

TENANTS THREATEN A GENERAL STRIKE

Persons in Brownsville District Talk of Refusing to Pay Rent After June 1.

WOULD INVOLVE THOUSANDS

Want Landlords to Give Yearly Leases—Houses Scarce Through-

A general strike of tenants against landlords in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, to begin June 1, was forecast as a possibility yesterday by tenants, who declared that if no relief was accorded they would act as a mass and refuse to pay rent. At present about 1,500 tenants are on strike in this district, and a general strike would involve many thousands.

Leaders of the Brownsville strikers said the idea of a general strike is agitating residents of that section because of what are termed intolerable living conditions. If the strike is called, it was said the Brooklyn Tenants Union would seek the co-operation of labor unions, churches and synagogues.

At the Brownsville Labor Lyceum last night, it was said the tenants are not in the fight against the landlords as such, but against the system of increasing rentals every few months because of the frequent changing of landlords.

Representatives of the tenants said they do not object to the landlord obtaining a fair return on his investment, but they oppose excessive increases which in some cases are 100 per cent. more than the original rentals. It was emphasized that not all the landlords in the section are profiteers, and one landlord on Howard Avenue, who refused to raise rents, saying he was making a fair profit, was the guest at a dinner given by his grateful tenants. The tenants also hung out an American flag in front of his house, and a sign reading: "We honor our landlord. He has not raised his rent in six months."

Brownsville tenants desire, above all, that the landlords grant them leases agreeing not to raise the rent for a year. In the event of a strike pickets will be stationed in front of the houses affected to warn prospective tenants of the situation and to advise them not to move into the apartments.

The Mayor's Committee on Rent Profiteering adjusted the dispute between Abraham Perlman, landlord of 473 Powell Street, and his twenty-four tenants. Perlman agreed that if he still owns the property on Oct. 1 he will not increase the rent more than \$1.

Conditions Bad Throughout State.

John Alan Hamilton of Buffalo, Chairman of the Housing Committee of the State Reconstruction Committee, who was in New York, said the housing situation all over the State is serious, and that an Up-State Advisory Council has been formed to consider the problem. He said that the council is conducting a survey of the State similar to that being carried on in New York City.

"Overcrowding in all the towns is becoming a menace," he said. "In the smaller places there are few tenements, and the congestion is apparent chiefly in the fact that families everywhere are taking in boarders to such an extent that the practice is becoming dangerous to health and morals."

Mr. Hamilton said that in Buffalo, as in New York City, there has been no building. He said that unless building is resumed the industries will suffer. The Public Health Committee of the State Reconstruction Committee, of which Dr. Henry Dwight Chapin is Chairman, will meet Monday evening at the Academy of Medicine to discuss the relation of housing to public health, it was announced yesterday.

The Mayor's Committee received a petition from tenants in the houses at 622, 626, 630, 636 East 136th Street, saying their landlady, Mrs. Rose Rudinsky, was about to evict them and asking that she be restrained. The petition said Mrs. Rudinsky had increased the rental to a point which the tenants thought too high and, when they refused to pay, she attempted to evict members of a committee who waited on her. Thereupon, the petition said, the 120 families in the houses went on strike.

Threatens to Boost Taxes.

Commissioner of Accounts Hirschfield examined Joseph Rudinsky of 409 West 129th Street, owner, with his wife, of 2,101 and 2,109 Harrison Avenue, the Bronx. When Rudinsky said his annual plumbing bill was \$5,000 some of his tenants laughed. Commissioner Hirschfield said that, taking Rudinsky's own figures on the income of the houses, he was receiving more than 35 per cent. on his investment and that the property was assessed for about half its value. Several tenants testified as to lack of heat, leakages, poor plumbing conditions, and Rudinsky's refusal to make repairs.

Mr. Hirschfield told the tenants the Mayor's Committee has no power to stop landlords from raising rents, but that if they do so, the city could increase their tax assessments.

Abraham Davidson of Weeks Avenue, the Bronx, whose income is \$20 a week, and who has a wife and three children, one of whom is an invalid, called at the office of the Mayor's Committee and said that in eighteen months his rent had been raised \$13. He said that when he first rented the apartment it cost \$23 a month. To meet the increases, he said he had to pawn trinkets belonging to his wife.

Captain Goldsmith of the Mayor's Committee settled a dispute between the tenants and landlord of 548 and 550 Powell Street, Brooklyn, on the basis of continuing the payment of the rentals which were being charged April 1.