

Rickety, Disease Ridden-- A Picture of Harlem Housing

**Writer Finds Many Homes
Actually in Danger
of Collapse**

By Angelo Herndon

Couched up on a divan that seemed ready to collapse any moment, and covered head and feet with tattered and worn blankets, Mrs. Jessie Wilburn, 22, of 315 W. 141st St., and mother of two children, only half-way stirred early Monday morning when asked by her mother, Mrs. Mary Wilburn, how much rent she has to pay for her four-room first-floor apartment.

"It's a man from the government," the mother said reassuringly.

Then she turned over and muttered with difficulty, "Oh mercy Jesus! What on earth do you want?"

"The man wants to know how much rent you pay. He wants to help you."

Slowly she rolled back the blankets from her head. Her face appeared to be unusually drawn for a young woman and the bones in it protruded in a ghastly sort of way. Finally, in a weak voice that suggested much grief and suffering, she said:

"I pay \$15 a month. But they should pay me \$15 to live in this hole."

WALL COLLAPSED

Emphasizing the full meaning of the words of her daughter, the 71-year-old grandmother who has spent sleepless nights wondering how to get old age relief, pointed to the wall opposite the divan and said:

"See here--last week the wall caved in on the head of one of my sons."

As if this was not sufficient evidence, she then led the way to three other places where the wall had cracked. In one room where her seven-year-old granddaughter lay sleeping, the wall was bulging out like a balloon.

"The landlord," she said, "just white-washed the cracks. But that won't do any good. Soon the whole thing will fall in."

Her two sons who are unemployed had just come to visit her. One of them said with stark realism--"the horse stable down on 128th St. is better than this place. Isn't it a strange thing--we're supposed to be human beings, but they get more attention than we do. If you don't believe it, go down and see for yourself."

UNFIT FOR HUMAN BEINGS

Without investigating his charges the whole building, including the adjoining house and the superintendent's quarters in the rear, is absolutely unfit for human habitation. It is a three-story wooden structure that could be swept away in less than thirty minutes by fire. Why it has not been condemned by the City Housing Authority, is a question that bothers all of the tenants.

They do not want to live in the place and are afraid that if the building is condemned, it will be impossible for them to find other living quarters since most of them are on relief and cannot pay the extortionate rents demanded by the landlords.

DARK AT MID-DAY

Mrs. Wilburn's apartment is without gas, electric and steam heat. The same is also true for most of the others. Even at noon it is as dark as any dungeon. In the winter time they all cluster up around the old coal burning stove in order to keep from freezing. Mother Wilburn said: "I don't see why we didn't freeze to death last year, because we didn't have enough money to buy coal and it's very hard to find wood to burn in New York."

When the mother, daughter and two children are not sleeping in the other dark, unventilated rooms they sit around in the kitchen hoping against hope for something to turn up that will make life different for them. It would seem that the kitchen is the most busy part of the house. With the coal stove and bath tub opposite it, a table, a few rickety worn chairs and a collection of other objects, it is a horrifying spectacle. Here



Harlem Slum

Mrs. Mary Wilburn sits in the kitchen of her Harlem slum home with her 6-year-old grandson, Arthur Wilburn. Below: a rear view of the three-story wooden firetrap structure where the Wilburn family lives at 315 W. 141st Street.

they cook, eat, wash and bathe. About eating--it is not always often when they eat, because the mother has no income and must depend upon what she can get from her two unemployed sons.

ONE TOILET FOR 3 FAMILIES

The daughter gets \$34 a month from the Children's Welfare Department, \$15 of which is paid out for rent.

There is a toilet in the hall way used by three families.

Mrs. Henrietta Gatling, 68 years old, is superintendent of both houses. She lives in the rear in an old building that is far worse than the one already described. She is paid the magnificent sum of \$3 a month by the Rachbach and Roscnstock Realty Company for taking care of the five families.

Asked what would happen in case a fire started in the building, she answered:

"The landlord once made the expression that if the place caught fire, a good jumper could jump down from the top without any trouble."

She also said that the landlord does not want people who are on relief. Two weeks ago, a family on relief was evicted, and it is expected that Mrs. Wilburn will be evicted next week.



—Daily Worker Photo

Navy Planes Fly From Hawaii To Philippines

HONOLULU, T. H., Sept. 19 (UP).—Navy headquarters announced a squadron of naval bombers took off from Pearl Harbor today on a mass flight to Manila—the first mass flight ever attempted from Hawaii to the Philippines.

The squadron, believed to comprise 15 planes, will follow Pan American Airways' course and make the flight in four hops—Honolulu to Midway, to Wake, to Guam and finally to Manila. Distance from Honolulu to Manila is 4,757 miles.

The squadron was dispatched to Manila to reinforce the navy's flying patrol equipment in the Philippines.

The flight was commanded by Lieut.-Comdr. Sam Lahache who headed a mass flight from San Diego to Pearl Harbor last June 27-28.

Lahache's squadron was released for Philippine duty by arrival last Saturday of 14 additional naval bombers from the mainland.

Lahache's planes were prominently marked with American flags and

Army Chiefs Give Estimate Of U. S. Needs

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19 (UP).—High army officials estimated today that approximately \$550,000,000 would be needed for modern weapons and equipment if mobilization were ordered in event of war.

Under mobilization plans formulated by the joint army and navy selective committee approximately 1,000,000 men could be placed in the field within 90 days.

Army officials said that stocks of modern field weapons, tanks, ammunition, gas masks, planes and heavy artillery were materially efficient to equip an army of that size. They said the army was "relatively strong" in weapons of the World War era, including rifles, pistols, machine guns and field artillery.

It was unofficially reported a navy tanker was stationed between Midway and Guam to act as guard ship for the flight.

Nazi Subs Off Brazil Sighted by Argentine Ships

BUENOS AIRES, Sept. 19 (UP).—The newspaper Critica said today that four German submarines surrounded two Argentine battleships off the Brazilian coast last week, then disappeared after identifying them.

The battleships were returned to their base from Rio De Janeiro and were being convoyed by four torpedo boats which put up a smoke screen for them.

Critica said the submarines, flying the Swastikas were easily visible while they came to the surface to identify the battleships.

U. S. War Plant Workers for Neutrality

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