

# EVIDENCE OF HIGH RENTALS

## Legislation Committee of City Council Hears Com- plaints of Tenants

### STRANGE TERMS OF LEASE

#### Shop Girls Pay \$10 a Week for Single Rooms, Says Ald. F. W. Johnston

Much evidence of the prevalence of excessive rentals in Toronto was laid before the Legislation Committee of the City Council, when it was yesterday afternoon, to consider means of curtailing rent profiteering. Several tenants came in person to give details of the exorbitant rents which they were paying, while others submitted their cases in the form of communications.

The chief proposals made as to remedial action were that of Mayor Church, who considered that relief might be secured by the Assessment Department, and a motion by Ald. Ball, which carried. This took the form of a recommendation to the City Council that it seek from the Federal Government legislation to restrict rentals on dwellings to a gross return of ten per cent. on actual property value. At the suggestion of Mayor Church a second clause was added, suggesting that no increase in rents on dwellings be allowed for a period of twelve months from the enactment of this legislation.

#### Have no Power, says Forman.

In reply to Mayor Church's suggestion that through the heavy assessment of profiteers, information might be obtained at the hearing of appeals regarding the profits reaped by them, Commissioner Forman stated that his department had no power to assess incomes of this sort. As far back as 1917 he had applied to the Legislature for authority to tax war profiteers, but had never secured it. He expressed himself as rather astonished that the Chief Magistrate of the city should ask him to do something which he himself should know was illegal.

Mayor Church did not consider that it was necessary for the Assessment Commissioner to construe the law. That was the function of the County Judge, who would hear the appeals. The Mayor emphasized the need for immediate action, and declared that the Federal Government had for four years been sleeping on a volcano which would one day blow it up.

Out of the mass of information adduced regarding gross incomes on residential property in the city, the case of a recently-built apartment house in Parkdale was somewhat striking. It was brought to the attention of the Committee by a member of the G. A. C., who said that he was one of ten veterans who were tenants in the place.

#### Asked to Pay in Advance.

The assessment on this property was \$74,200, the water rates \$164.30, and this year's taxes \$188.85. The total yearly income from rentals would be \$26,500 at current rates charged. For his own apartment of four heated rooms he paid \$53 monthly, but to renew his lease at the end of September he was informed that he must comply with a rather extraordinary demand. His landlord stipulated that he pay in advance for the first and last months of the lease or vacate. His only theory was that the landlord desired to compel his tenants to pay at the end of this month their rent for the month of September, 1920, in order to tide himself over a period of temporary financial embarrassment.

#### How Rents Go Up.

Another case submitted was that of a duplex house yielding a gross revenue of \$90 per month on an estimated investment of \$6,000, while the soaring scale of rentals in the city was illustrated by the increase from \$35 to \$55 per month in two years of the rent charged on a College street apartment, and from \$18 to \$33 since 1914 in that on three heated rooms on Bain avenue.

Ald. F. W. Johnston stated that he had discovered rooming houses in the central portion of the city where shop girls were forced to pay \$10 per week for single rooms.

#### What About Expenses is Question.

After listening to case after case of this sort, and to the discussion on Ald. Ball's motion, Ald. Blackburn, who is also a builder, stated that he thought the other members did not understand the situation so well as he. "Where," he queried, "are your expenses coming from out of that ten per cent.?"

His suggestion that the Legislature be asked to appoint a Commission to investigate rents and introduce legislation to protect tenants was greeted with the general comment: "Another Commission!" and promptly voted down.