building a strong and democratic tenants movement. Time and energy spent on this will greatly assist the eventual success of your campaign.

EXTERNALLY

Having a well organised group is not enough. The whole estate must be

involved:

■ to make sure the campaign is based on all tenants needs, their anger and their feelings.

■ to show the support for the Tenants' Association

■ to take part in direct or mass action

■ as a permanent source of assistance and new active members

Informing and involving the estate must be a constant activity and the following ways have all been used successfully

- ★ Leaflets and posters
- ★ Door knocking
- ★ Petitions and surveys
- ★ Public meetings
- ★ Newsletters

★ Social events

★ Creating publicity in local media

★ Organising a flat or Tenants Association base on the estate

★ Using existing social networks, eg pubs, clubs, community centres, local workplaces.

These are standard, but important, methods used by tenants associations. There are many other possibilities. You might have decided to tour the estates with a loudspeaker or burn a mock Barratt's house. The choice of campaign tactics is important since some tactics particularly help involve and interest other tenants. Lastly just by being seen to be active you will create interest. Actions speak louder than words and word soon gets round if your action is in line with feeling on the estate.

10. FORGING NATIONAL LINKS

A national campaign has never been so badly needed. However, at the moment, it is up to each local council to decide whether to sell or not, thus it is only local campaigns that will ultimately prevent sales taking place.

In fact past experience of national tenants campaigns shows that their strength actually lies in local action. Problems of time, money and resources prevent regular contact between groups and the organisation of any large national events.

However a 'national campaign' does not necessarily mean everyone combining to take part in national events held in one place nor a central group doing all the work on behalf of everyone else. The lessons from existing and past tenants organisations is that: **tenants should concentrate on their local campaigns but should widen these campaigns as far as possible by forging national links. Methods would include:**

★ **getting speakers** from other campaigns to your public or committee meetings.

★ **arranging visits** of all your group to relevant estates.

★ **circulating examples of**

your work—leaflets, posters, videos, press releases, victories, problems.

★ **sharing information, experience and campaign strategies and tactics** at day workshops, regional meetings or national conferences.

★ **exchanging detailed information on developers**, their past and present work and deals as soon as it becomes available.

★ **keeping in close contact with organisations like SCAT** with its long experience of fighting privatisation and with SHELTER.

★ **feeding in information and reading specialist tenants press** eg Community Action, Public Service Action.

★ **getting your MPs to ask questions** and take up the wider issues.

★ **trying legal test cases** which might have an effect nationally.

★ **keeping in constant contact with the national press.**

HOUSING 21 WAYS TO PRIVATISE

The Tories now have at least 20 different schemes and policies to privatise council housing. Over 200,000 local government jobs in housing management, building repair and architects departments are at stake. These schemes not only involve selling public assets at knockdown prices — since 1979 total over £2000 million — but h contractors. Others involve exploiting emp local government.

The Stockbridge Village plan, the blueprint for privatising whole council estates, is fast falling into disrepair, disrepair and disaster. Yet Stockbridge Village Trust will still be marketed as a triumph as the Tories push through their legislation.

The Trust took over 3,500 neglected houses, maisonettes and flats known as the Cantril Farm estate, from Knowsley Borough Council in April 1983. The plan was to demolish some, refurbish others (for sale and rent), sell land for new housing, sell blocks, redevelop the

Estate Sales Public Money for Private Profit

The Government intends to introduce legislation to speed up the privatisation of whole council estates to developers, builders and housing associations. Tenant co-ops are also to be encouraged. The privatisation of certain housing management functions has also been mentioned. The legislation will include new powers for councils to evict tenants quickly to prevent delays. The sale of estates has major implications for tenants and local

Public Service Action

Philip Wolmuth



ESTATE SALES

118 QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE ANSWERED

THE PURPOSE.

The questions are designed to help you

- ★ to gain more information
- ★ to expose the motives and proposals of the developers
- ★ to force local Councils to look at all aspects of any sale
- ★ to have the full financial details of the scheme debated in public
- ★ to show exactly who gains and who loses
- ★ to ensure each developer is compared on an equal basis
- ★ to gain fuller consultation

Above all the questions are designed to be used as part of any tenants campaign against sales. By continually raising these questions in public and by continually probing any replies, your campaign should be greatly strengthened.

However the questions can also be used in other ways. For instance to help local councillors ask the right questions, to help you to put forward your own alternative plan or to help the local media ask key questions.

HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST

The questions cannot fit every situation as many different types of deal are being proposed. Some are for use when sales are only a rumour, others for when a developer is about to buy your estate. So you will need to adapt it for your estate.

It is a long list but should not be severely pruned. Selling off estates is a multi-million pound business and we should know the answers to all these questions.

Councils and developers may turn round and say the questions are unnecessary or involve too much work. Argue in return that councillors must have all these answers before them and the public if they seriously want to protect the interests of tenants, ratepayers, the Council and voters and not to be exploited by the developers. Lastly, if the deal is so good why shouldn't it be made fully public? Moreover it is a council officer's duty to present all relevant facts and factors.

The question can be used in various ways, for instance:

- ★ in letters to officers
- ★ in letters to councillors
- ★ by councillors at a full Council meeting and other meetings
- ★ by councillors in letters to officers

The power of this list is that it should give you key advantages however the Council reacts. If they answer the questions, you gain invaluable information and the whole basis of the scheme is exposed. If they don't answer you can reveal their exact motives and use their secrecy against them. You will need to get the maximum publicity for your questions and the answers (or lack of answers!). Therefore it may be better to ask a few questions at a time. However, if time is not on your side you may choose to demand answers to whole sections or the whole list.

The questions are divided into 3 main sections:

1. Consultation and Proposals
2. Developers and Councils
3. Management, the Government and Final Questions

A. CONSULTATION & PROPOSALS

1. CONSULTATION

1. Will tenants be immediately informed if the Council decides to even consider the sale of any estate or its management? And will a meeting with local tenants be held before any decision even to consider sales is taken?
2. Recognising that when slum clearance takes place any Council must hold a full public enquiry if anyone objects, will the Council agree to a full public enquiry into the need to sell the estate and the plans for the future?
3. What is the Council's planned programme of consultation?
4. Will the Council draw up a questionnaire which has the approval of local tenants association? Will it cover all aspects eg who wants to be rehoused, what management tenants want, what they think should be done to their homes, what repairs service is needed etc?
5. Will the Council give full access to tenants association members in collating the results?
6. Will the answers to all these questions be available to tenants before a decision is taken?
7. Does the Council plan to spend any money on information and publicity materials (including officer time)? If so, how much and on what?
8. If consultation is to be fair will the Council grant the tenants group £1 for every £1 it spends itself, to find out tenants views and produce its own publicity?
9. Will the Council inform every tenant of every possible change to their existing situation including transfer rights, repairs service, allocations, moving and compensation before any decision is reached?
10. Will the Council agree to a series of meetings with developers on the estate and where the agenda and speakers at the meeting have been agreed with the tenants association before the meeting?

Notes: 1. What you consider fair consultation and what the Council may consider as fair consultation can be totally different. You need to decide early on what process you want.
 2. The law demands that if a Council is compulsory purchasing most housing a Public Enquiry has to be held if anyone affected objects. However this doesn't apply to estate sales. Any 'reasonable' person would agree it ought to! There's therefore a strong case to argue that the Council sets up their own Public Enquiry in any case.

2. PROPOSALS FOR THE ESTATE

1. What does each developer propose for the estate in terms of demolition and rehabilitation? Give present numbers of dwellings and proposed final numbers and sizes of units.
2. How many dwellings will be kept for rent by the council (or any other organisation) and how many sold or used in different ways eg equity sharing?
3. Who will be able to buy any dwellings for sale, and what discounts if any will be involved?
4. How many people is each unit expected to accommodate when it is finished? What evidence is there of need for that size dwelling? What will be the necessary income to buy them?
5. If the developer is to modernise any flats or houses and return them to the Council in return for land and buildings, exactly which dwellings and land will be involved?
6. Has either the developer or local authority surveyed the estate and listed the improvements that are necessary? If so, exactly what improvements are considered to be necessary?
7. Has the Council produced a brief for the estate? If so, please supply a copy.
8. Give exact proposals for rehabilitation under the following headings:

Proposed work to deal with:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. damp (water penetration and condensation) | i. internal design and layout |
| b. brickwork | j. floors |
| c. heating systems | k. stability |
| d. windows | l. electrical systems |
| e. roofs | m. landscaping and environmental improvements |
| f. plumbing | o. additional external work to the property |
| g. kitchen | p. additional internal work to the property |
| h. bathroom | q. mains services |

9. Specify for each of the above items the amount budgeted for two standard dwellings. If this is not possible give the total expenditure for each item for whole estate.

10. Will the finished properties be completed to Parker Morris Standards? If not please specify exactly how they will differ?

11. Will the finished properties be completed to "Homes For the Future" standards?

12. Will they be finished to NHBC standards? If so, which Grade?

13. Will they developer apply for a NHBC certificate on the basis of the plans? (ie before work takes place).

14. What complaints procedures will be set up and for what period of time will the developer take responsibility for faults?

15. Does each developer's plan fit in with present planning policy (eg the Structure plan, density levels etc)? If not, in what ways does it differ?

16. What present problems associated with the flats, houses or site does the developer intend to exclude from their work (eg asbestos, cold bridges, poor insulation, chemical contamination, infestation etc.)?

Notes: 1. Exactly what work the developer does and to what standard affects the whole finance of the scheme and the quality of the housing in the future. Getting detailed costings will help reveal the developers real intentions and also may help you argue that the Council could afford to do the work anyway.

2. Parker Morris standards were set in the 1960s. Developers usually build to inferior standards. "Homes for the Future" published by RIBA sets higher standards (eg heating, insulation etc) and a number of Councils agree these must be the standards of the 1980s & 1990s.

3. TIMETABLE

1. What is the Council's proposed timetable for the state in respect of:

- initial committee decision?
- consultation?
- preparing a brief for developers?
- receiving developers' proposals?
- considering developers proposals?
- making final decisions?

2. Which Council Committees and sub-committees will consider the sale and what are the dates of the meetings when this issue will be placed on their agendas? When will there be a debate in full Council?

3. When is the work proposed to start?

4. When will be finished?

5. If tenants are to be rehoused when will this start and finish?

6. In what other ways are the bids from different developers to be assessed?

EFFECTS ON TENANTS

1. Will every tenant and lodger presently living on the estate be considered eligible for rehousing? Who, if anyone, will be excluded?

2. How does the Council define "suitable alternative accommodation"?

3. What will be considered acceptable expenses for a disturbance payment?

4. Is the Council prepared to make up the true cost of moving ie the difference between disturbance payments

and actual expenditure?

5. What is the current cost to the Council of providing for homeless families and how many homeless households are currently in temporary accommodation eg bed and breakfast hotels at present?
6. What is the current demand for accommodation as shown by the waiting list and transfer list? What is the breakdown of family size on these two lists?
7. What evidence is there of the Council's ability to rehouse present tenants? What is the present relet situation, in terms of numbers, size and quality of accommodation and area?
8. What will the rent level be for any dwellings 'handed back' by a developer?
9. Can all those that want to move together be allocated houses or flats in the same street or block?
10. Has the Council considered the social effects on tenants forced to move? What does it consider these to be?

Notes: 1. Tenants may have put a lot of time (and expense) in making their flat or house into a home. It's important to list the kind of things that have been done and show how estate sales destroy all this.
2. Forced moving can break up community ties and support. For instance will there be a need for increased Social Services spending to support the elderly & others who have to move?

2. DEVELOPERS & COUNCILS

1. DEVELOPERS BACKGROUND

1. Which developers have approached the Council to date?
2. Who did they originally approach and by what means? Or did the Council itself solicit proposals? Please attach original letter and copies and correspondence since.
3. What experience has the developer of similar work?
4. Give details of 3 other privatisation schemes by developers who are being considered by the Council including:
 - a. description of estate eg date built, size, general condition.
 - b. financial details of whole scheme including expenditure by Council, house sales price, expenditure by Council and profit of developer.
 - c. problems met during the scheme.
 - d. evidence of tenants and/or buyers satisfactions or complaints. Supply contact names of any tenants groups or other organisations representing their interests.
 - e. names of relevant officers from each Council responsible for liaising with developer in the following departments (or their equivalents): Treasury, Housing, Technical Services, Legal, Architects, Planning.
5. Has the developer been involved in any housing project in the last 5 years where the workmanship or design has been found, or alleged to have been, defective in any way? If so please give details.
6. During any previous privatisation scheme, has any developer altered the original proposals agreed at the start of the scheme. If so, what was changed and why?
7. What architects, structural engineers, managing agents, estate agents and surveyors does the developer intend to use? What is their experience and background?
8. Which trade associations is the developer a member of?
9. Have there been any problems either for the buyers when they try to resell or with mortgage arrears on any of the previous privatisation schemes undertaken by the developer?

2. DEVELOPER'S FINANCE

1. What price, or financial package, has each developer offered to date? Is this dependent on the Council carrying out certain works, if so what?

2. How will the finance be raised?

3. Have any applications for Urban Development Grant be made, or is there any possibility they may be made? If already made attach a copy of the application.

4. Have any applications for Derelict Land Grant been made, or is there any intention of making them? If already made give details.

5. Will Urban Programme funding be used on the estate? If so, give details.

6. Are any other special financial arrangements being proposed eg passing on the VAT charges to the Council?

7. Will MSC labour be used in any way eg in a Community Refurbishment Scheme?

8. Give overall financial details of the scheme for each developer including:

- ★ cost of preparing package to date
- ★ cost of land
- ★ building costs
- ★ fees for architects, surveyors and engineers
- ★ profit on the scheme

9. If the scheme involves the developer in handing back refurbished dwellings what is the exact cost of this work and the value of the properties being handed back? What is the value of the land and dwellings that the developer receives in exchange?

10. Have any of the directors, or directly employed staff of the developers, any financial interest in:

- ★ any other Council contract?
- ★ any Housing Association?
- ★ any other firm or consultancy involved in the work being proposed?

If so please specify

11. If properties are to be sold, what will the selling price be for each type?

12. Will this include any special items eg carpets, fridges etc?

13. Does the developer propose any special offers to encourage sales eg paying for solicitors fees, paying for surveyors fees etc?

14. How will the mortgages be arranged?

15. What is the existing price of similar properties in the area?

16. Can the developer guarantee that if resold after one year, the prices of property involved in the scheme will not rise over 5% over the general rise in property prices in the area?

17. Have the prices of any properties on similar privatisation developments carried out by any developer risen by more than 5% above other local property price rises when they have been resold?

18. How and when will the developer pay the Council for the estate?

19. What work, if any, will the developer sub-contract and to whom?

20. If a housing association is involved in refurbishment, will they be claiming Housing Association Grant?

Note: 1. In some cases the properties will be sold at a discount, financed by the public sector, only to be resold soon after to more affluent buyers at greatly increased cost. Questions 16 & 17 are designed to find this out.

3. COUNCIL FINANCE

1. For the last financial year where there is a full set of accounts please specify:

- a. Total gross rent income for the estate.
- b. Cost of repairs.
- c. Cost of maintenance.
- d. Cost of improvements.
- e. Management costs.
- f. Debt charges.
- g. Any other expenditure on the estate

2. What is the total cost of Staff time in preparing for the sale of the estate eg contract documents, attending meetings with contractors, drawing up plans of estate, considering documents from developers, processing rehousing and compensation payments, reporting and attending council committees, carrying out any consultation and employing any consultants. This should not be a global figure but broken down into number of staff in each department and an estimate of person/days spent.

3. What is the cost of terminating existing maintenance, servicing or repair contracts?

4. What is the cost of compensation payments including home loss and disturbance payments.

5. What debt charges are outstanding on the estate and how many more years will they be continued to be paid?

6. Will outstanding debt charges be charged to the Housing Revenue Account after the estate has been sold or to the ratepayers? What is the current capital and interest payments on these debt charges? How much will other tenants rents have to rise to pay these costs?

7. What is the cost of rehousing present tenants or finding suitable alternative accommodation?

8. What will the cost be of replacing each dwelling sold by a new dwelling?

9. Has the Council any capital receipts which it has been unable or willing to use?

10. What is the Council's own valuation of the land and properties? What is their valuation of the land without properties? Have any valuations been sought? How do these differ from those of the District Valuer?

11. What building or environmental work, if any, does the Council intend to do before any sale takes place?

12. What facilities and assistance, if any, eg storage, office space, use of land etc will the Council offer to the developer and what will the charges be for these services?

13. What would be the cost to the Council of modernising the estate? How would the specifications for the work differ from those of the private developers and what is the breakdown of the estimated costs?

14. What will be the affect on rent pooling?

15. Does the Council propose to go for the bid offering the highest capital receipt?

16. Or if other factors will be taken into consideration, what are these other factors?

Note: 1. There are many hidden costs associated with a sale, it's important to demand these are all fully considered. The sale may not appear nearly so favourable once these are known.

4. EFFECTS ON OTHER COUNCIL WORK

1. What reduction in Council staff will there be, if any, as a result of any sale? Which jobs and departments will be affected?

2. What will be the effect on the waiting list?

3. What will the effect on transfers be?

4. What proportion is the estate of the total council house stock in the area?

5. Taking into account the current level of relets how many lettings will be lost in the next 30 years?

3. MANAGEMENT, THE GOVERNMENT & FINAL QUESTIONS

1. THE MANAGEMENT

1. What is the proposed form of management?
2. What are the supposed advantages and disadvantages of this form of management?
3. What other forms of management have been considered and why have they been rejected?
4. How will tenants be involved? What will their voting powers be?
5. What power will tenants have to change policies of any new management structure?
6. How often will elections be held for all posts on the management body?
7. What will the relationship between the Council and new managing body?
8. What criteria or policies will be agreed with tenants before any management is hived off regarding:
 - tenancy agreements
 - repairs service
 - rent levels
 - the frequency and quality of other services
 - transfers
 - allocations
 - staffing levels
 - trade union representation
 - complaints
 - security of tenure and evictions
 - rent arrears
9. What monitoring will the Council carry out, what penalties will they enforce for poor standards and how can a contract be terminated?
10. If part of the estate is sold, who will look after the general environment and services? What will the annual charges for these services be?
11. What organisations, companies or individuals have so far expressed an interest in managing or maintaining the estate? What is their background and experience?

2. URBAN HOUSING RENEWAL UNIT (Department of Environment)

1. Has any visit been made by a representative from UHRU?
2. Who visited and when?
3. What was their advice? Attach any correspondence between the Council and the Department.
4. Have any of the 3 UHRU consultants visited any estate acting for their own firm or organisation?

5. Has UHRU been involved in drawing up proposals for the estate?

★ if so, is the council proposing to apply for

(a) additional Housing Investment Programme allocation

(b) Urban Programme funding for Community Refurbishment scheme to carry out the project recommended by UHRU?

6. Do UHRU's proposals satisfy the AMA guidelines for acceptable UHRU schemes? Is the council proposing to follow the AMA guidelines in considering whether to proceed with UHRU's proposals?

7. If the council has sought UHRU's advice, will it also seek the advice of the PEP — including a technical appraisal of the estate?

3. HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

1. If housing associations are being proposed to take over management of the estate, would this satisfy the National Federation of Housing Association's guidelines for such arrangement?

2. If a housing association were to take over, what services would the HA itself be providing and which would it be subcontracting? Eg would the HA itself provide the repairs service — or engage contractors?

3. If an HA took over management of the estate, would tenants have to pay service charges for items currently paid for in their rent or rates? eg warden services, grass cutting etc.

4. Would the HA be an association registered with the Housing Corporation, therefore subject to scrutiny of its allocation policy and management standards? Or an unregistered association to attract private sector finance? Or is it proposed to establish both a registered and non-registered association as at Stockbridge to attract Housing Corporation funds for development activities but private sector funds to pay off the mortgage? What would be the implications for tenants of such arrangements?

4. FINAL QUESTIONS

1. Why does the Council believe a private developer can improve the estate better than itself?

2. Has the Council discussed a whole range of other options open to them (eg a rolling programme of renewal, a programme of partial improvements, environmental improvements under the Urban Programme, rehousing everyone and 'freezing' the site, forming their own trust, campaigning to use capital receipts etc)?

3. What have tenants' rents on the estate been used for in past few years?

4. Are there any other estates currently, or about to be, considered for privatisation?

A few of these questions may need more explanation. Phone SCAT in Nottingham. (0602) 412563.