

Harlem Tenants Start Sharp Drive Against Rents, Bad Housing

Consolidated Tenants League to Launch Campaign with Big Parade, Oct. 7; To Demand More Federal Low-Rent Projects

By Angelo Herndon

Donolan J. Phillips, head of the Consolidated Tenants League, 209 W. 125th St., announced yesterday plans for an intensive drive against high rents and bad housing conditions in Harlem.

"The reports," said Mr. Phillips, "made recently by the Citizens' Housing Council of New York is an excellent one, reflecting the true living conditions of the people in this community."

To focus public attention on the acute housing situation in Harlem, Mr. Phillips said that his organization is now busy with preparations for a huge parade which will take place on Oct. 7 at Dorrence Brooks Park, 136th St. and St. Nicholas Ave.

With a number of trade unions, civil and welfare organizations participating, the parade will be the first action in protest against the horrible conditions revealed in the report of the Citizens' Housing Council and for more government low-renting housing projects in Harlem.

NEW BUILDINGS BARELY BUILT

Mr. Phillips explained further that any attempt to alleviate the present suffering of Harlem citizens must take into consideration the social and economic problems which give rise to inadequate housing, lack of employment and ill-health.

"Since 1920," he went on, "very few dwelling houses have been constructed in Harlem. While the old buildings have been allowed to gradually deteriorate, the landlords instead of making improvements, have increased rents simultaneously with a tremendous increase in migration."

"The percentage of migration in Harlem is higher than in any other section of the city. For that reason, Harlem should be given first consideration because the situation that existed in 1920 is ten times worse today."

In order to arouse the widest possible interest of the masses of the people, the Tenants League is undertaking a campaign for the passage of a Rent Control Bill based on the income of the people. Such a plan would check the ravenous appetite of the big landlords and make it possible for all citizens to live decently.

STOP MANY RENT RISES

Through the efforts of the Tenants League, many victories have been won recently against landlords demanding higher rents. On September 1st, the tenants living at 63 W. 137th St. made the Rapport Real Estate Company of 2112 Broadway back down on a proposed \$3-8 increase on rents. Other big real

estate companies have also been forced to make repairs and paint the homes of thousands of tenants.

Obviously, if the people of Harlem are to share proportionately in the benefits of the United States Housing Act, a program designed to reach the masses of people who are most in need must be substituted for the present one which, so far, has only reached professionals, white-collar workers and others in the higher income brackets.

Under the present plan of the Housing Authority the annual rental for a four room apartment in New York would cost \$401, requiring a yearly income of \$2,006 in order to become eligible. But if it will be remembered that fifty-one per cent of the Negro families in New York had incomes of less than \$837 in 1937, and with less than forty-one per cent receiving a median income of \$1,266 in the same year, it is clear that the housing problems in Harlem will become more aggravated.

POWERFUL DRIVE NEEDED

Negro citizens can not hope to improve their intolerable situation if the landlords are allowed to continue fleecing them \$7 to \$12 more for the same unsanitary and dilapidated apartments occupied by white citizens.

Similarly, the white population must suffer equally as a result of such discriminatory practices.

In the words of Mr. Phillips "local councils, tenants leagues, and other groups representing the masses of people are needed to solve these complicated social problems. Forums of education through the press, churches, trade unions, civic and social welfare organizations are necessary to implement all the actions that these various agencies might take. If the people themselves are in back of the movement for better homes—they'll get them in Harlem and every other community."

Sikorsky Air Plant Boosts Factory Staff

STRATFORD, Conn., Sept. 21 (UP).—The Vought-Sikorsky Manufacturing Co., recently awarded a \$1,998,420 airplane contract by the United States Navy, today began hiring an additional 800 employees to augment its factory staff of 1,100.