

What is bankrupt is the whole system of capitalism itself -- an economic system which turns a basic human need like housing into a money game for high stakes manipulated by the vultures in banks, insurance companies, mortgage companies, real estate speculators, slumlords and politicians. It is a system capable of sucking millions of dollars of profit out of the bare existence of a poor community for decades and then capable of rewarding its victims with destruction when there is no more blood to suck.

#### WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PEOPLE?

What will happen to the residents of North Philadelphia if it is leveled and "recycled"?

Four years ago, Meltzer, fidgeting slightly in his chair, said that he thought they should be "relocated". The word "relocated" sounds a lot like the familiar Vietnam war double talk. Remember? Vietnamese peasants, no longer trusted by their own government, were removed by gun point from their villages and "relocated" in camps. Or perhaps it brings to mind the plight of Black families in Rhodesia and South Africa who have been "relocated" to compounds far removed from their husbands, fathers and brothers who toil daily in the city's factories and in the mines.

But in the case of Philadelphia there is not even a camp, a compound, or a project to which "relocation" is planned. Rizzo opposes low-cost housing in predominantly white neighborhoods and the white populated suburban communities are opposed to it too. Without new low-cost housing being built in sufficient quantities, thousands of North Philadelphians have nowhere to go. The truth is that Rizzo and his city planners haven't got the slightest idea of where and how to "relocate" the families that are being displaced by the demolition of housing and they could care less.

#### FIGHTBACK GROWING

With their backs up against the wall, the residents of the neighborhoods under attack are beginning to organize a resistance to the powerful forces they face.

The Spring Garden-Fairmount section of the city has been an area "in transition" for some years now. A working class area with a large Puerto Rican and Black population, Spring Garden is one of the first target neighborhoods the city planners have chosen for "recycling". A number of speculators and developers have bought and renovated blocks of houses to be sold to middle and upper middle class buyers - usually young, white and pro-

fessional people who want housing close to their center city jobs.

With this influx of affluent homeowners, the poorer residents of the community find that they are being forced out of the homes and apartments they've had for years because of increased taxes, higher rents, and unscrupulous real estate speculation.

The present residents have no intention of moving and have organized a group called El Comite del P.U.E.B.L.O. (The Committee of the People) to deal with government officials, agencies, landlords, and real estate developers.

A multi-national organization which has broad support in the community, El Comite is capable of mobilizing several hundred people to a meeting. It is now drawing up its own plan for the development of the community which would remove housing from the hands of the speculators and absentee landlords and turn it over to the community to be supervised and developed.

#### SQUATTERS MOVEMENT

Another important development is the formation of a coalition of city-wide and neighborhood groups which has been formed around the squatter movement organized by Milton Street.

The North Philadelphia Development Corporation, which Street heads, has moved nearly 100 homesteaders into abandoned housing to prevent the buildings from being further vandalized and to allow poor people to have a chance at home ownership.

Street has been negotiating with the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the owner of many of the properties, for the legal transfer of ownership to the new tenants.

Street and other community activists are also turning their attention on the city housing policy and how that policy is being implemented through the disbursement of federal community development funds.

What is needed now is a city-wide movement that can respond to the inhumane Rizzo housing policy with unified, militant action. The development of El Comite in Spring Garden and the visible strength of Street's squatters movement, together with long-standing organizations such as the Tenant Action Group (TAG) and the Housing Association of Delaware Valley, may signal a new stage in the creation of a movement that could bring better housing to Black, Latino and white working class Philadelphians despite the best laid plans of Bernard Meltzer, John Gallery and Frank Rizzo.

## UAW LOCAL 813 TURNS THUMBS DOWN ON RIZZO

July 1978

While the labor big-wigs of the city's central labor council are having trouble making up their minds on how to respond to Frank Rizzo's concealed bid for a third term through changing the city charter, auto workers at the Hunting Park Budd plant made it crystal clear where they stand.

According to the *Concerned Members Bulletin*, the newsletter of the Concerned Members of UAW Local 813, the membership voted at their April meeting to send Rizzo a letter calling for his resignation because of his racist speech at Whitman Park. The motion, made by a member of the Concerned Workers, was adopted unanimously.

The newsletter summed up the arguments for the motion pointing out that:

*"Rizzo was trying to stir up race hatred in order to turn the white voters' eyes*

*away from his own failure as mayor-- a huge tax increase for homeowners after promising not to raise taxes and giving businesses a tax cut, a bankrupt school system that gets less city money than in most other big cities, and racism in giving out housing rehabilitation money which the US government now may withdraw from Philly. When it comes to corruption Rizzo offered Pete Camiel a deal in the bathroom and then failed a lie detector test about it, fired Lyn Abraham from the Redevelopment Authority for refusing to hire Democratic party hacks, and got a \$400,000 house from a city contractor for \$100,000. But Rizzo has not and will not do anything that really benefits either white or black people. Has he even slowed down the drain of jobs from the city? No. Has he cut down on crime? No. But he wants white people (2/3 of the voters in Philly) to forget all that and let him be mayor forever. That would hurt everyone in Philadelphia, not just black folks."*