

Eviction–Suffering

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, November 1960, 1, 8.

Summary: Notes the sufferings of victims of urban renewal and is cynical of those who benefit. (DDLW #773).

We used to say that New York was made up of a series of villages, each with their charm and culture and a certain richness of life in spite of poverty. Harry Golden's books are filled with the joy of the old East Side, as well as with the story of poverty and struggle. But the villages are being torn down now and the Roosevelt site is the latest scene of tragedy, where 169 families are still left in the neighborhood with no houses available for them.

"It was mass hysteria," Juliana Delkus told us, speaking of a meeting at St. Stanislaus church where meetings are being held in the school hall to protest the ruthlessness of this displacement. The Lower East Side Neighborhood Association is sponsoring the protests that are being made and trying to get an extension of time for the tenants who have not found a place to go.

"Many of these people have their old parents with them, and if they went into a project they would not be allowed to keep them. And if they do not get a place which is approved by the housing authority with a window in every room and heat and a private bath, they won't get the bonus paid to each family for getting out quick and finding their own place."

Juliana is one of the tenants in the neighborhood who will have to move, and she has been helping the others by going from door to door and getting signatures on petitions.

"I am not even trying to find a place yet," she said. "I want to help the others. The housing authority officer offered me an apartment which he said he would pay \$200 for, and said the rent would be eighty dollars a month. I told him I could not take it. He said, 'What? You can't even pay eighty dollars a month?' What poor person can pay eighty dollars a month, I want to know."

When asked if any of the tenants evicted could move into the new project, Juliana said she had heard that it was to be a cooperative house and besides the initial cost, the upkeep would be \$28.50 a room. Ground was to be broken for the new project on Fifth street between First Avenue and Avenue A on December 8, she said. She called attention to the fact that on another street where all the families were evicted, the houses were boarded up and work was not started for five years. Anyone walking through the East Side will see hundreds of buildings boarded up which could be improved enough for temporary dwellings while slums are being eliminated and better housing provided.

In my column this month I call attention to the generosity of the City in trying to reimburse and recompense owners and tenants but here I am pointing out to amend what I said that the old adage works always, "Them as has, gits." It is so old a proverb that Our Lord used it, turning it to spiritual goods, saying that "To him that has much, much is given, and to him that has little, even that it taken away."