

Further to my letter of Dec. 20, 1966. I still maintain that slums are people, not brick or mortar
S. A. Boesinger

ANOTHER WATTS, SOME SAY

Tenants Pledge Rent Strike

By D. J. R. BRUCKNER

Los Angeles Times News Service

ST. LOUIS, Feb. 4—Almost 2,000 tenant families of the largest public housing development here are preparing for a rent strike March 1 against the Public Housing Authority in an effort to force major improvements in living conditions.

Tenant spokesmen who set the strike deadline said the alternative to over-all upgrading of the huge development is widespread rioting. Tenants referred to "another Watts" and some teen-agers told a reporter, "It's coming, man, it's coming big!"

Involved in the dispute are the Pruitt homes and the Igoe apartments which form a single housing complex about two miles from downtown St. Louis. They are operated by the housing authority for low-income tenants.

Representing the tenants is the Pruitt - Igoe Neighborhood Corp., a community group organized last summer by the Urban League and the War on Poverty to upgrade the community.

Housing authority officials and members of the city's board of aldermen agree that conditions at the development have deteriorated rapidly in recent years. But the housing authority is required to operate entirely from rent receipts, and the officials say they do not have the money to make needed repairs.

RECENTLY, they promised to begin major repairs in the spring, but tenant spokesmen said work must begin immediately if the strike is to be avoided.

When it was built 13 years ago, Pruitt - Igoe was widely praised as one of the best public housing facilities in the na-

tion. Today, it is the worst slum in St. Louis' Negro ghetto.

Pruitt-Igoe is 43 similar-looking buildings, each with 11 floors, set in a tract of 30 square blocks. The land around them is strewn with broken bottles, empty cans and piles of debris.

Inside, the buildings are worse than outside. Each building has one elevator which stops only at the first, fourth, seventh and 10th floors. A reporter went into four buildings before he found an elevator that worked.

The hallway walls are gray cement stone blocks. They never have been painted. Most of the floors also are gray. They are commonly filled with piles of trash and broken glass. At night, they are overrun by rats and mice and bugs.

The stench in some buildings is overwhelming; many ventilating fans do not work. Broken windows are common, and many refrigerators and drain pipes do not work. A number

of kitchen stoves no longer work because tenants over-used them to heat their cold apartments.

BANDS OF roving youths jam the elevators, break laundry machines and windows and knock out hallway lights.

About 10,000 people live in Pruitt-Igoe, and all but one of the 2,000 families is Negro. More than 60 per cent of the families have no male head of household and an equal percentage are on public relief.

The tenant corporation's demands include adequate heat and hot water immediately, immediate repair of broken stoves, refrigerators, windows and elevators, and regular police protection to replace the two guards assigned by the housing authority to the entire project.

It also wants a janitor assigned to each building, contending that the present assignment of one for two buildings is insufficient. It wants immediate

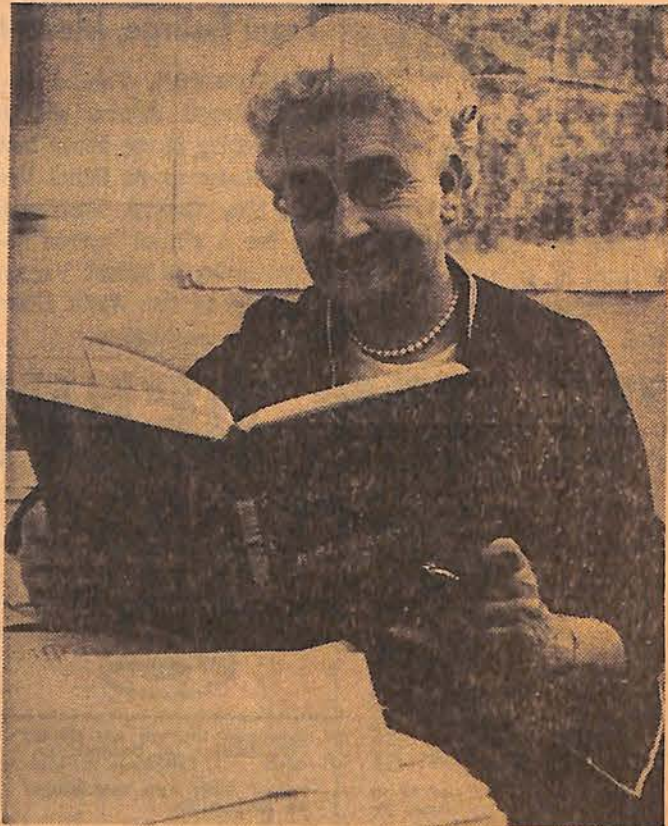
attention given to work orders placed by tenants which the corporation says have been ignored for months.

All these things, the corporation says, must be done on a crash program.

Eugene Porter, corporation president, claims his corporation represents 1,900 of the 2,000 tenant families and could enforce its rent strike easily. The housing authority says a rent strike would, in fact, cut off even the meager operating funds it now has for the project.

Hayes' Parties Quiet

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4 (AP) — The most sedate gatherings ever held at the White House were perhaps the mid-Victorian hymn sings and prayers to which President and Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes asked friends on Sunday evenings. The Hayeses did not serve alcoholic beverages even at state dinners.



DR. BEARD PREPARING HER REPORT
She Pen Pal to Several Hundred Centenarians

THEY DELIGHT RESEARCHER