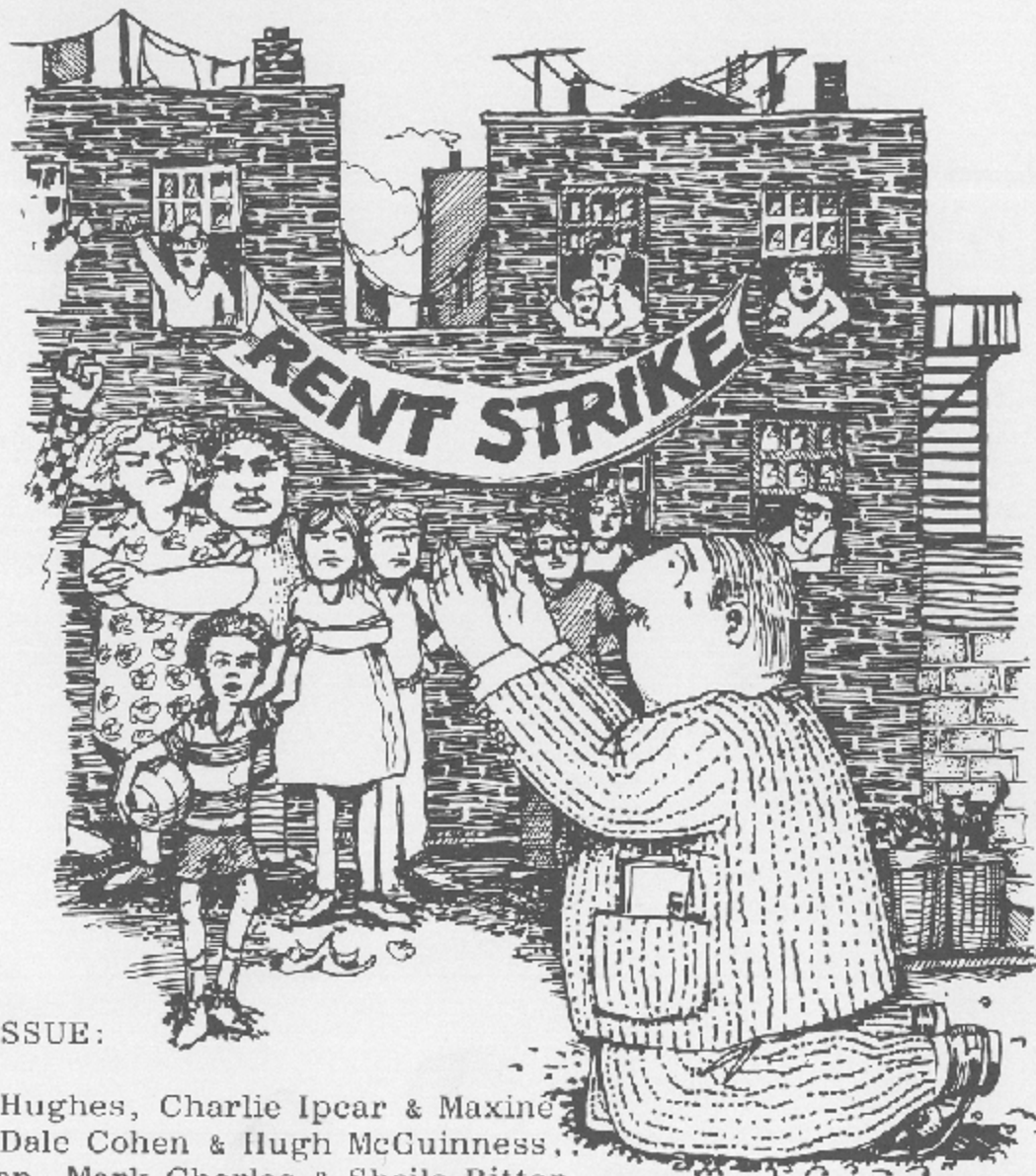


# Broadside #165

THE NATIONAL TOPICAL SONG MAGAZINE

AUGUST 1985

## Housing & Other Neighborhood Organizing Songs



### IN THIS ISSUE:

Langston Hughes, Charlie Ipcar & Maxine  
Parshall, Dale Cohen & Hugh McGuinness,  
Bob Norman, Mark Charles & Sheila Ritter,  
Peter Berryman, Elyse Crystall, Sandee Swantek,  
Martha Koester, Paul Emery, Tony Heriza, Judith  
Levine & Laura Liben, Mike Rawson, Bev Grant,  
and Luci Murphy.

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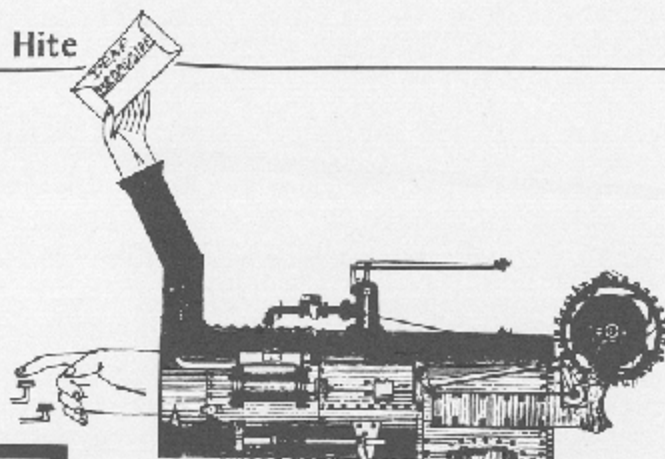
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## BROADSIDE #165

## CORRESPONDENCE

....it seems that New York on the Fourth of  
 July is the best weapon we have against our  
 greatest enemy from within: the creeping  
 ghost and icy hand one feels at the most  
 unexpected times, that chiller of freedoms  
 and stalker of poets, that detainer of children  
 and slayer of romance, the cold and secure  
 touch of conservatism.

M. Hite



## WE WON'T MOVE

Songs from this issue of  
 BROADSIDE

The Ballad Of the Landlord  
 We're Gonna Stay  
 You Just Can't Take Our Homes  
 Away and more

including

Malvina Reynolds

Jimmy Collier

and others

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REAL ESTATE

Isaiah 5:8-9

Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field until everywhere belongs to them, and they are the sole inhabitants of the land; the Lord God of Hosts has sworn this in my hearing: "Many houses shall be brought to ruin, great and fine but left untenanted."

Guest Editor Charlie Ipcar

This special issue of BROADSIDE will delight all who have experienced the trials and tribulations of seeking shelter in a market society. It is dedicated to tenants and other neighborhood people who have fought so long and hard against the landlords and other real estate interests who make their living off the housing market.

The songs in this issue are a small sampling from a yet to be published housing songbook, to be entitled Pity the Downtrodden Landlord. Several of the songs are also recorded on a recent Folkways release entitled We Won't Move! However, many have never before been published or recorded.

Such a songbook could not have been assembled without the enthusiastic help of well over 100 people, who in the last five years sent in more than 300 songs, a collection that truly boggles the mind. These songs have come in from all over this country, not to mention contributions from overseas.

The songs selected here provide a compelling overview of housing and other neighborhood organizing issues. Complaints are laid out in graphic detail. Perpetrators are vividly characterized. And the perpetrator is urged to do the basic organizing that needs to be done to bring about change.

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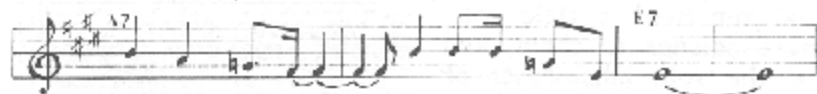
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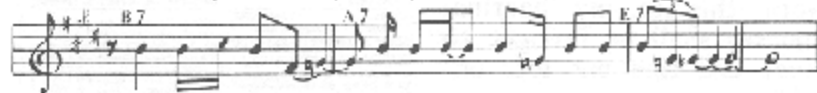
## The Ballad Of The Landlord



Land-lord, land-lord, my roof has sprung a leak.



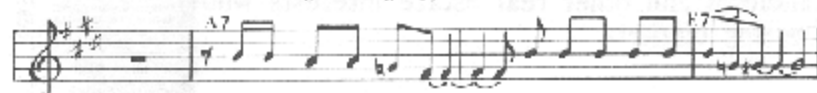
Land-lord, land-lord, my roof has sprung a leak.



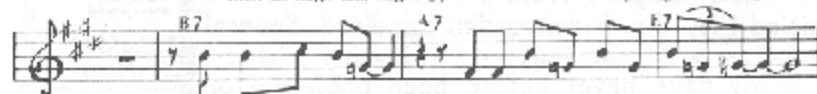
Don't you re-member I told you 'bout it way last week.



You're talkin' high and mighty; talk on 'til you get through.



You're talkin' high and mighty; talk on 'til you get through.



You won't be able if I land my fist on you.



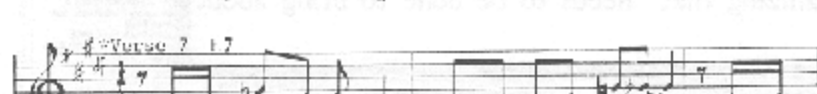
Pol-ice, po-lice! Oh, come and get this man!



Pol-ice, po-lice! Oh, come and get this man!



He's tryin' to ruin the government And over-turn this land.



Copper's whistle, pa-trol bell, ar-rest, Pre-cinct



sta-tion, i-ron cell, head-lines in the press,



Man threat-ens Land-lord, re-nant held, no bail.



Judge gives Ne-gro ninety days in jail.

The housing songs that we sing today grew out of a long history of tenant/landlord confrontations dating back to medieval times. This song, based on a poem by Langston Hughes, grew out of conditions in NYC's Harlem in the 30's. In classic terms it describes the escalation of anger and frustration that Black tenants experienced trying to get landlords to make needed repairs. Ray Kamalay from Michigan worked up this fine blues adaptation of the poem.



Landlord, landlord, my roof has sprung a leak,  
Landlord, landlord, my roof has sprung a leak,  
Don't you 'member I told you about it,  
Way last week?

Landlord, landlord, these steps is broken down,  
Landlord, landlord, these steps is broken down,  
When you come yourself,  
Whee, you don't fall down.

Ten bucks you say I owe, ten bucks you say  
is due?  
Ten bucks you say I owe, ten bucks you say  
is due?  
Well, that's ten bucks  
Here'n I'll pay you.

Well, you got eviction orders, you wanna cut  
off my heat?  
Well, you got eviction orders, you wanna cut  
off my heat?  
You wanna take my easy chair  
And throw it in the street?

You're talkin' high and mighty, talk on till  
you get through;  
You're talkin' high and mighty, talk on till  
you get through;  
You won't be able  
If I land my fist on you.

Police, police! Oh, come and get this man!  
Police, police! Oh, come and get this man!  
He's tryin' to ruin the government  
And overturn this land.

Copper's whistle, patrol bell, arrest,  
Precinct station, iron cell, headlines in the  
press,  
Man threatens landlord, tenant held, no bail,  
Judge gives Negro ninety days in jail.

# I Ripped Off What I Could

This song comes directly out of the experience of myself and others to utilize rental housing as an organizing issue in a midwestern university town in the early 1970's. Co-authored by myself and Maxine Parshall, it was always one of the most popular at fund raisers and rallies, pulling together as it does the essential elements in the strategy of a successful but unscrupulous housing entrepreneur. The song is adapted from the traditional favorite "When I First Came To This Land." To sing this song, you add verses cumulatively, which presents quite a challenge to the brain by the time you reach verse eight.



© 1974 Charles Ipcar & Maxine Parshall

Musical notation for the song "I Ripped Off What I Could". The notation is in 2/4 time and includes the following lyrics and chords:

When I first came to this land, I was not a wealthy man,  
 So I bought a row of shacks, And I ripped off what I could!  
 I called those rows, "Pay Through the Nose"  
 And the rents were sweet and good, I ripped off what I could!

When I first...etc.  
 So I wrote myself a lease...  
 Called my lease "The Golden Fleece"  
 Called those rows...etc.

When I first...etc.  
 So I hired a managing crew...  
 Called my crew "Your Kent's Due"  
 Called my lease...etc.

When I first...etc.  
 So I bribed a building inspector...  
 Called that inspector "My Protector"  
 Called my crew...etc.

When I first...etc.  
 So I bribed an assessor chief...  
 Called that chief "My Tax Relief"  
 Called that inspector...etc.

When I first...etc.  
 So I bribed a councilman...  
 Called that man "Screw Who You Can"  
 Called that chief...etc.

When I first...etc.  
 So I bribed a district judge...  
 Called that judge "Waffle and Fudge"  
 Called that man...etc.

When I first...etc.  
 So I wrote a housing bill...  
 Called each line "I've Got Mine"  
 Called that judge...etc.

(More slowly and quietly)

Now that I've been in this land  
 I am quite a wealthy man;  
 So I sold off all I owned,  
 And I ripped off what I could.  
 And I called that deal  
 "I'm Well-Beeled";  
 And I quietly skipped town,  
 I ripped off what I could!



When I first came to this land,  
 I was not a wealthy man,  
 So I bought a row of shacks  
 And I ripped off what I could!  
 I called those rows,  
 "Pay Through the Nose"  
 And the rents were sweet and good,  
 I ripped off what I could!

When I first...etc.  
 So I wrote myself a lease...  
 Called my lease "The Golden Fleece"  
 Called those rows...etc.

When I first...etc.  
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(More slowly and quietly)

Now that I've been in this land  
 I am quite a wealthy man;  
 So I sold off all I owned,  
 And I ripped off what I could.  
 And I called that deal  
 "I'm Well-Beeled";  
 And I quietly skipped town,  
 I ripped off what I could!

## Love Me, I'm Your Landlord

After singing housing songs at a private party or an organizing meeting, I'm sometimes approached by people who say they enjoyed my songs but their "best friends" have become landlords. No doubt there are some people who are conscientious about maintaining their income property, and are even concerned about the welfare of their tenants. However, we are all aware of other former housing activists who have become transformed into classic slumlords. Dale Cohen and Hugh McGuinness, tenant organizers from the university town of Ann Arbor, came up with the appropriate musical response, reworking Phil Cohs' song "Love Me, I'm A Liberal."

© 1981 Dale Cohen & Hugh McGuinness

I re - mem-ber when I was a ten-ant, I re-  
 member the strife and the pain. I swore to re-  
 form that sys-tem that pro-duced such ill-got-ten  
 gain. So now that I'm your land-lord, you've  
 no rea-son left to com-plain. So, love me,  
 love me, love me, I'm your land-lord.

I remember when I was a tenant,  
 I remember the strife and the pain.  
 I swore to reform the system,  
 That produced such ill-gotten gain.  
 So now that I'm your landlord,  
 You've no reason left to complain.

Refrain: So, love me, love me, love me,  
 I'm your landlord.

I helped form the first tenants union,  
 For that I should get a gold star;  
 I love each one of my tenants,  
 I even lend them my car;  
 But this talk about rent control,  
 That's going a bit too far...



**REAL ESTATE**

I cried when my tenants had no heat,  
 Tears ran down my spine;  
 I mourned when that old furnace broke down,  
 As though I'd lost a grandparent of mine;  
 But, you know, they had it coming,  
 When they were late with the rent last time...

I cheered when Epstein was rent struck,  
 My faith in the system restored;  
 And I'm glad that Trony went bankrupt,  
 They charged rents no one could afford,  
 And I love each one of my tenants,  
 But I hope that they don't move next door...

Oh, those people who work for McKinley,  
 Should all hang their heads in shame;  
 I don't understand how their minds work,  
 Property maintenance is part of the game;  
 But if you ask me to roll back my rents,  
 I'll have the cops take down your name...

# Boil Them Landlords Down

A shut-down furnace in the dead of winter can be a powerful catalyst for getting to know your neighbors, sharing resources, learning how the housing market really works, and organizing a rent strike. Bob Norman and his neighbors on New York City's Upper West Side had such an experience back in the winter of 1975, and in the process came up with a number of protest songs including this "alternative energy" song. The song is based on the classic "Boil Them Cabbage Down."

© 1981 Bob Norman

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated by letters above the notes: F, A, B7, and E.

These chilly winds of win - ter, They're  
 blowing down my street. And my land-lord he's a  
 bas - tard, And he won't give us no heat.  
 Boil them land-lords down, Bake those land-lords brown. Now the  
 on-ly song that I can sing is Boil them land-lords down.



Boiler inspection: "They seem to have done all they could in the way of patching ... We will give them another certificate ... surely it will last...till it blows up."

Those chilly winds of winter,  
 They're blowing down my street,  
 And my landlord he's a bastard,  
 He won't give us no heat.

All your begging and your pleading,  
 They won't make him reform;  
 But if we put him in the boiler,  
 He's sure to keep us warm.

Chorus: boil them landlords down,  
 Bake those landlords brown.  
 Now the only song that I can sing  
 Is boil them landlords down.

Angel Figueroa,  
 He told me what to do:  
 "Get hold of that landlord  
 And make him work for you"...

The wintertime is coming,  
 It's getting pretty cool;  
 Let's get some of those landlords  
 And use them up for fuel...

So listen all you tenants,  
 If you want to be warm;  
 Just get yourselves together  
 And sing this little song...

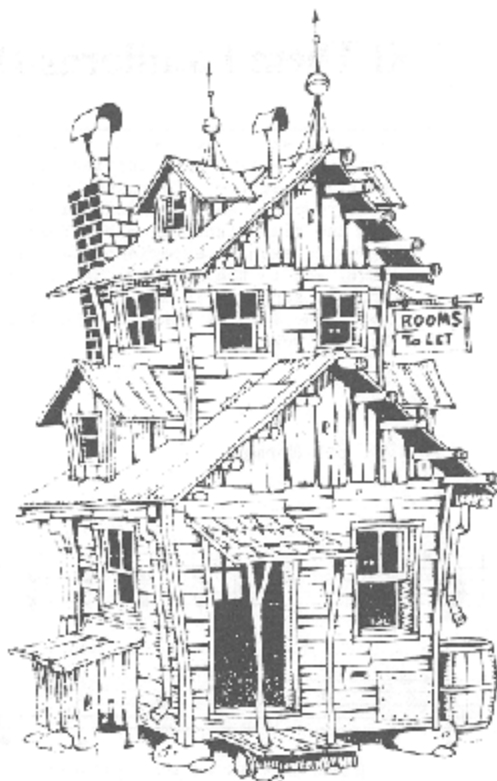
## The Old Landlord's Dump

This lovely song was put together by two Ann Arbor friends, Sheila Ritter and Mark Charles, who between the two of them have experienced a wide range of outrageous housing situations. They also worked hard to correct such conditions or provide alternatives to rental housing. Mark helped organize a tenants resource center, coordinated a citywide rent control campaign, and together with Sheila pioneered a new cooperative house. Sheila was also director and workshop leader at NASCO, a nationwide housing co-op resource center. The song itself is based on Cyril Dawney's "Gray Funnel Line," making it ideal for a capella singing. Just the song to try the next time you're with some friends in a musty mint-green stairwell.

© 1981 Mark Charles & Sheila Ritter

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. Chords are indicated by letters (D, A, G, E9, A7) above the notes. The score ends with a double bar line and a 7-measure rest.

I mind the rain coming in the roof. It's cold and  
 wet and that's the truth. So late at night when I close my  
 eyes I feel it drip and I moan and sigh. It's one more  
 day in my old land-lord's dump!



I mind the rain coming in my roof,  
 It's cold and wet and that's the truth,  
 So late at night when I close my eyes  
 I feel it drip and I moan and sigh.

Chorus: It's one more day in my old landlord's dump!

I mind the cockroaches in the sink,  
 I mind the living room painted pink;  
 I mind the water that comes out rust,  
 There is no landlord a tenant can trust...

I mind the snow piling 'round the door,  
 When he'll shovel it I'm not sure;  
 I mind the cold coming through the walls,  
 My heat bills rise as the temperature falls...

Oh, Lord, if dreams were only real,  
 I'd find a place to buy for a steal;  
 Then I'd drive right by that landlord's place,  
 And stick my tongue out in his face...

My friends and I will save our dimes,  
 We'll work and plan until that time;  
 Then we'll buy a house that we can share,  
 And all our lives we'll be happy there.

We'll live no more in that old landlord's dump!



## Landlady

The lease, the lease! Who could forget their first lease? Like a bill of rights in reverse. Like signing your life away before life has even begun. Some of those clauses must surely date back to medieval times. Peter Berryman, a singer-songwriter from Wisconsin, addresses this experience in exhaustive fashion, in one incredible diatribe. To be chanted as rapidly as possible.

© 1980 Peter Berryman

You signed your lease I see,  
 Before I let you go  
 You'd better listen to me,  
 There's some things you ought to know:  
 Don't stack shit in the hall,  
 Don't stack shit in the hall;  
 Keep it in your closet  
 Or lose your deposit;  
 And one more thing:  
 No dogs, no cats,  
 No snakes, no bats,  
 No kangaroos, no drinkin' booze,  
 No marmosets, no cigarettes,  
 And keep that fridge defrosted;  
 Uh, keep that fridge defrosted;  
 Give me the first month's rent  
 And the last month's rent,  
 A cleaning deposit and a damage deposit;  
 It's more for the furniture,  
 More for the driveway;  
 No parkin' in the street  
 And you pay for the heat,  
 For the lights, for the gas, and out the grass;  
 Shovel the snow or out you go;  
 And keep them baseboards free of dust,  
 Oh, keep them baseboards free of dust;  
 No bookshelves of bricks and boards,  
 And no goddam extension cords,  
 And one more thing:  
 No overnight guests, no sublets,  
 No kinky sex, no waterbeds;  
 Don't lose your key 'cause I won't let you in;  
 Take out the garbage once a week,  
 Clean them windows till they squeak;  
 No parties after ten, no children under ten,  
 No gatherings over ten;  
 No tacks in the walls, no bikes in the halls;  
 And lock the doors, and mop the floors;  
 And one more thing:  
 I'm comin' over now and then  
 With a white glove on my hands;  
 Gonna run it all over your  
 Windowsill, stovetop, molding, shelving, 'frigerator,  
 And, if I want, up your tenant's hinder;  
 Be clean as a church and quiet as a mouse;  
 It's your home but it's my house;  
 Rent's due on the 1st;  
 Might be steep but could be worse;  
 Break it down and you will see,  
 I'm a reasonable landlady;  
 This is all you have to pay:  
 One thousand eight hundred eighty-two dollars and sixty-five cents  
 Every day!



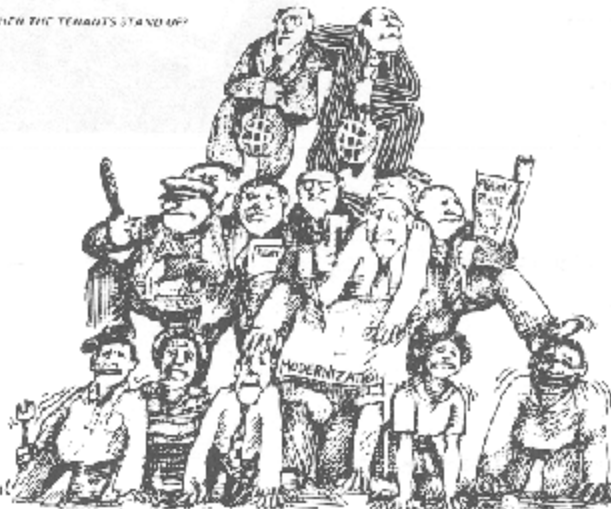
## Talking Rent Blues

A major mystery song in my collection is this talking blues, adapted from the Almanac Singers' "Talking Union." This is one of my favorite tenant organizing songs as it lays out, verse by verse, the thinking and tactics that go into putting together a successful rent strike. Someone sent me this song back in 1976, clipped out of The Newspaper, an alternative weekly from the Boston area.

© 1985 Anon.

Now if you wanna keep your rent down There's  
just one thing to do, Got-ta talk to the folks in the  
building with you. Got-ta build you a union and  
make it strong, If y' - all stick to-ge-ther, well, it  
won't be long. You get lo-wer rents, Bet-ter  
liv-ing con-di-tions, If you de-cide to leave,  
your se-cu-ri-ty de - po-sit.

WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE TENANTS STAND UP?



Now if you wanna keep your rent down  
there's just one thing to do,  
Gotta talk to the folks in the building  
with you.  
Gotta build you a union and make it strong,  
If y'all stick together, well, it won't  
be long - you get lower rents, better  
living conditions, and if you decide to  
leave, your security deposit!

Now it won't be easy but it's gotta be done,  
Visit all the tenants one by one;  
Invite all your neighbors over for tea,  
When you talk about rents, they'll all agree,  
Yep - they're all for it...

Better living conditions are your right,  
Running hot water with heat all night;  
Ridding those pests, those roaches and rats,  
Sealing old windows and stuff like that...

But to solve those problems, ya got to fight  
it,  
Gotta talk it over and stand united;  
"He" won't listen when one of you scawaks,  
But he's got to listen when the union talks,  
He'd better, or be mighty lonely come rent  
day.

Your absentee landlord has no ears,  
Just a name on a billboard, out-of-town  
profiteer;  
He'll pass on to the tenants all his expenses,  
Taxes and inflation, and fuel adjustments,  
Damn bureaucrats...

He'll croon his lute that he's goin' broke,  
And we all know that outrageous joke;  
He'll use your rent for a car or yacht,  
No, he don't give a damn if you got a pot  
To cook in...

Now your roof falls in and your pipes get  
stuck,  
You might start thinkin' you're plumb outta  
luck;  
Especially when you're down to your last buck,  
But you can always start singing "Repair &  
Deduct"  
Money takes, money swears...

There's just one thing to bear in mind,  
Gotta keep your vigilance all the time;  
Gotta town slumlords got no respect,  
They pass on expenses and keep you in debt;  
All of which, I guess, just goes to show  
The biggest robberies are made with a  
fountain pen, you know...

But out in New York City, here's what we  
find,  
And out in Boston, here's what we find,  
And out in San Francisco, here's what we  
find,  
And out in Detroit City, here's what we  
find:  
That if you don't let redbaiting break you  
up,  
If you don't let stool pigeons break you up,  
If you don't let legal harrassment break you  
up,  
And if you work like Hell and stand united,  
You'll win - what I mean is take it easy,  
But take it!

Tenants All Over The City

Tenants all over the city, Hear the words that I say:  
 Stop landlord harassment And J-51 give-aways.  
 Tenants all over the city, Don't let them put you out in the  
 street; with- hold your rent if you have to, de-  
 mand that they give you good heat, Fight back, for S, R, O rights,  
 Fight back, we won't be moved; Fight back, pub-lic housing for all;  
 Fight back, and spread the news, Spread the news; That tenants all over the  
 city Are arming themselves with their rights To stop coop con-  
 versions and goons who call in the night, Fight back, Mit-  
 chell-Lama, in-rem, Fight back, mit- chell-Lama, in-rem, Fight back, our  
 homes are too dear; Fight back, and jail the crooks, Jail the crooks,  
 Tenants all over the city, EV'RY color, re-li-gion and  
 age, Or-gan-ize your friends and your neigh-bors, watch the  
 an-ger and fear be-come rage, Watch the an-ger and fear -  
 Be - come rage!

Here we have an upbeat contemporary organizing song, replete with NYC housing is-sues, and clear in its message. Elyse Crystall has worked long hours as an orga-nizer with the Metropolitan Council on Housing, has a compelling voice, and a gift for translating experience into song.



Tenants all over the city,  
 Hear the words that I say:  
 Stop landlord harassment  
 And J-51 give-aways.\*

Tenants all over the city,  
 Don't let them put you out in the streets;  
 Withhold your rent if you have to,  
 Demand that they give you good heat.

Fight back, for SR0 rights,\*\*  
 Fight back, we won't be moved;  
 Fight back, public housing for all;  
 Fight back, and spread the news,  
 Spread the news:

That tenants all over the city,  
 Are arming themselves with their rights,  
 To stop co-op conversions  
 And goons who call in the night.

Fight back, Mitchell-Lama\*\*\*, in-rem\*\*\*\*,  
 Fight back, make them open their books;  
 Fight back, our homes are too dear;  
 Fight back, and jail the crooks,  
 Jail the crooks.

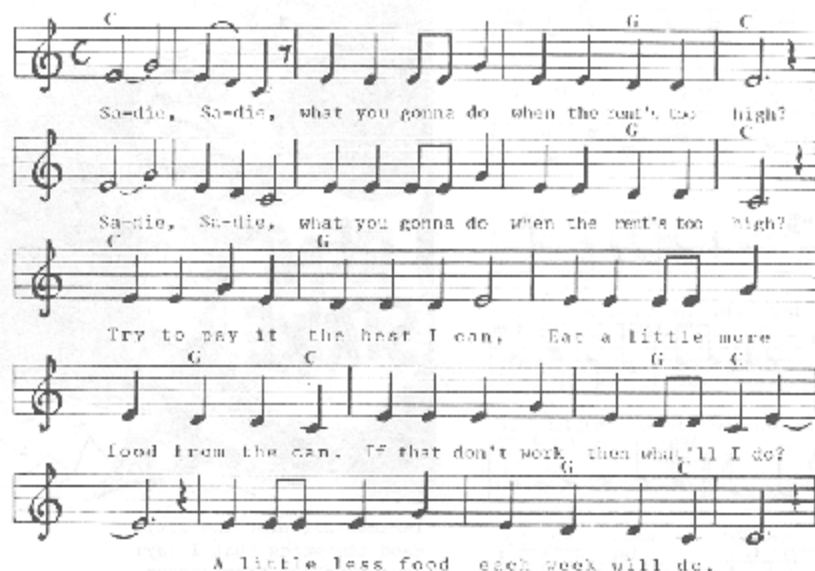
Tenants all over the city,  
 Every color, religion and age;  
 Organize your friends and your neighbors,  
 Watch the anger and fear become rage,  
 Watch the anger and fear -  
 Become rage!

\* A NY tax abatement program for major renovations.  
 \*\* Single Room Occupancy.  
 \*\*\* NY subsidized moderate-income apart-ment buildings.  
 \*\*\*\* NYC administered buildings taken over because of unpaid taxes.

## Sadie

Sandee Swartek lives in Detroit, is a hot mandolin player, and sings feminist and labor songs. This song was written while she resided at Palmer Park, a Detroit apartment neighborhood, where she became involved in tenant organizing. Her song reflects the dilemma of older tenants on fixed income facing escalating rents.

©, 1982 Sandee Swartek



Sadie, Sadie, what you gonna do when the rent's too high?

Sadie, Sadie, what you gonna do when the rent's too high?

Try to pay it the best I can, Eat a little more food from the can. If that don't work, then what'll I do?

A little less food each week will do.

Chorus: Sadie, Sadie, what you gonna do when the rent's too high?  
Sadie, Sadie, what you gonna do when the rent's too high?

Try to pay it the best I can,  
Eat a little more food from the can,  
If that don't work then what'll I do?  
A little less food each week will do...

Tell the boss I need a raise,  
Tell the boss I'll work extra days;  
If that don't work then what'll I do?  
Clean houses on Saturdays, that's what I'll do...

Tell the landlord I can't pay,  
Tell the landlord to go away;  
Call my neighbors, what'll I do?  
We'll strike together when the rent is due...

Words & Music by Mindy Meyers

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# The Jolly Tenants Union

This amazing song comes out of a long organizing effort by Boston-area apartment tenants against their landlord, the Hamilton Realty Company. Initial efforts were spurred on by rent increases, illegal lease clauses, racial discrimination, employment of a convicted arsonist as a property manager, and much, much more! Even informants were paid to infiltrate the tenants' union. Martha Koester, the composer of this song, worked hard as a resident tenant organizer. She is a good example of how individuals can effectively use their songwriting talents to communicate their sense of outrage to others, and reinforce solidarity. The song is modeled after "Haltzing Matilda."



© 1982 Martha Koester

Once a jol-ly ten-ant had to pay a rent in-crease, He  
 moaned and he cried, "How can that be?" And he sang as he  
 paid an - other fifty dol-lars more, blood-suck-ing  
 land-lords are ru-in-ing me blood-suck-ing land-lords,  
 blood-suck-ing land-lords, blood-suck-ing land-lords are  
 ru-in-ing me! And he sang as he paid an - other fifty  
 dol-lars more, blood-suck-ing land-lords are ru-in-ing me.

Once a jolly tenant had to pay a rent increase,  
 He moaned and he cried, "How can that be?"  
 And he sang as he paid another fifty dollars more,  
 Bloodsucking landlords are ruining me!

Chorus: Bloodsucking landlords, bloodsucking landlords,  
 Bloodsucking landlords are ruining me!  
 And he sang as he paid another fifty dollars more,  
 Bloodsucking landlords are ruining me!

"Alas," said the tenant, "That's two-thirds of all  
 I earn,  
 Maybe I'll rake it if I don't eat."  
 And he sang as he paid another fifty dollars more,  
 Bloodsucking landlords are ruining me!

There's six legged roommates who huddle underneath  
 the stove,  
 December, the temperature's forty-three;  
 With all these conditions, the place just isn't  
 worth that much,  
 Bloodsucking landlords are ruining me!

Twice broken into, the landlord won't change the  
 lock,  
 The burglars in Brighton all have my key;  
 My backdoor, the burglars can enter with a credit  
 card,  
 Bloodsucking landlords are ruining me!

Then the angry tenant visited his neighbors all,  
 Saying, "Fellow tenants, don't you see?  
 If we had a union, then we could bargain for the  
 rent,  
 Bloodsucking landlords are ruining me!

Then the jolly landlord tried to bust the union up,  
 Sent in paid informers one, two, three;  
 "Who's in the union, and what will they be doing  
 next?"  
 Bloodsucking landlords are ruining me!

Down with the landlords who hire convicted  
 arsonists,  
 Down with informants who rat for a fee;  
 Up with the union, join the fight for rent control,  
 Til bloodsucking landlords stop ruining me!

Bloodsucking landlords, bloodsucking landlords,  
 Bloodsucking landlords stop ruining me!  
 Up with the union, join the fight for rent control,  
 Til bloodsucking landlords stop ruining me!

## Arson's Just Business

Ba-by, you won't be-lieve it, How some-one could come around And  
 take our house, Just burn it down. The  
 land-lord's stand-ing by the fire-trucks O-ver there with the po-lice, O-ver  
 there the kids are stand-ing in a pud-dle. Hell, it's night-time on the street.  
 They say they're sor-ry, There's no-thing they can do. It  
 hap-pens all the time, L A, Chi-cago, New York, it's no-thing new;  
 They all got in-sur-ance And that's the luck-y thing, 'Cause  
 ain't no way to catch the bas-tards, Come and done this thing.  
 They'll burn down the whole dam city, man, Get paid their share,  
 What the hell's the dif-fer-ence, ain't no rea-son for us to be stay-ing here.  
 Ain't no jobs left, Just booze and junkies and wel-fare.  
 Ar-son's just busi-ness And busi-ness it don't care.

Few things are more terrifying to people than an outbreak of arson in their neighborhood. This song was written in response to my complaint that while arson was alive and well in many major cities, I hadn't come across a single protest song. Paul Emery, a singer-songwriter from Michigan, rose to the challenge. Emery, whose house did burn down once and whose vintage Gibson guitar recovered from extensive third degree burns, says:

Losing your place is bad when it's an accident but it's especially hard to deal with if you know some fucker's got paid to do it and that he's just a minor pawn in the economic arrangement that's responsible for you standing in the street.

This song describes how you feel as you begin to explain to your partner, or to someone else you love, that someone just burned down your house and it makes perfect sense.

© 1982 Paul Emery

Baby, you won't believe it,  
 How someone could come around  
 And take our house,  
 Just burn it down,  
 The landlord's standing by the firetrucks,  
 Over there with the police,  
 Over there the kids are standing in a puddle.  
 Hell, it's nighttime on the street.

They say they're sorry,  
 There's nothin' they can do,  
 It happens all the time,  
 LA, Chicago, New York, it's nothin' new;  
 They all got insurance  
 And that's the lucky thing,  
 'Cause ain't no way to catch the bastards,  
 Come and done this thing.

Chorus: They'll burn down the whole damn city, man,  
 Get paid their share,  
 What the hell's the difference,  
 Ain't no reason for us to be staying here,  
 Ain't no jobs left,  
 Just booze and junkies and welfare,  
 Arson's just business  
 And business it don't care.

And really the building  
 Wasn't worth much anyway;  
 You remember how the wind blew, baby,  
 And how the curtains you put up would sway?  
 Shit, it got so cold sometimes,  
 We'd all sleep together in one bed;  
 Burnt up everything we had in the house, baby,  
 I'm just glad no one's dead.

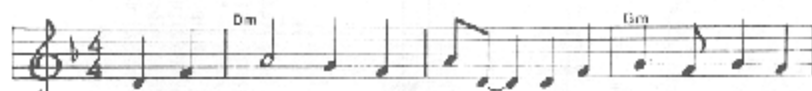
When you come home, baby,  
 We can drive on down the street;  
 Of course by then all the ashes  
 Will be covered up by weeds;  
 The thing is, it really scares me,  
 All the hope and love that burnt up there,  
 Thirty years of our life,  
 We tried to raise a family there...

# You Can't Just Take Our Homes Away

The involuntary displacement of the elderly, minorities and other low-income people from existing housing became a major organizing issue in the late 1970's. This song describes the strong attachment people have for their neighborhoods, the planners and speculators who threaten them, and their determination to fight back. The song was adapted by Tony Heriza from Holly Near's "Mountain Song" and further revised by me.



© 1979 Tony Heriza, 1981 Charles Ipcar



I have lived in this ci-ty, As my mo-ther did be-



fore me, and you can't just take my home a-way With-out us



fight-ing. No, you can't just take my home a-way.



plans, Try your damndest to ig-nore us, But you etc.



-place us, Ther you have-n't seen our fa-cies, No, you etc.

I have lived in this city,  
As my mother did before me,  
And you can't just take my home away  
Without me fighting,  
No, you can't just take my home away.

Well, you make your city plans,  
Try your damndest to ignore us,  
But you can't just take our homes away  
Without us fighting,  
No, you can't just take our homes away.

These old buildings raised our children,  
And 'tho it's true they need repairing,  
You can't just take our homes away...

We have lived in this city,  
Through hard times we've helped each other,  
And you can't just take our homes away...

You drive a big Mercedes car,  
You have a fancy education,  
But you can't just take our homes away...

And if you think you can displace us,  
Then you haven't seen our faces,  
No, you can't just take our homes away...

We have lived in this city,  
Ties are deep and they are many,  
And you can't just take our homes away  
Without us fighting,  
No, you can't just take our homes away  
Not with us watching,  
No, you can't just take our homes away!



# Gentrification Blues

"Gentrification" describes a special form of low-income displacement, one in which lower income people are forced out of their neighborhoods as higher income people buy and renovate their buildings. Judith Levine and Louie Lisen wrote this blues in 1980, drawn from their experience working with the Anti-Displacement Committee of Southern Hill/Coventry, Brooklyn, New York.

C. 1982 Judith Levine & Louie Lisen

I woke up this morn-ing, I walked out my door, I  
 noticed my neigh-bors weren't there any more, I've got the  
 gen-tri-fi-ca-tion blues. When I  
 asked where they'd gone to, That's when I heard the bad news,  
 You never got high-er-class ice cream and the New York Times, 'Cause the  
 real es-tate a-gents brought in their own kind. But good-  
 bye to bus-let-o and the people who drink it, Good-  
 bye to yo-to-ga-tion and the people who drink it.

Bridge A:

I woke up this morning, I walked out my door,  
 I noticed my neighbors weren't there any more,  
 I've got the gen-tri-fi-ca-tion blues.  
 When I asked where they gone to,  
 That's when I heard the bad news.

Bridge B:

They call it Torrey Hill to make it sound classy,  
 Used to be Coxsack and they said it was trashy,  
 But some folks still remember this neighborhood  
 When the rents were lower and the living was good,  
 Well, I looked in the windows, I looked in the  
 doors -  
 They were hanging up the chandeliers and sanding  
 the floors,  
 I got the gen-tri-fi-ca-tion blues,  
 The rents sign said "\$550, one floor through."

Bridge A:

Now we've got Haagen-Dazs ice cream and the New  
 York Times  
 'Cause the real estate agents brought in their  
 own kind,  
 But good-bye to Justelo and the people who drink  
 it,  
 Good-bye to integration and the people who drink  
 it.

Bridge A:

When the brownstones came, they said they liked  
 integration,  
 To live with other races and have neighborly  
 relations.  
 I got the gen-tri-fi-ca-tion blues,  
 Now it's to hell with good relations  
 If it doesn't raise the property values.

They say that a brownstone is the people's housing  
 But what about the folks who can't afford a hundred  
 thousand?  
 I got the gen-tri-fi-ca-tion blues,  
 They're living somewhere else now,  
 They're the many who've been kicked out by the few,  
 I woke up this morning, I looked next door -  
 There was one family living where there once were  
 four.  
 I got the gen-tri-fi-ca-tion blues,  
 I wonder where my neighbors went 'cause I know  
 I'll soon be moving there too.

Somebody said, "Where will we go?"  
 'Cause there ain't no place to live 'round here  
 anymore.  
 I got the gen-tri-fi-ca-tion blues,  
 Guess we gotta fight back  
 'Cause we ain't got nothin' to lose.



# We're Gonna Stay

What makes this song refreshing is its positive commitment to neighborhood life and the willingness to challenge the forces of displacement. Mike Rawson has this to say about his song:

"We're Gonna Stay" was written for the 1980 Housing Conference sponsored by the California Housing Action and Information Network, California's state-wide organization of housing groups. It reflects on the relation between plant closing and neighborhood disintegration and expresses a determination to halt both.



© 1980 Mike Rawson, Fuse Music

Red brick walls, leaky window frames, A place to sleep and get  
 out of the rain. But it's much more than that, more than a  
 roof and a floor. It's shelter for my family and a  
 whole lot more. It's the bus on the corner that  
 takes me to work, It's the store down the street where I  
 know the clerk. It's the schoolyard where my kids can raise their  
 voices loud. It's here I start each day and end it proud.  
 Yes, I think I'm gonna stay this time. I've  
 paid for this place, why shouldn't I call it mine?  
 We've paid your taxes and we've bought your wine, Land-  
 lord, this time we're gonna stay.

Red brick walls, leaky window frames,  
 A place to sleep and get out of the rain  
 But it's much more than that - more than a roof and a door -  
 It's shelter for my family but a whole lot more.

It's the bus on the corner that gets me to work,  
 And the store down the street where I know the clerk;  
 It's the park where my kids can raise their voices loud,  
 It's where I start my day and end it proud.

Chorus: Yes, I think I'm gonna stay this time.  
 I've paid for this place, why shouldn't I call it mine?  
 We've paid your taxes and we've bought your wine,  
 Landlord, this time we're gonna stay

Yet now I've got a notice sayin' I got to move -  
 Pay rent or leave - I'm supposed to choose;  
 And so 'ave my friends, all over town  
 Because we're all laid off and the plant's shut down.

But we don't want to move and even if we did,  
 We can't because no landlord will rent to folks with kids;  
 And if we can't pay rent now, we couldn't pay it anywhere then,  
 So we've organized ourselves and vowed to never move again...

## Together, We Can Move Mountains

This song was put together by Beverly Grant, one of the founding members of the NYC music group **The Human Condition**. It celebrates the victory of a massive rent strike at Co-op City:

In 1975-76 a rent strike at Co-op City in the Bronx involved upwards of 60,000 people, most of whom had never participated in any type of organized struggle. I was asked to write some music for a film relating to this successful strike, and in listening to taped interviews with rent strikers, was moved by the statement of a young Puerto Rican woman who said, "Together we can move mountains."

C. 1976 Beverly Grant, Human Condition Music

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of eight staves of music with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "To - ge - ther we can move moun - tains, A - lone we can't move a - ny - thing at all. You know, to - ge - ther we can move moun - tains, A - lone we can't move a - ny - thing at all. You know, peo - ple, some - times we des - pair when we think we're a - lone. And no - thing's gonna change. We got step - ped on, a - bus - ed, ig - nored and con - fused, Made to suf - fer and told we're to blame. But to -

Chorus: Together we can move mountains,  
Alone we can't move at all  
Together we can move mountains,  
Alone we can't move at all.

You know, people, sometimes we despair  
When we think we're alone and nothing's  
gonna change  
We get stepped on, abused, ignored and  
confused,  
Made to suffer and told we're to blame...

The ones who get rich, while we scrape  
to get by,  
Know our unity means their defeat;  
So they set us against one another,  
sister and brother, color 'gainst color,  
Keeping us weak; they're keeping us weak...

From the smallest seed a mighty tree can  
grow,  
With its roots planted firmly in the  
ground;  
We've got to reach for the sun, only  
then will we know,  
All the love and the beauty and the life  
to be found...



# We Ain't Gonna Move

Luci Murphy, who wrote this song, describes her work as "organizing people to sing and enjoy life, and rally one another in defiance of landlords, marshals, managers, and other agents of greed." As she explains, "This song was written while riding on a bus to a tenant and housing convention in southeast Washington. It takes so long to get anywhere in Washington on a bus that you have ample time to write as many verses as you choose - but I only wrote two!" The tune is adapted from a traditional country blues, sung by Rev. Gary Davis, called "You Gotta Move."

© 1978 Luci Murphy

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves of music with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "We ain't gonna move, we ain't gonna move. When we hold to-gether, we make our-selves strong. Together we stay here, right where we be-long. We ain't gonna move, we ain't gonna move. This ci-ty is move."

Chorus: We ain't gonna move, we ain't gonna move,  
When we hold together, we make ourselves  
strong.  
Together we stay here, right where we  
belong,  
We ain't gonna move, we ain't gonna move!

This city is where my children were born,  
But the landlord says children can't stay  
in my home;  
Somebody please tell me where children  
belong,  
We ain't gonna move, we ain't gonna move...

The landlord has troubles, the landlord  
has woes,  
Maintenance costs money, ev'rybody knows;  
He contributes so much money to the mayor's  
race,  
He can't fix up my place and I ain't gonna  
pay no rent increase...



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