MIT blames landlord; UAG supports tenants

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... demolishing units without replacing them. The way MIT has treated the tenants in those buildings violates every commitment they've made to us about how they will deal with tenants in their Cambridgeport properties." One result of the situation is that MIT's role in Cambridgeport (e.g. Simplex) will be the focus of the Planning Team's next meeting, scheduled for tomorrow night at 7:30, according to Mrs. Laura Brown, the president.

On Tuesday, October 6, Herrey, Real Estate Officer Project Manager Leigh Woodward and Walter Milne, assistant to the Chairman of the Corporation, toured the houses with tenants, architects and UAG members, to ascertain the true condition of the buildings. Apparently MIT did not know the physical state of the buildings when they were purchased. Herrey admitted at the Friday meeting that the Real Estate Office hadn't inspected them.

According to UAG and the residents, Herrey promised to have an MIT proposal ready by Thursday morning, October 8. Herrey denies making any promises. He called Bill Noble Wednesday night and asked to meet with him in private. Noble refused, suggested various alternatives, but they could not agree. UAG arranged the Friday open meeting and leafleted for it.

Friday meeting

The administration was represented by Herrey, Milne, and Wadsworth. MIT in its leaflet had accused UAG of consistently dwelling low-income housing, and said that its program to build 1000 units of housing in Cambridge was "phony," since half of the units would not be low-income housing. UAG could not be started until the Inner Harbor project was underwritten, since it had one yet been built. The administration was visibly apprehensive of the charges and anxious to refute them in public.

Prof. Paul Kiparsky (Humanities) of UAG, chairing the meeting, opened with a brief statement and then turned the floor over to Noble and several other tenants, who described their experiences: how they had had to perform their own repairs, claiming that Murray had made promises that "the buildings would not be demolished without rehabilitation." They demanded that Murray be removed as landlord; the administration said rehabilitation would be too expensive; they replied they wanted repairs not rehabilitation. They demanded that Murray be removed as landlord; the administration said they had to check with their lawyers. They were asked for a commitment to try. Herrey said MIT had to find out what its rights were. An MIT professor, William Pinson, said he felt MIT should repair the buildings if salvageable, which, according to an architecture grad student at the meeting, 3 or them are. (Is is completely decrepit; it caught fire last year. Drunks had been using it.) The Institute claims the building as a fire hazard. The tenants replied that that was because they'd let the wiring deteriorate, and for the buildings being wood and close to each other - so is most of Cambridge, they added.

The meeting broke up with only one guarantee having been made: the residents will not be evicted for the present. UAG met Sunday night to plan a strategy but tabled the setting of their own demands Monday. The Institute was awaiting word from its lawyers on whether it had legal grounds to evict either of its two middlemen. Another meeting is set for Thursday at a time and place to be announced.

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