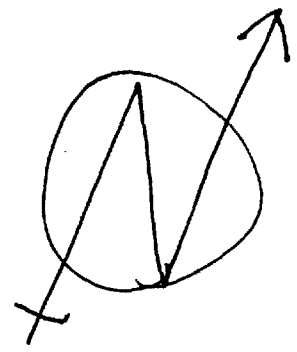
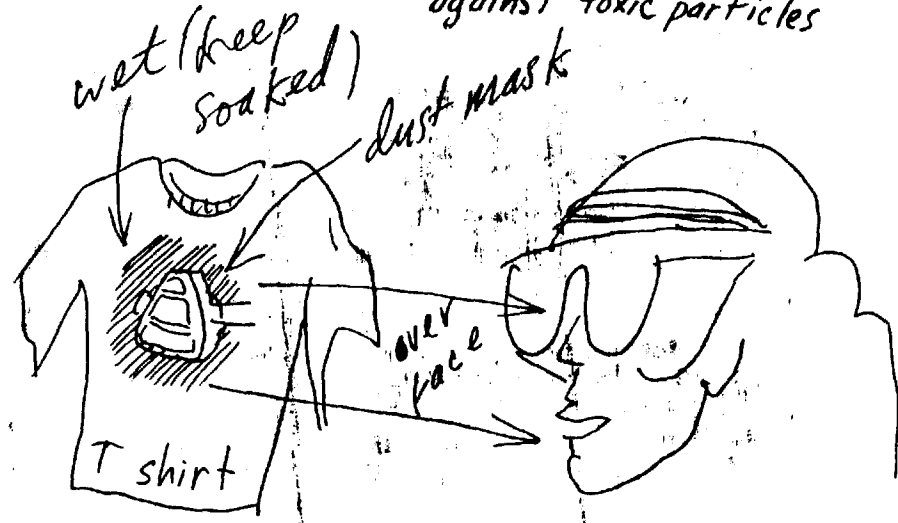


wet T-shirt, place  
over nose + mouth  
place dust mask  
over T-shirt + keep  
T-shirt wet

Minimal dust protection  
against toxic particles



Dedicated to Eleanor Bumpurs

Squat  
ZINE

**ORGANIZATIONS**

These are some organizations which can be helpful:

- ACORN .....(718) 789 5600  
(Assoc. of Community Orgs. for Reform Now)
- Center for Constitutional Rights... (212) 614 6464
- Church of Saint John the Divine..... 316 7400
- Harlem Fight Back..... 831 6561
- Coalition for a Moratorium on Evictions
- Harlem Reclamation Project..... 966 1907  
    Brooklyn Reclamation Project
- Jersey City Reclamation Project
- Legal Aid ..... 227 2755
- Metropolitan Council on Housing..... 693 0550
- National Lawyers' Guild ..... 260 1360
- Radio station WBAI..... 279 3400
- Sanitation Department, Infomation..... 265 7550
- Riverside Church..... 222 5900
- Self Help Works Consumer Co-op ..... 749 0602
- Sterling Community Service Foundation. 580 7300
- White Lung Association ..... 619 3689

Mailing address:  
 Box X  
 c/o Room 202  
 339 Lafayette st.  
 NYC 10012

and done, as many people with cameras should be taking pictures as possible and tape recording too. If they want to hassle you about it, just politely refuse to stop, they are public officials and you have a legal right to make a record of all that takes place.

If the cops ask to speak to your leaders tell them you don't have any. If they ask you if you're in charge say no, nobody is in charge. Never admit to having leaders even if you do.

For more information see the handbook on eviction available from the Coalition for a Moratorium on Evictions.

If all this sounds like a big deal and maybe more than you can handle, don't worry about it. When you and a few friends move into an empty old building and camp out there, it will probably be a quite a while before you have to face anything like this so don't hassle yourself about it. There's a lot of us out here who've been through all this, not even as well prepared as you, and we still ain't moved!

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you on the spot. If you haven't received any previous notice you're entitled to a court appearance. Notices that name "John and Jane Doe et al" or "anyone living at such and such an address" or "anyone living on this or that floor, or this or that apartment" are only legitimate if they have made every effort to find out the legal name of each person living in the building and haven't been able to. So, if they have seriously tried to reach and get the name of each person in your building, you will have heard from them plenty already. That means if they show up with a notice like that, and you haven't heard from them before, you should tell them you're not going anywhere until your case has been decided in court.

If they have notice that the building is going to be *evacuated* for reasons of safety, you'll have to get the help of professionals to provide a plan showing how you would repair the problem for which the evacuation order was issued. You'll probably have just a few days to get the judge to stay the order of evacuation, so you should get on the phone right away. ACORN may be the best place to start.

Since crack houses and shooting galleries are often set up in abandoned buildings, the authorities will try to use this as a pretext to get squatters out without due process. Keep drugs out of your building and watch out for setups.

At any sign of trouble with the cops someone should be contacting all your friends and supporters to get as many people on the scene as possible. This will keep the cops on their toes and they will be less likely to pull anything they're not supposed to. Sometimes they will even give up and go away. Its best just to be firm and reasonable with them unless you're ready for a fight, because they probably are.

If the cops get through your front door get as legal as you can with them. Write down badge numbers, demand to see all their ID's write down their names etc. Have witnesses to everything that is said

less you have checked with a lawyer to make sure it won't mess you up. Some you might not have to answer and it will mess the city up if you don't go, but usually it will mean problems for you if you don't go. So get the advice of a lawyer or a housing activist. If it doesn't have your name on it or says John or Jane Doe or something else, definitely don't answer it. But do take it to the clerk of the court and put it on record that nobody with the names on the notice live at your address. They might try to get you to identify yourself, but don't do it. You should take any notice you get to a tenants rights organizer or housing lawyer for their advice.

If cops or bureaucrats come to your place you should be able to get rid of them unless they have a lawful eviction order (signed by a judge, with your right names and address). If all they've got is a notice to appear, you have time to contact the organizations listed after this chapter to help you defend yourselves in court. In the mean time you can fix up your place, especially any exterior or first floor code violations. This will help change your legal standing and make it harder for them to win against you in court. This will give you more time, so you can fix up more etc. etc.

If people in your building start getting eviction notices, be sure there's always somebody with proof of residence who hasn't yet been named on a notice. This way, if it comes down to eviction they won't be able to seal up the building since there will be somebody living there that they can't evict. That means that after the eviction is carried out and the cops are gone, you can move back in. Anyone who isn't named on the eviction notice, who has proof of residence, cannot be evicted. They are entitled to receive notice, and to court appearances where the case must be decided by a judge. If you haven't been served notice they can't evict you. If they show up with a notice which names you they can't just evict

## INTRODUCTION

The housing situation in NYC rapidly becomes worse and worse. Abandoned buildings deteriorate with every winter. Low income housing and homesteading programs have disappeared along with our elected officials' promises. Now is the time to take the situation into our own hands. What we're saying is that housing policy is dishonest and an insult to anyone living in welfare hotels, crowded conditions or in the park. These laws are put together by people who can only be described as common criminals in nice clothes who live in two or three homes. They would never dream of living in the conditions that we are used to. These people profit from our misery. They don't have one grain of sympathy for us, our children, or the sometimes unbearable conditions we are forced to live in.

This book has been put together to help people with little or no money find a solution to their housing problems. We hope that after reading it people will look at an abandoned building in a totally new light. You might think that living in the conditions we describe in this book is pretty crude. We hope you won't be forced to. But if it sounds better than what you've got now, we hope you'll be inspired to give it a try.

We will go through a step by step guide on how to find your building, what to look for and the cheapest and easiest ways of making it comfortable. Once you are in the building you will have to deal with the law eventually, so we have included a section covering some basics to keep them from messing you up. We aim in this book to show methods which you can use to live more comfortably and safely than on the street. We believe that even if you have no money at all and don't want to have anything to do with other people, that you will still find the

ideas in this book useful. It may be less work and in some ways more comfortable to live in a shelter. However, we believe that if you can manage to take an empty building, you will have a home with more self respect and more independence than just about anyone. You can get off the street or out of the shelter and make a decent home for yourself very simply. If you do, we hope that you will use whatever political, legal, or other means you can to keep the powers that be from making you homeless again.

Mayor Koch has said that if you can't afford to live here you should get out. Let's give him our answer: We're taking homes for ourselves here, Koch and his cronies can like it or leave themselves. You can improve a vacant lot with out being busted for trespassing -- insist on your right to squat on unused public property.

Here are some some facts<sup>1</sup> to consider if you are not sure whether it is right for you to make a home for yourself in a building that you don't "legally" own.

- Two-thirds of New Yorkers pay 40% or even more of their income for housing.
- While most of the top quarter of the income scale pay less than 40%.
- 100,000 people are homeless in New York
- the city government owns 65% of the vacant properties in Harlem and other areas of the city
- 36,000 apartments were converted to co-ops and condos between 1981 and 1984.
- 27% of homeless people were forced out of their homes by eviction.
- 310,000 units have been emptied by abandonment, disinvestment and arson.

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<sup>1</sup>Figures provided by the Coalition for a Moratorium on Evictions.

You can ask for a postponement because your lawyer is unable to appear in court the day your case is to be heard. And so on. You could have quite a few postponements before your case is even heard. Since they can easily get bogged down in lengthy eviction proceedings, which they may lose, HPD tries to get other city departments to throw squatters out. But if those departments can see you've worked to make your place as safe and sanitary as possible, they may be inclined to tell HPD "They're your problem, you get them out".

**Welfare and kids.** You cannot be denied welfare because of squatting. It is also not legal for the Bureau of Child Welfare to take your children away simply because you are squatting. Plenty of people live in apartments that are in terrible condition where they pay rent, without having their children taken away from them. Since there is so much administrative arbitrariness in both of these areas, persistence and legal advice may be needed to make sure that your rights are respected.

**Cops and bureaucrats.** Don't let any one from the city government in your building unless they have a warrant. period. no exceptions. Don't open the door to them, you don't have to. If they have a warrant make them put it through the mail slot or under the door so you can see it first. You should not open the door to them unless you intend to let them inside, because they will try to intimidate you or just push you aside. Don't accept any registered mail unless you can see it's not from the city government. Don't sign for anything unless you're sure you know what it is. Don't identify yourself or answer any questions. You don't have to accept any kind of notices, if they want they can slide them under the door, but don't open the door to them or tell them who you are.

If you do receive any kind of legal notice with your name on it, don't miss the court date un-

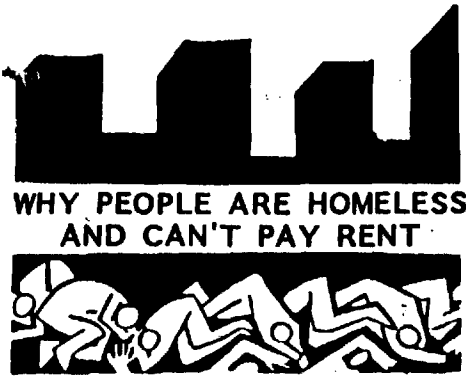
tell people that homesteaders and rent paying tenants have a common interest in stopping gentrification. Once you get pretty well organized you can go to your local Community Board to seek their support. In any case its probably worthwhile to check out whatever housing and tenants organizations exist in your area. Most important, keep in touch with other squats in the neighborhood.

Its good if you can take photos of the work you do on the building. Save receipts for any materials you buy and try to keep some sort of record of the hours and work you put in.

**Code violations.** Obviously any building you can squat is going to be full of code violations and there's no way you can correct them all without a lot of work. But you can minimize the hassle the law might give you about them. Building Code violations deal with conditions that make the building structurally unsafe, Fire Code violations with fire hazards and hazards to escaping the building in a fire, and Health Code violations with conditions that make the building unsanitary. Note the measures mentioned in other sections of this book (FIRE SAFETY; TOILETS, WATER & COOKING and EMERGENCY REPAIRS).

The point here is not that you can meet the codes, but you may be able to keep the different city departments from throwing you out over them. The Fire, Health and Building departments can order a building evacuated and there's not much you can do about it. But the department that will really want to get rid of you is Housing Preservation and Development. They can't just throw you out either, they have to prove in court that you have no right to be there. You have a right to all the protections of the legal process of eviction. You can ask for a postponement of your case because you haven't been able to get a lawyer. You can ask for a postponement because your lawyer has been unable to prepare your case.





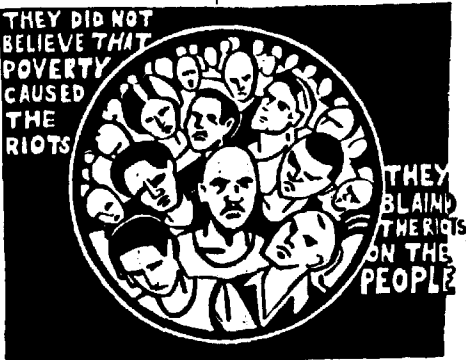
WHY PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS AND CAN'T PAY RENT

A COMMISSION WAS SET-UP TO STUDY THE RIOTS.



1968 - INNER CITY RIOTS

CONSISTING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MILITARY, BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT



THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THAT POVERTY CAUSED THE RIOTS

THEY BLAMED THE RIOTS ON THE PEOPLE



If nothing works<sup>3</sup>, try to get your mail delivered to a friend on the block and hope for a new mail person on your route. Maybe the present one will get friendlier after you've been around a while and fixed the place up a bit. In any case, mail sent to you at your address will be held for you at the local Post Office, where you can pick it up. Such mail should be equally good proof of residence. Get library cards, swimming pool cards and other ID with your address too. Don't show ID or proof of residence unless you need to, don't give out any information you don't have to. Just save your proof of residence in case it becomes necessary.

Make the front of your building look as much like an ordinary building as possible. When you start to have too much garbage to throw it in the trash barrel on the corner, you can get sanitation department pickups even if the regular truck won't take your stuff. You have to call their bulk removals number, and they'll pick up anything in bags and more. The guys who've made the pickups on our street have been real helpful. Working on the front will also give you a chance to hang out with the neighbors while you're painting, or fixing your stoop, etc. They'll respect you when they see you're working on your place.

Go to the block association meetings and seek their support. Although the block association may be only merchants and professionals, if they see you're making good use of the building and because of you there's no shooting gallery in the building, they might want to help you. If there is no block association you may want to try starting one. You can

<sup>3</sup>If you are unable to get mail delivered, this may enable you to get an eviction case thrown out, since the notice must normally be served by mail. This has worked in one case.



## 7. LEGAL HASSLES

Every effort you can make to show that you have established as normal as possible a residence will be an advantage in dealing with the law. (See NOTE in GETTING IN section.) Operate on the basis that you are a lawful citizen and a legal tenant until it has been decided in court otherwise.

Have mail sent to you at your address. This will help you prove that you live there and that you aren't breaking and entering or trespassing. Make a mail slot in the door and put the address on the door. Observe when mail is usually delivered and hang out when the mail deliverer comes by. Explain that you are living there and that you will be receiving mail. Sometimes they are uncooperative but usually they are friendly enough if you approach them in the same way. If that doesn't work, your route is probably not done by the same person every day, so try to deal with another one until you start to get some mail delivered. If nothing else works, as a last resort try the postmaster at the office for your route. They may tell you that there has to be a mail box with keys, that you're not a legal tenant, don't own the building, etc. Point out that your building isn't a multiple dwelling unit at the present, is undergoing renovation, that all the addressees receiving mail receive it at the same house number without any apartment numbers. Tell them that you are living there and haven't been evicted, so that your legal status as a tenant has not been decided in court. Tell them that that your tenancy is a civil matter between you and the City of New York, not involving the federal government and that your right as a citizen to receive your mail does not depend on the legal status of your residence. Tell them you are a lawful citizen who is taking care of herself and shouldn't be punished by having his postal rights withheld.



## 1. HOW TO FORM A GROUP

This first part is often the trickiest, since a bad, un~~to~~gether group will do more damage to the project than the city government will in many cases. The people you live and work with are more important than the building that you chose. One of the most important aspects of a group is diversity. Every group has its own style, some are more political, some like to party, some like to be real business-like and legal, some are arty, others are just trying to get over and off the street. Whatever your group is like, you should keep in mind that not only do you have to relate to each other, you also have to relate to your community. If your neighborhood is all the same ethnic group as the members of your group, you don't have to worry about diversity. But if your group has only token members of the main ethnic group in the neighborhood, then you could get yourself in some trouble.

A group of people living and working together who all agree on everything cannot exist, someone in the group is always going to have to shelve, give up, or compromise on an idea. As you will be living in the unfamiliar condition of having no landlord, no way of calling in the police to settle your differences, you should give some thought to the kind of people you want to live with.

Once you've decided to squat, its up to you to make the first contact. How you do this depends on your situation. If you live in a welfare hotel or shelter, you will have a readily available supply of people who are in the same situation as you. After studying this book, the next time someone says to you 'god I'm sick of this shit', spring the idea on them. Sit down, have a coffee and go over the pro's and con's of squatting. We're sure you're going to disagree with some of the things we say, just as sure



You can use plastic  
to make tents in your living areas for winter



A propane camp stove with a large tank attached with a hose is very practical and economical. You could also use an ordinary gas stove, they're easy to find on the street. You should be careful to make sure it doesn't leak, and it will work better if you get jets for it that are meant to work with propane. A backpack stove is handy for traveling light and is small enough to hide easily in a building that hasn't been completely secured yet.

**Making it more comfortable.** The Red Cross and some churches will give you blankets or sell them cheaply. When the weather is very cold a tent of any kind around your bed will help keep you warmer. Insulation can be made with old rugs on floors walls and ceilings, other scavenged materials can also be used for this. If no one is living on the floor above you can cover the floor with garbage bags filled with crumpled newspaper to insulate the rooms below.

Newspaper for wall paper can reduce the problem of flaking paint plaster and dust, especially if its painted over.

Windows can be scavenged from construction sites where buildings are being renovated from window suppliers where old windows are left on the street for the taking. Doors can also be got in the same way.

Electricity, water, and other services, can all be provided by a variety of methods which you should be able to discover by using your imagination and contacts with other squatters.

as you will come up with ideas of your own (with enough energy and luck). Communicating with people in this way you will soon find yourself in a group which is seriously considering the option of squatting. We feel that six adults is a big enough group to go into a building (figure out yourselves what "adult" means). If for some reason your group is only two or three people don't be discouraged, go ahead with the project, since once a building is opened, within weeks you'll have people coming around looking for a place.

If for some reason you happen to be isolated, that is, living alone in a hotel, or even in the park, and you can't get the people around you interested in or organized, then don't give up. Remember that this city is full of homeless people and all you need is a few of them to start your group. You could advertise on lamp posts and bulletin boards. For example:

"Wanted:  
People interested in Homesteading  
Contact \_\_\_\_\_."

(Some squatters call themselves homesteaders when dealing with the public, but in many areas no one understands what this means.) The groups listed at the back of this book may help you make contacts. We have found that a set of rules is a must for any new group. The rules should be discussed in detail and agreed on by all concerned. They should be written down, since verbal agreements tend to get pretty vague after a few months. Here is one set of house rules you can think about if you need ideas for your own:

- No hard drugs
- No violence
- No stealing

The first three rules can get you thrown out if you break them.<sup>2</sup>

- Every member must work a minimum of \_\_\_ hours per month on the common areas of the building. Jobs may include childcare and other non-construction work. What work people do depends on their abilities.
- Every member must pay \$\_\_\_ per month to a construction fund for the common areas of the building: roof, stairs, plumbing, electricity, etc.
- The construction funds should be deposited in a joint account (requiring at least two signatures to get money out). The name on the account should be something like "The 937 E. 685th st. Homestead Association.
- All new members must go through a trial period working on the building with old members for one month, and then must be accepted as a member by agreement of all of the other members.

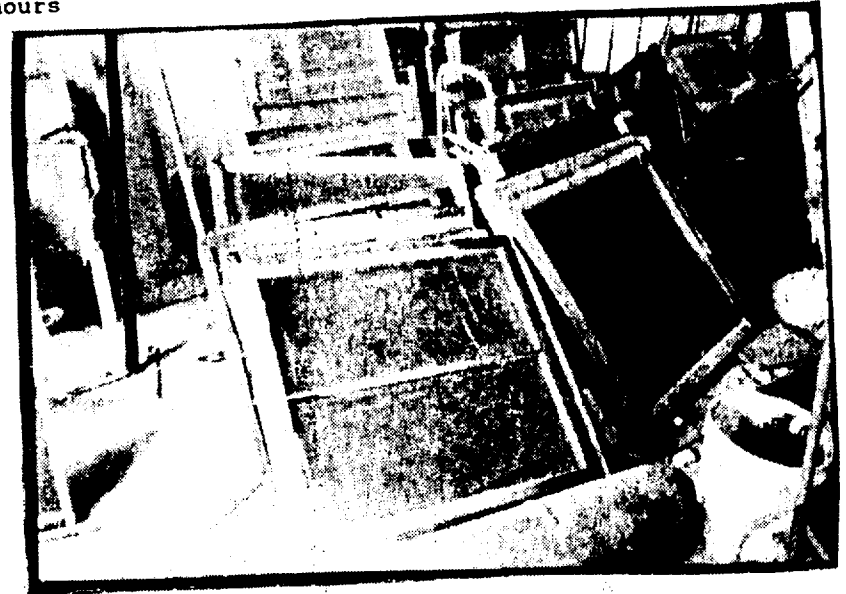
We want to emphasize again that these rules are our own, and you will probably need to adapt them to your own circumstances. We also hope people will keep in mind the cruel wave of evictions which has made so many people homeless when they consider whether or not some offense is serious enough to throw a member out.

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<sup>2</sup>Remember that squatters have no legal right to throw anyone out or evict them.



these doors, windows and window gates were found on the street and collected by a couple of people in less than two hours



best. You will need something to set the pot on so it won't rest directly on the burner. You can place a grill (an old refrigerator shelf will do) on top of some bricks. Or you could also place the burner can inside a larger can, say the burner is a beer can, you could put it inside a coffee can. The larger can should have holes punched around the top with a can opener so that when you put a pot on top the burner won't be sealed off from the air. Punch holes around the bottom rim of the can also to help the flow of air. You may find that holes around the top of the burner can are also needed. The beer can sits inside the coffee can and your pot sits on top of the coffee can. To fire it up you pour alcohol on the cloth until its soaked and light it (use ordinary rubbing alcohol from the drugstore or supermarket). Enclose the stove with a metal reflector to keep in the heat and cut down on drafts, otherwise it will take forever to get anything hot. Use the smallest pot or pan that will hold what you're heating or it will take extra heat and time to heat the larger pot. The stove should burn for about a quarter of an hour before it goes out. Never refuel the stove while its burning, or use anything stronger than 70% isopropyl alcohol, disaster could result. For the same reason recap the alcohol bottle and set it away from the stove before you light it. Depending on how much you use this stove, you could cook for over a week for less than a dollar. If water accumulates in the gauze material, just take it out and squeeze it dry.

## 2. FINDING A BUILDING AND INVESTIGATING

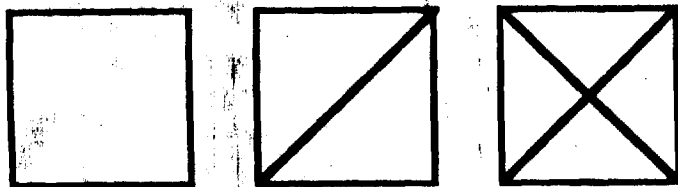
New York City is full of empty buildings ranging from totally destroyed shells all the way to buildings that are in OK shape. The way to find a building is to simply walk around the streets with your eyes open. Try to concentrate on areas where people are already squatting or homesteading, as usually you'll get less hassle from from the neighbors. Look at the buildings surrounding the one you've got your eye on.

If the surroundings look as if they've been renovated for well off people this may mean more hassle from neighbors and police. The neighbors can be dealt with just by talking to them and explaining your case. Give them some figures on how many people are homeless (see Introduction). Tell them who is in your group and how you came to be in the situation you're in. Be realistic and honest. See what you can find out from them. Ask about the history of the building and whether or not any one has been using it since it was abandoned.

Try to get an idea if any community groups, politicians, gangs or real estate operators have an eye on the building. If so, figure out if they are for real and if not, whether you will be able to take the building and keep them off your back. If you think they are for real, you might approach them and see if you can work together. You may also meet squatters who still have room in their buildings and are looking for new members.

Be polite, but be careful of people who are in too big a hurry to be your friend. Be particularly careful to avoid antagonizing any of your neighbors during the first month until you've established your residence. As for dealing with the police refer to the chapter on legal hassles.

You will notice that some buildings have been painted with squares like the ones illustrated:



These are painted by the city government to indicate the status of the of the building. The empty square indicates that the building is abandoned. The square with the slash (/) indicates that fire fighters should be cautious entering the building. The square with the cross (X) indicates that the building is condemned. Don't assume that this necessarily means the building is not good, perfectly good buildings get condemned all the time.

Its worth knowing whether a building is still privately owned or has been taken over by the city government. If the owner of a building shows up and wants to get you out, it is easier for him to get you evicted than it is for the city to get you out of one of their buildings.

Also if it comes to where you want to fight to hold on to your building over the long term, whether by legal or other means, this is possible with city owned buildings but practically impossible with privately owned buildings. People on the block may know if the city owns a building or not, but to be sure check at city hall. The place to go is:

Office of the City Register  
Room 205 31  
Chambers Street

## 6. MAKESHIFT TOILETS, WATER & COOKING

Use buckets or empty bottles for piss, and lime or disinfectant to keep the bucket from getting foul. Construction sites are an easy source of empty five gallon buckets. Pour the piss down a storm sewer in the street until you've made certain that the sewage pipes in the building are OK. Don't throw tissue in the piss bucket or you'll have a mess when you pour it out. If you shit in the bucket you'll really have a mess when you try to empty it. It's best to shit on a few sheets of newspaper, wrap it up, put it in a plastic bag and throw it in a trash barrel on the street. Its best not to use your own or your neighbors' garbage cans for this to avoid getting hassled. If you let your place get unsanitary, you can have complaints made against you to the Health Department. That will not only get you thrown out in a big hurry, it will also make hassles for other squatters. Just by keeping your place safe and healthy you show that you can do a better job of providing housing than the government or real estate business can.

Keep your food hanging in a bag or on a shelf hanging by wire away from the wall so mice and bugs can't get at it. Do the same with your garbage and dispose of it every day, this way you won't get any mice or bugs.

Most fire hydrants can be opened with a pipe wrench. Since you will probably have to haul in water to begin with, you won't want to use a lot of it for washing. But do make some provisions for washing even if you actually do most of it at the fire hydrant or church etc.

**Making an alcohol stove.** A very cheap stove can be made using an empty can for a burner. Loosely pack the can with cloth, gauze bandage is



Take the exact address of the building with you. In the office, look first at the Lot and Block Maps find the block number and the lot number of the address you're interested in. The records are kept according to these numbers and not according to address. When you have this information check out the micro film for the building (you need ID to do this). When you're reading the micro film, go directly to the last few pages on record to find the last transaction, because this will tell you who owns the building now. The city government ends up owning a building when the previous owner didn't pay the taxes on it and the city takes the building (forecloses) in place of taxes. So look for a statement of foreclosure such as the one in the example reproduced on the next two pages where it says: "SUBJECT to unpaid taxes..."

**Exterior.** Have a look at the exterior walls. You may have to wait until you've got inside before you can get to the back, but what you need to look at is the same. Are there major holes in the masonry, can they be filled or covered, or are they significant structural defects? Are there signs of bulging or sagging, are there wide gaps where the mortar joints should be? If so forget it, in fact you may be wise to cross the street instead of walking past on the sidewalk. Is the fire escape pulling loose from the wall, is it falling apart or just missing a few steps? The cornice is the part that sticks out from the face of the building along the roof, is it intact or is it broken apart and dangling? The cornice is just decorative so you can remove it or tie it up so it won't fall, but this is a sign of deterioration. This or other problems which represent a danger to people on the sidewalk should be secured. In addition to the danger they represent they are also building code violations which can get you closed down.

**Entering.** OK, so at this point you've got your eye on a certain building and from the outside it

T H I S D E E D, made the 25th day of May,  
Nineteen hundred and Seventy-eight

B E F O R E M E H A R T S. FISHERMAN,

Commissioner of Finance of the City of New York, having his  
Principal office in Room 500, Municipal Building, Borough of  
Manhattan, County, City and State of New York, GRANTOR,

and THE CITY OF NEW YORK, a municipal corporation having its  
Principal office at City Hall, Borough of Manhattan, County,  
City and State of New York, GRANTEE.

**W I T N E S S E T H :**

That the Grantor, duly empowered by a  
Judgment of foreclosure entered at a Special Term, Part II,  
of the New York Supreme Court, County of New York  
on May 25, 1978

In an action to foreclose certain tax liens owned and held by  
The City of New York entitled:

**IN REM TAX FORECLOSURE ACTION NO. 29, BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN**

and in pursuance of the provisions of Section D17-12.0 of the  
Administrative Code of The City of New York, does hereby grant  
and convey unto the Grantee, its successors and assigns:

All those certain lots, pieces or parcels of land  
with the buildings and improvements thereon erected,  
situate, lying and being in the Borough of Manhattan,  
County, City and State of New York, more particularly  
designated on the Tax Map of The City of New York, for  
the Borough of Manhattan, as Sections 1 to 8, inclusive,  
as said Tax Map was on the 6th day of July, 1977.

File 439 11808

SALIAL NO.	SEC.	BLUCK	LOT
832	2	387	151
833	2	347	152
839	2	369	3
840	2	339	5
841	2	369	6

846	2	389	47
848	2	389	32
849	2	369	36
850	2	386	38
854	2	339	44
855	2	339	51
859	2	359	51
860	2	389	51
861	2	390	1
862	2	390	1
863	2	390	1
864	2	390	1

## FIRE PREVENTION

Keep passages clear for escape. Place fire extinguishers, or have a bucket of sand and a bucket of water where they can be easily reached on each floor. For kerosene or grease fires use sand. Keep the halls and stairs clear. Same with the fire escapes. If the ladders are missing that go down to the ground, see if you can replace them, even a rope ladder or a heavy rope with knots every couple of feet will work. Try to provide lighting in the halls and stairs if you can.

Buildings with squatters are less likely to burn than 'empty' buildings. However, arson is probably the major cause of fire in poor neighborhoods. Landlords torch their own buildings, and other buildings they may be interested in. However it happens, it is often to the advantage of the department of Housing Preservation and Development when buildings burn. All of this makes squatters particularly vulnerable to fire, even if we aren't usually responsible for them.

**Arson Watch.** A round-the-clock fire and safety watch may be advisable in your situation. If so, there may already be an arson watch group or community safety patrol of some sort in your area. These organizations are well worth joining, or starting yourself with other squatters or tenants.



Punch two holes on opposite each other in the flue pipe that goes into the stove. Stick a piece of heavy wire through the holes and attach the round piece to it. When the round piece is up and down it lets the smoke through freely, the more you turn it toward horizontal the more it restricts the flow of smoke.

You will need to set the stove on some kind of support which will keep it well of the floor. Whatever you use, bricks, an old bed frame etc. must be something that doesn't burn.

If you have a chimney, check to make sure its clear. By checking the location of the chimney on the roof, you can reckon where it should be in your apartment. You can tell where the chimney is in an apartment because it sticks out into the room from the wall on either side of it. The hole for the flue in the chimney may be open or bricked up or completely hidden by plaster or sheet rock. If so, just chop it open with a hammer. To see if the chimney is clear you can put a flashlight in the hole that the flue is meant to go in. Then go up to the roof, climb on top of the chimney and look down the holes to see if you can see the light from your flashlight. If you can see the light the chimney is clear, if not then its not.

If you don't have a chimney or the chimney isn't clear and you can't clear it, then you'll have to chop a hole in the wall or run the flue pipe out the window. In either case, the flue should go all the way up and past the roof by five feet.

111 42

Harry S. Tishelman  
Commissioner of Finance  
of the City of New York  
Grantor,

- to -

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,  
Grantee.

DEED  
(Pursuant to Section D17-12,0  
of the Administrative Code)

The parcels of real estate affected by the within instrument are set forth therein by Section, Block and Lot numbers as the same appear on the Tax Map of the City of New York for the Borough of Manhattan

RECORD & RETURN TO:  
ALLEN G. SCHWARTZ  
CORPORATE COUNSEL  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

Room 1713

NO CHARGE  
4206

REAL ESTATE  
MAY 25 1978  
TRANSFER TAX  
NEW YORK  
COUNTY

Si 5324  
70 x PT. Kalena

RECORDED IN NEW YORK COUNTY  
06425

MAY 25 PM 2:54

Allen G. Schwartz  
CORPORATE COUNSEL

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the premises herein granted into the Grantee, its successors and assigns forever, SUBJECT to any state of facts an accurate survey could show. SUBJECT also to unpaid taxes, assessments and water rates affecting said premises which have accrued and become subsequent to these contents and in the List of Delinquent taxes filed in the above-mentioned action.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Grantor has hereunto set his hand and seal.

Harry S. Tishelman,  
Commissioner of Finance  
of the City of New York

n the presence of:

CITY OF NEW YORK ) ss:  
COUNTY OF NEW YORK )

On the 25th day of May, 1978

before me came Harry S. Tishelman,  
Commissioner of Finance of the City of New York, to me known to be the individual described in and who executed the foregoing instrument and acknowledged that he executed the same.

Allen G. Schwartz  
CORPORATE COUNSEL

doesn't look too bad. Now for a look inside. To be on the safe side as far as getting hassled goes, it may be best to go in in the evening when its dark. However, after familiarizing yourself with the neighborhood you may find that you can enter in the daytime without being hassled. Either way, **be very careful where you step and what you hold on to.** Its very easy to step through a rotted floor board or lose your balance when a piece of broken window frame comes loose in your hand, if you're not watching what you're doing. The riskiest part of a building is usually at the top. This is because there are usually some bad leaks in the roof which will cause rot. However, vandalism and fire damage may be found anywhere, and years of leakage will result in rot on lower floors also.

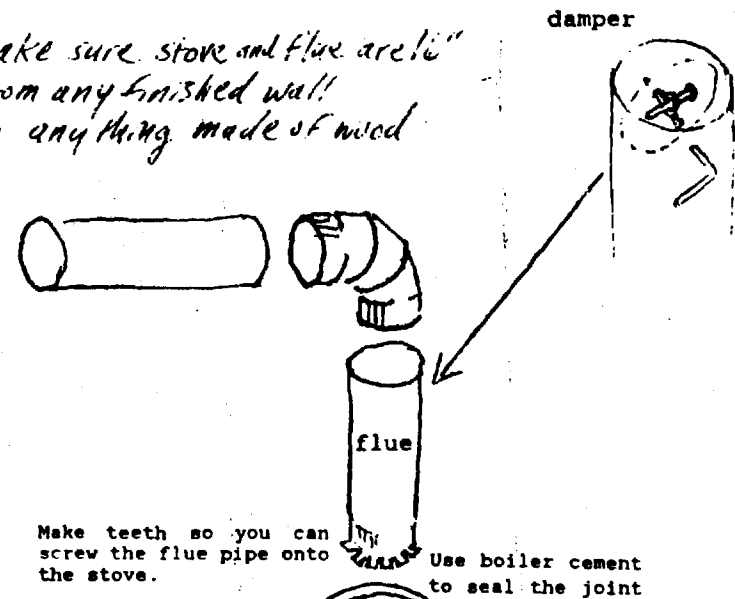
Normally the easiest way in is the back. You can climb up the fire-escape and you're in. Even if the back is bricked up you can get to the roof, and from there there's very rarely any problem getting in. Now say there's no way into the back, you're going to need about five people and a twelve foot ladder. Two people must position themselves as lookouts with a signal in case the cops come, one person holds the ladder while two people equipped with good flashlights enter the building. It's always useful to have one person with you who has some knowledge of old buildings, if no one in your group can fill this role borrow someone.

If you are unfortunate enough to choose a building that is totally bricked up, you must somehow try to get onto the roof. If this fails you will have to chisel out a couple of concrete blocks from a window. We recommend that just one person does this so you don't attract too much attention.

It's easy to get in if you can get friendly with someone who lives next door, then you can get in through their building and onto the roof.

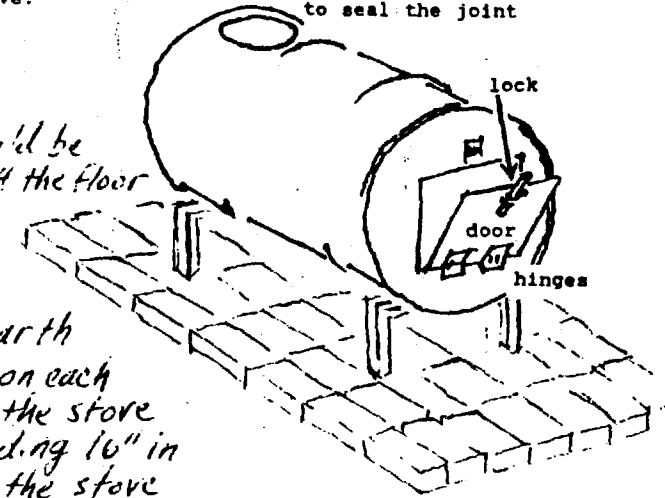
*cargo pallets  
make excellent  
firewood*

*make sure stove and flue are 16"  
from any finished wall!  
or anything made of wood*

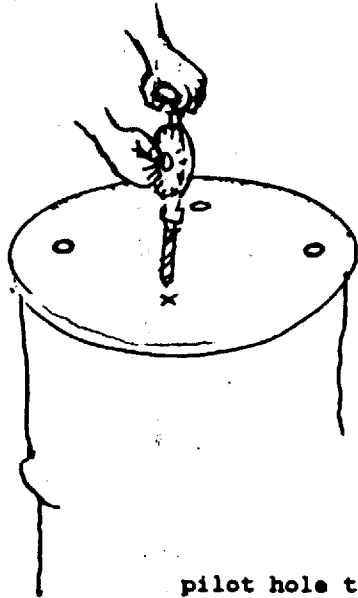


*stove should be  
one foot off the floor*

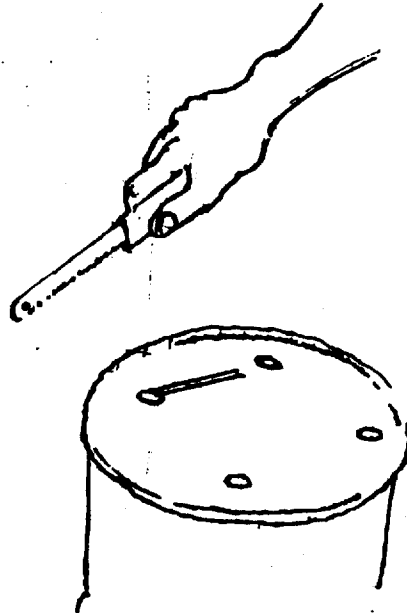
*make a hearth  
8" wider on each  
side than the stove  
and extending 16" in  
front of the stove*



Making a woodstove  
out of an oil drum



drill a  
pilot hole to start each  
cut, and then make your  
cuts using a sheetmetal  
blade

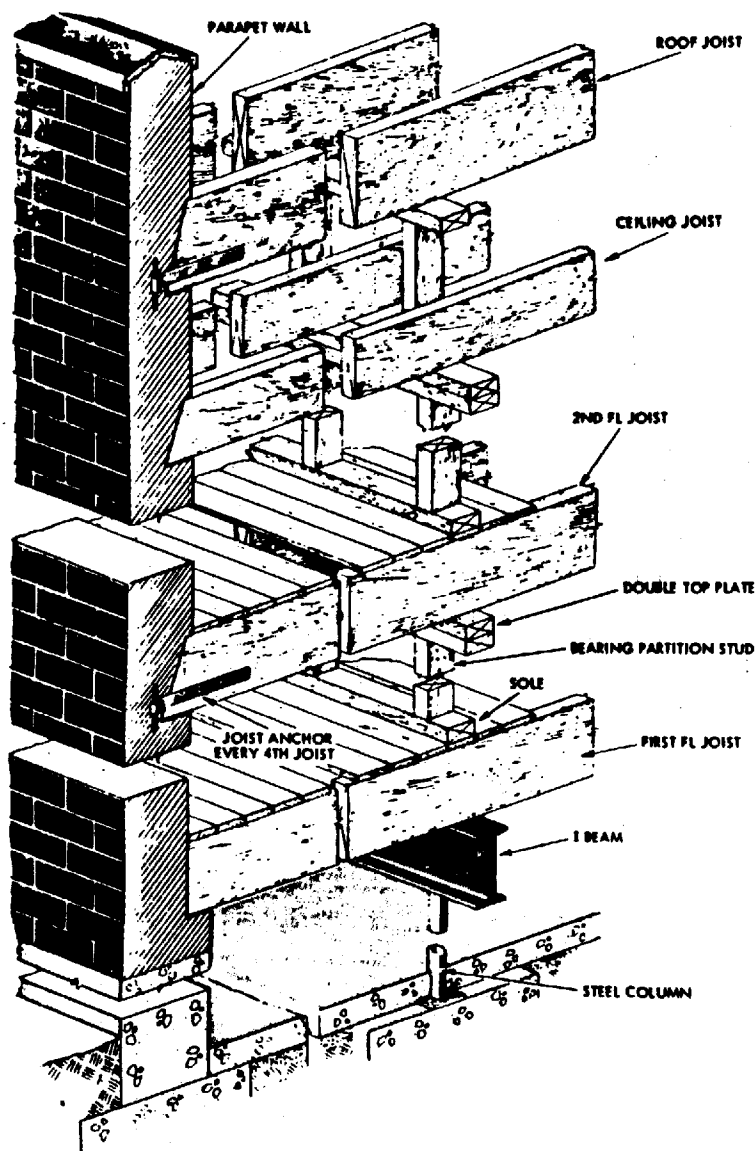


So, after a few days of planning, hassle, people not showing up, and getting organized, you're finally in and ready to inspect. The building inside will almost certainly look like shit. It will be full of old rotting furniture, rubble, and ceilings coming down all over the place. Some apartments will be burnt out. Don't be discouraged, this is quite normal, this is what we're going to inspect.

**The roof.** Check for holes. Look for missing, burnt or rotted joists (joists are the timbers which support roofs and floors). Rot can be tested by sticking a knife in the lumber as far as it will go. When checking for rot find a spot where the leaking water soaks in and doesn't dry up right away. Up to an inch may be burnt or rotted and the timbers might still be OK. The ends of the joists can suffer the most weakening without endangering the structure, but the joists cannot be weakened much in the middle without risking collapse. Check the parapet walls around the roof to see if (or how badly) they are falling apart.

**The stairs.** If you're lucky there will be nothing wrong with your stairs except for some missing steps. If the building has no staircase at all you will have a lot of work to do. Until you are able to replace the stairs you will have to use the fire escape or ladders. There are enough buildings with stairs around that you may be wasting your time on one that doesn't have a staircase at all. One squat has been evacuated by the Fire Department for not having stairs. Eviction by HPD (Housing Preservation and Development; the landlord of city owned abandoned buildings) can be delayed by legal means for a long time. But evacuation by Fire, Health or Buildings Departments, is fast and harder to resist legally or otherwise.

**Floor joists.** These are the timbers that support the floors. Make note where they are missing or damaged (see roof section). If the floors are slop

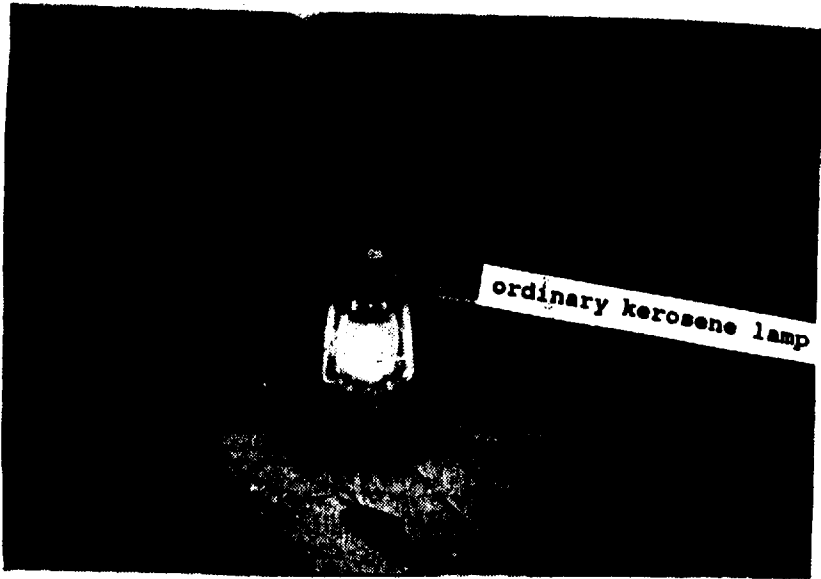


Typical ordinary construction for a masonry building consists of wood joists and wood bearing partitions.

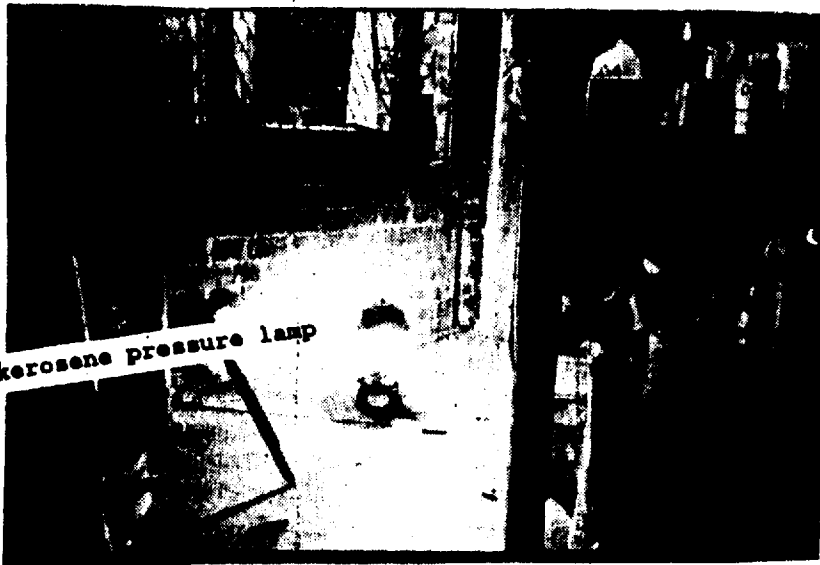
Candles are the easiest way to provide light, the best kind are the tall glass ones, the kind that often have pictures of saints or magic charms on them. This kind lasts a long time but more important won't blow out and the glass is heavy enough that it won't shatter in freezing weather. Somewhat better light can be provided by old fashioned kerosene lamps (trim your wicks now and then to make the brightest flame and least smoke, then if it smokes turn the wick down). Coleman lanterns make light as bright as electric light. The kerosene type is safer than the gasoline ones, although it takes longer to light. Kerosene is also cheaper and easier to get than white gas.

**Making a woodstove.** To make a wood stove out of an oil drum what you need to do is make two holes in it. You need one hole to put the wood in, with a door you can close to keep the smoke from coming out. You need another hole for the smoke to go out which your flue pipe will connect to. The easiest way to cut the door hole and the flue hole is to drill a pilot hole to start each cut, and then make your cuts using a jig saw with a sheetmetal blade. If there's no way you can get hold of power tools, you could even cut the holes using a cold chisel. If you do it this way you should get pretty warm before you even have a fire. The hole for the flue must be measured to fit the flue pipe you will use (probably four or five inches in diameter). The piece which you cut out for the door you can then attach to the hole it came from, using hinges. Its probably best to put the hinges on the bottom of the door, with a lock at the top to keep it shut.

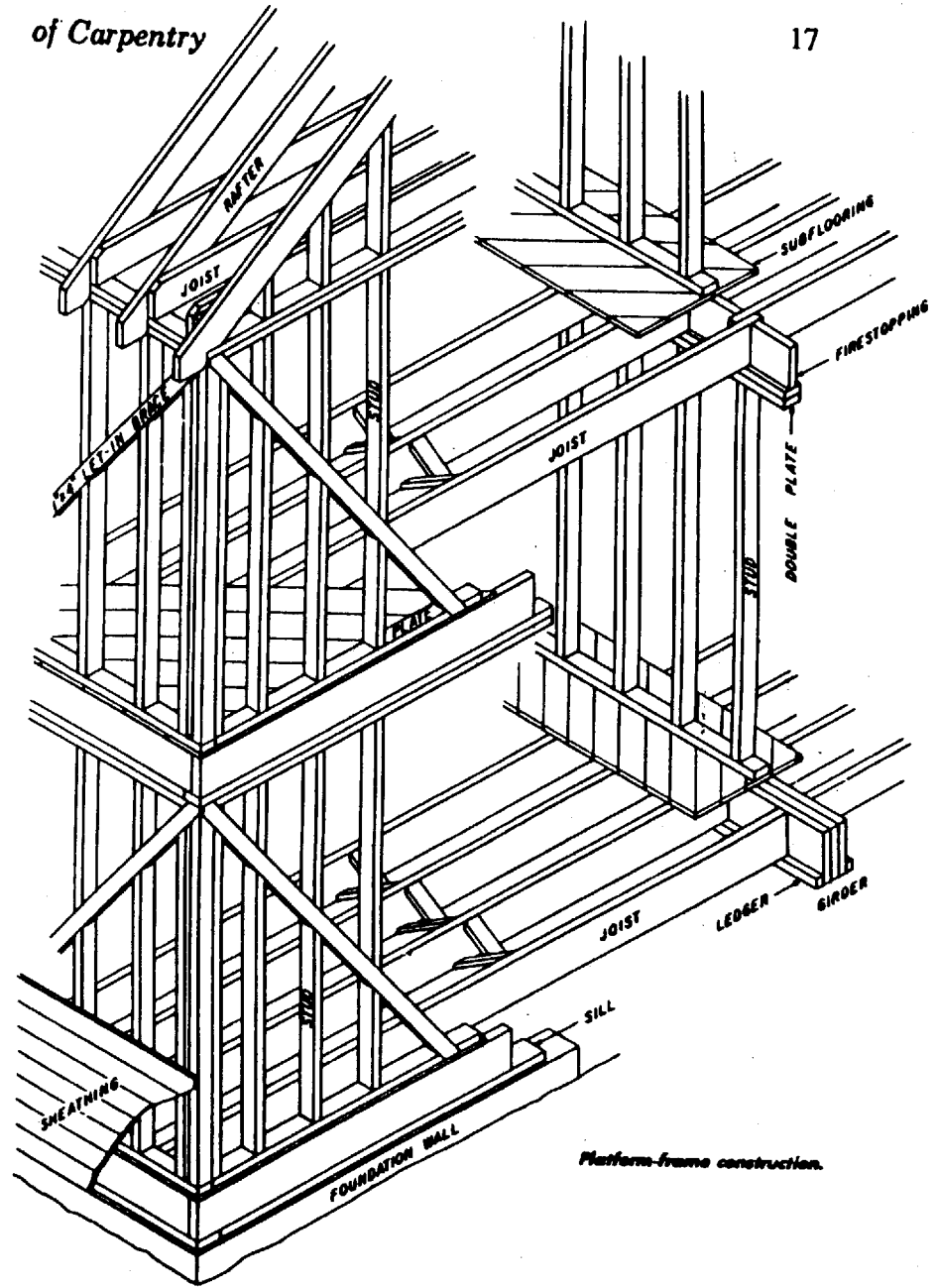
A damper allows you to control how fast the fire burns (so does opening and closing the door, but using a damper will also help you use less wood). A damper can be made by cutting a round piece of sheet metal slightly less than the diameter of the flue.



ordinary kerosene lamp



kerosene pressure lamp



Platform-frame construction.

ing more than an inch or so this may mean that the structure has shifted so much that it is dangerous. If timbers are dangerously damaged they can be braced using scavenged lumber (use 4x4 timbers or nail together 2x4's).

**Sewer pipes.** The toilets will normally be smashed or missing, but the pipes may be in salvageable condition. Follow the waste pipes through the building down to the basement checking for holes. Look for holes in the walls which HPD may have made in order to damage the pipes. Copper water pipes will certainly have been stripped, but if there were steel pipes they may still be in place and useable. If your plumbing is in OK condition you can probably get your water running pretty soon. Otherwise you can get water from a fire hydrant.

**Front door.** If the front of the building has been sealed with concrete blocks make sure that the door or any windows are ready to use before you knock the blocks out. Whether you knock a hole in the block wall and install a door in the opening or there is a working door in place, make sure you are ready to keep the building secured once you have opened it and made your use of the building public. A heavy chain through a hole in the door around the door frame with a heavy padlock is an easy way to secure the door.

## 5. HEAT, LIGHT AND FIRE SAFETY

In New York heating is not merely a comfort in the winter time. Tenants can sue their landlords for not providing enough heat and it is well known that there are deaths among people living on the street and people living in apartments because of cold weather.

We believe that kerosene heaters, although they can be fire hazards and messy, are a practical and economical means of heating. Kerosene heaters aren't legal but can be bought in the outer boroughs and New Jersey. It's worth it to get kerosene outside of Manhattan since the price in Manhattan can be as high as six dollars a gallon and less than a dollar elsewhere. Do not store your kerosene in a room where the heater will be operated. Do not go to sleep with the heater on.

If you can get a wood stove this is a very cheap source of heat. They are also safer and healthier than kerosene heaters. If you can't find one you can make one from a steel drum. Make sure that if you can't connect your stove to a chimney which works, that you run your flue pipe above the roof level.

Since complaints can be made to the Fire Dept. about smoke it is important (and for your own health and safety) that the smoke from your stove should be run out of a proper flue or chimney. Fire extinguishers are well worth having for your own safety as well as in case any city officials manage to get inside your building. This goes for smoke alarms too which you have to place carefully so they are not too close to your heater or they'll go off all the time. It is very important not to burn painted wood since this makes poisonous fumes. With either kerosene or wood, ventilation is important. Do not leave your fire going or heater on when you go out.

equipment necessary to perform the work. Asbestos is typically found in boiler and pipe insulation. It may be found in other areas of buildings besides the basement, in pipe insulation and other items such as radiator covers and fire-proof doors.

If you see insulation that is not fiberglass, that is ripped, split, ragged, or powdery looking, you should consider verifying whether the insulation contains asbestos. Contact the White Lung Association if you have any questions about asbestos evaluation or removal.

If for some reason you must handle asbestos, be sure to wear a respirator approved for use with asbestos. A half-face respirator equipped with a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Absolute) filter is adequate. Also wear disposable gloves. Keep the asbestos wet. The weight of the water on the asbestos fibres tends to keep those fibres from becoming airborne.

Anyone who deals with asbestos should take a training course. This course should not be less than two days and should contain hands on training as well as the use of respirators and personal protective equipment. The White Lung Association provides such training. For any questions dealing with asbestos contact the Asbestos Safety Technicians of the White Lung Association at 619 3689.

### 3. GETTING IN

So you've formed your group and checked out between six and sixty buildings and now you're all ready to move in. If the area you're in is run down, often no one will bother you while you smash out the concrete blocks. With a twelve pound sledge hammer a door sized opening normally takes about seven and a half minutes. Quickly get all the broken blocks off the sidewalk and into the building and sweep up to remove signs of your work. You may want to keep a low profile and do this while lookouts watch for the cops, or bring along lots of friends and supporters. It is also possible, and may be preferable, to work from the inside and chisel the blocks out discreetly one by one. You should have a door and frame prepared to set in the new opening, so measure and mark the hole you're opening with your new door in mind. In any case work quickly and as quietly as possible.

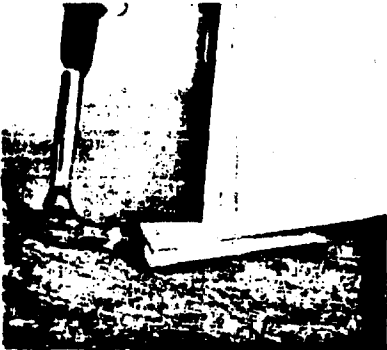
Once in, unless there is a useable door in place, either set up a barricade or install a door. Steel door frames and doors are easily scavenged from demolition or rehab sites. Unless you're pretty strong it will take two people to carry a steel door, or a cart to roll it on.

**Installing the front door.** Set the door frame in the opening and fill in around the edges with pieces of broken block and mortar (a couple of bags of mortar mix should do the job). Make certain that the bottom of the door frame is exactly as wide as the top when it is set in place, otherwise the door won't work. Use a board which has been cut to exactly the right width to keep the correct space at the bottom of the frame while it is being installed. Make sure the frame is straight up and down and not crooked, bent or twisted out of line in the opening.

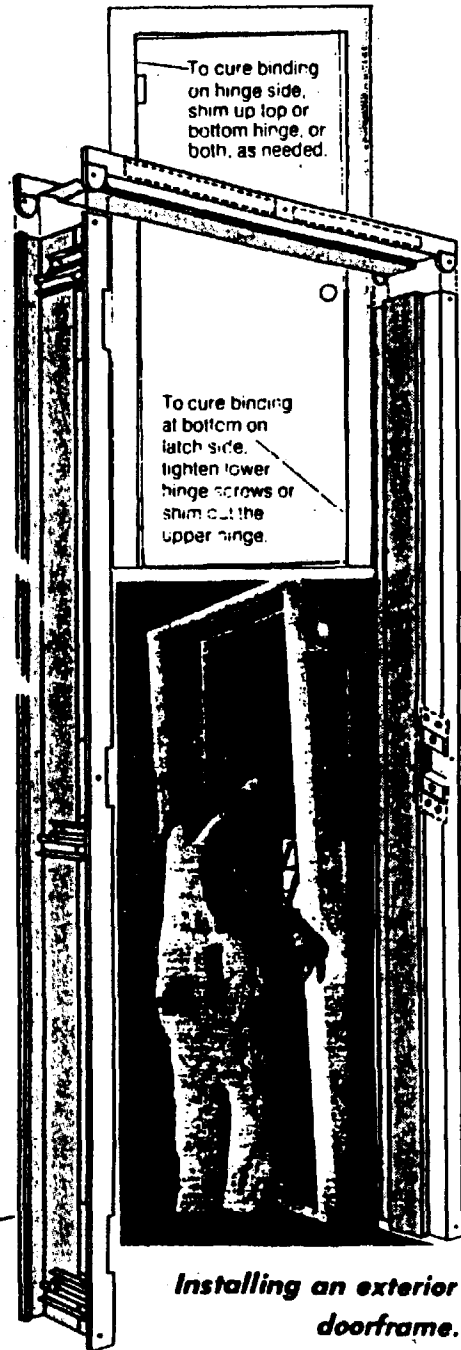
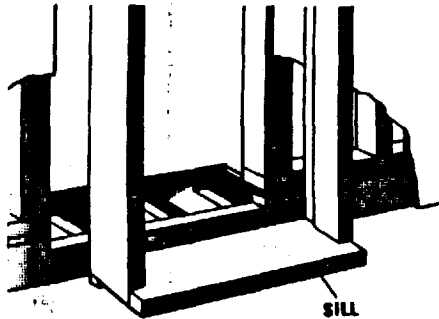
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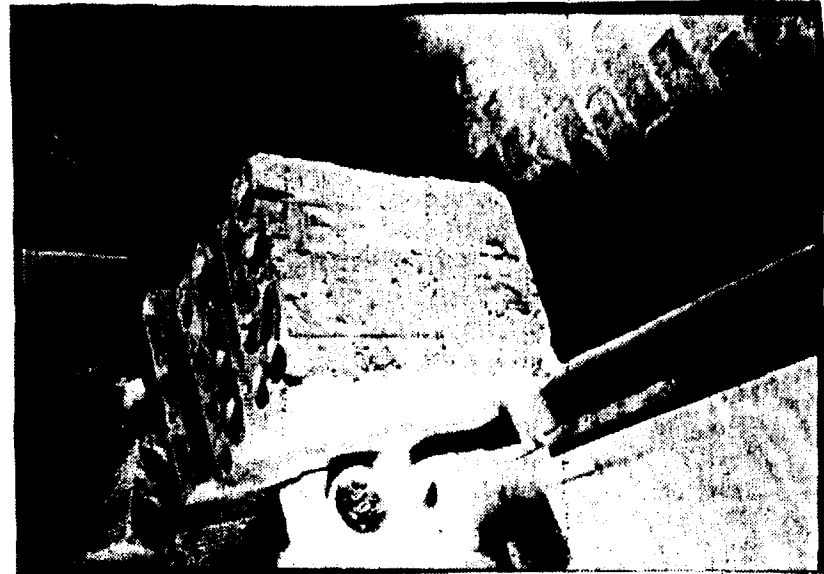
Put cardboard shim under bottom hinge leaf in jamb if door binds at top on latch side; shim up top hinge if bottom binds.



Insert a wedge under the outer edge of the door to hold it steady for sanding or planing or when working on one hinge.



Installing an exterior doorframe.



Construction blocks of this type (light weight, white or grey in color) very often contain asbestos. Less than one day working with this stuff without full protection can have the equivalent effect on your lungs of smoking two packs of cigarettes a day for 30 years. If you find any suspicious material (like pipe insulation) in living or work areas, call the White Lung Association (619 3689) and arrange to have a sample tested. Don't fool with this stuff. If you find something you're not sure about don't touch it or disturb it, keep away from it until you've determined what it is by having it tested. The ONLY way you can make sure such material is free of asbestos is by having it tested. If anyone tells you that they can tell if something is free of asbestos by looking at it or touching it, try to explain the situation to them. But if necessary, keep such people away from the area.



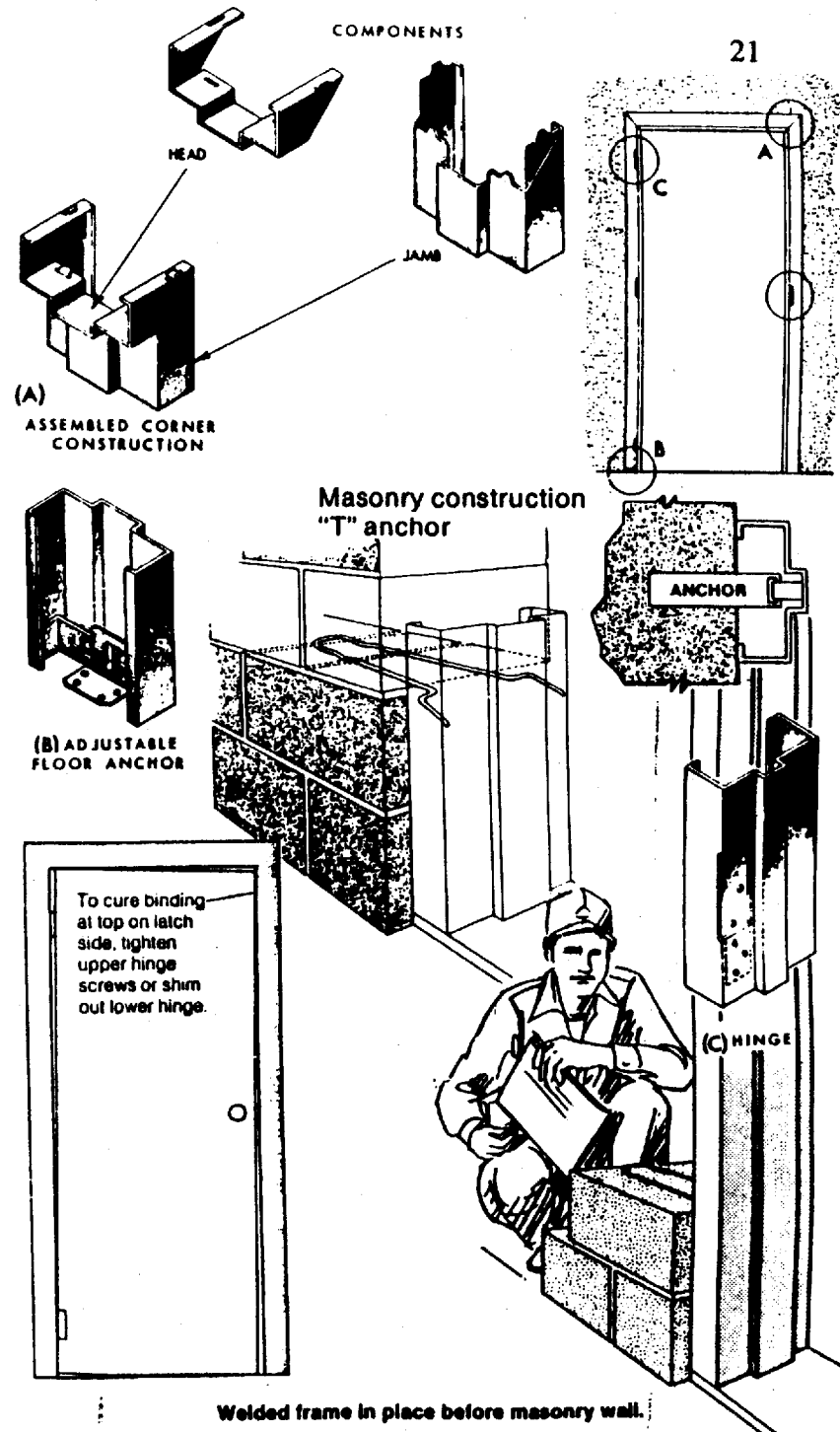
the cops throw you out as soon as possible.

**Debris removal.** Start from the top and work down. Don't throw stuff out of upper story windows, you may get hassle from your neighbors who will probably have good reason to call the cops. Since you likely don't have the kind of tube contractors use to get stuff from the upper floors to the street, you'll have to have another way. One way is to take up the flooring in the same corner on each floor, so that you can throw stuff through the hole and it will fall through another hole in the floor below and so on down to the second floor. Then you can safely chuck it out the back.

Or, if you don't want to, or can't, mess up your back yard this way, you can send the debris all the way to the ground floor, bag it up and take it out to the street for the Sanitation Dept. bulk removal truck to haul off.

(It may take quite a few tries to get response from the Sanitation Dept., it depends who you talk to. When you find someone helpful, get their name and deal with them in the future.) If you use this through the floor method, hang a floor to ceiling curtain of plastic around the corner of each floor where you have the holes, so that the dust won't spread all over the place.

**ASBESTOS.** Asbestos causes cancer and other serious diseases. There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres. Studies of duration of exposure to asbestos suggest that as little as three months and even one day can result in significant disease. It should be known that a health risk exists in your home only if the asbestos fibres are released from the material. If the material is in excellent condition and not in a living area, leave it alone. A greater hazard can be created than originally existed if it is removed by inexperienced people. It is recommended that only a trained asbestos abatement professional remove the asbestos containing material from your home since they have the knowledge and

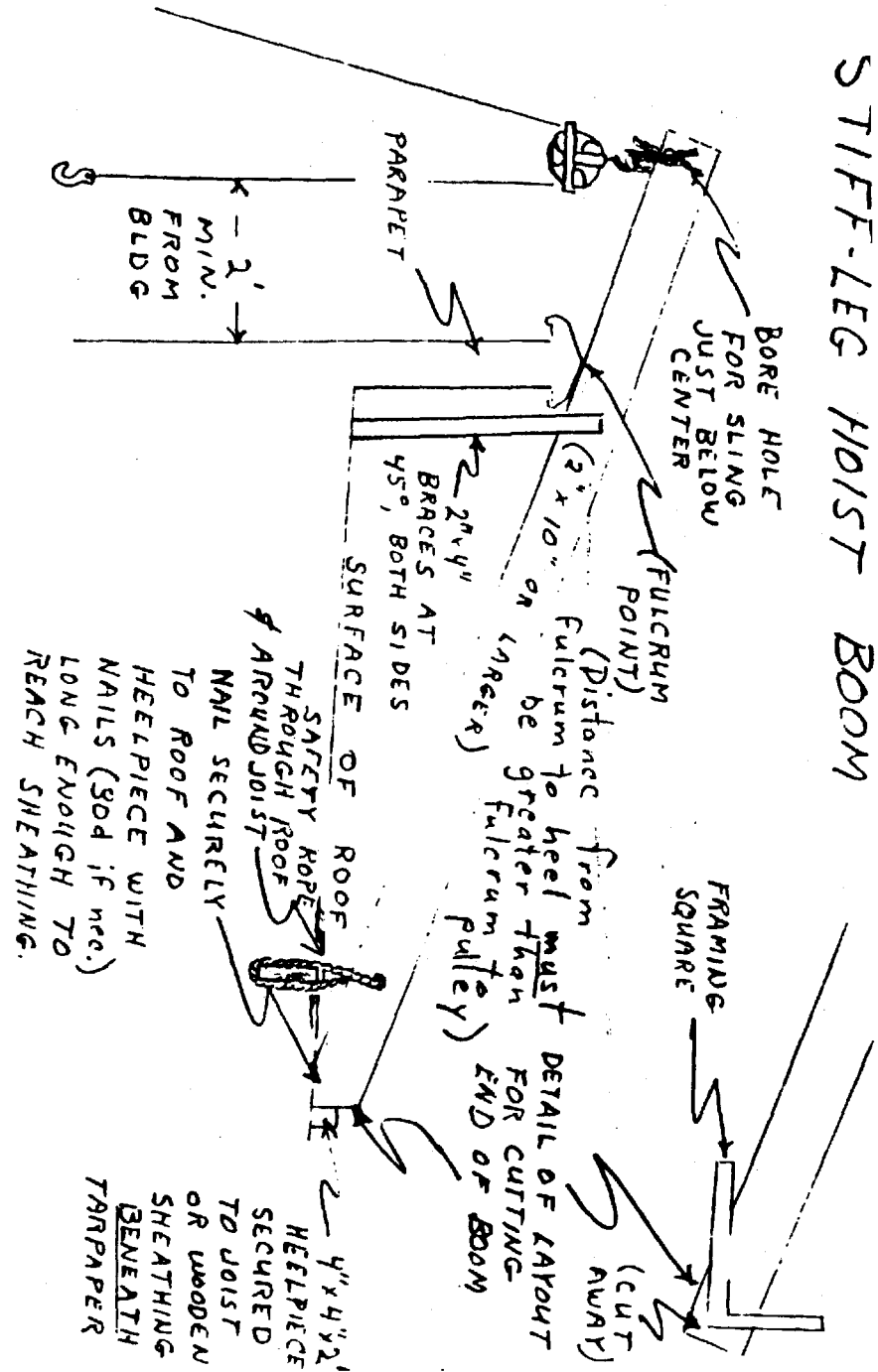


If the frame you have is bent, you can straighten it with a hammer, laying it on the pavement and using a block of wood to keep from denting it up too much.

Install the frame so that the door will open into the building. There are steel tabs (anchors) on the inside of the door frame which are meant to be bent out so that they will anchor the frame into the mortar joints in the block wall. As you fill in the opening around the door frame with mortar and block, be sure that the inside of the frame itself is filled with mortar and block pieces, because the frame is not solid by itself. If you're not able to afford or install a heavy duty bolt lock on the door, a heavy chain and padlock will do the trick. Pass the chain through a hole in the door and around the door frame.

Paint the name of your group and address on the door. For example: "The 995 East 8th street Homestead Association, and Neighborhood Improvement Committee". Do all the work that you can in advance so that on your opening day you can simply set your frame, with door and lock, in place and fill in the edges of the opening with block pieces and mortar.

If this is more than you can manage right away, you'll need to rig up some sort of barricade for the doorway and have someone inside to let people in and out. You should not leave your building unattended in any case, especially just after you move in. It is good to have someone on hand to watch the place when most people are out during the day. The risk from police and other evildoers is high right after the building is occupied. **Don't let anyone in that you're not sure about, no cops or city officials under any circumstances unless they have a warrant.** (See the legal section for what to do if they have got a warrant.) Keep the door closed and locked at all times, don't sit out on your stoop with the door unlocked or open.





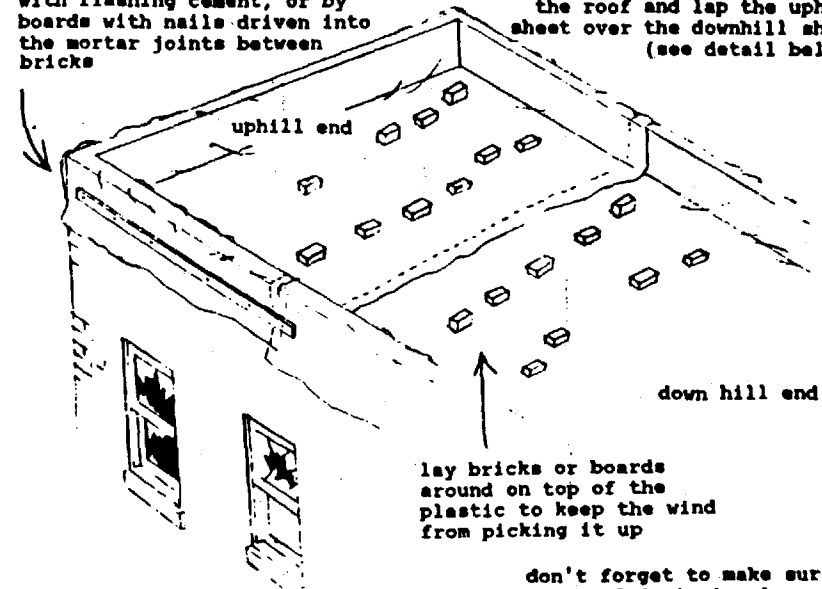
You're in the building illegally, there is no need to make your front door an open invitation to cops and thieves.

**Security.** Nothing is worse than coming home to find that your tools, sleeping bag or heater have been ripped off. Except maybe walking upstairs to your apartment and meeting a junk sick thief running downstairs with your radio in one hand and a knife in the other.

Your security depends on making it difficult enough to enter your building that most thieves will pass it up. If your building looks funky and people on the street can see that only poor people live there, you won't need as much security work as Trump Tower. Besides keeping your front door locked, other precautions will depend on how much hassle you have or seems likely. Keep your ground floor windows barred or sealed with concrete block or even plywood. Eliminate hand and footholds by knocking them off, or by setting nails or broken glass in masonry cement or roofing cement. More of the same, or coiled barbed wire around the base of the fire escape and continuing across the face of the building at the second floor level will help deter climbers. Grates on windows facing the fire escape are good, but it will take a lot of them to do your whole building. It might be good enough to bolt full sheets of plywood to the outside of the fire escape railing on the second floor. This will make a wall around the fire escape too high to climb over and you can top it with a coil of barbed wire (or nails). The roof may be a point of entry, so be sure that the penthouse door is secured (the penthouse is the little room at the top of the stairs where you walk out on the roof).

plastic should be draped over the parapet wall and fastened with flashing cement, or by boards with nails driven into the mortar joints between bricks

start at the downhill end of the roof and lap the uphill sheet over the downhill sheet (see detail below)



lay bricks or boards around on top of the plastic to keep the wind from picking it up

don't forget to make sure the roof drain is clear and unclogged

flashing cement

uphill sheet

spread flashing cement along the edge of the downhill sheet and press the uphill sheet over it

make sure the lap joint between the two sheets is perfectly sealed with flashing cement, leaving not even the smallest gap

downhill sheet

This is a very temporary protection. For a somewhat longer lasting repair, spread cement over the entire surface to be sealed before laying plastic on top. Make sure there are no bubbles in the plastic, that all of the plastic is stuck to the cement.

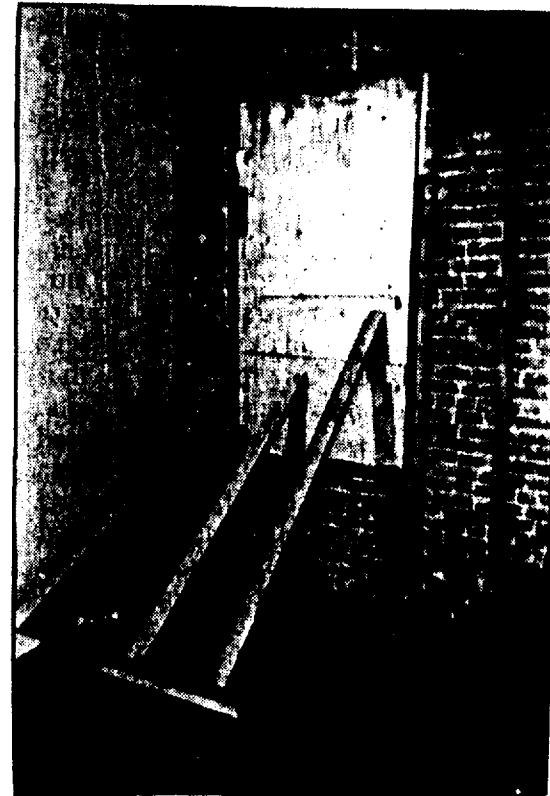
If repairing the roof is too big a project to take on right away, you can use polyethelene plastic sheeting to protect your roof temporarily. Get a hundred foot roll of 4 mil plastic twenty foot wide and a couple of buckets of flashing cement (be sure to get flashing cement, other kinds of roofing tar won't work). You should also be able to get this donated. Begin by clearing, sweeping and covering holes. See the diagram on the next page for details on laying down the plastic. Avoid walking on the plastic since that will easily cause leaks. This protection is very temporary, if you do a good job it should make it through the winter. But the summer heat will cook the plastic until it falls apart. To make this job a bit more permanent, use plenty of flashing cement to stick down the plastic over the entire surface of the leaking roof area. Make sure there are no bubbles.

You can use the plastic that's left over to seal windows that are missing. Use lath (the thin slats that plaster walls used to be built with) to nail the plastic into the window frame, or staple it up using strips of cardboard to reinforce the staples. You can also use the plastic to make tents in your living areas for winter insulation if necessary.

**Shoring.** Close off any areas of the building where the floor or roof is unsafe. Then if you can't replace, repair or reinforce the damaged timbers you can brace them with 4x4's (or 2x4's nailed together). Be sure to brace the damaged timber against something solid or otherwise you're just making the problem worse. The brace must ultimately be supported by a bearing wall or footing. You can brace down to a joist if its near a bearing wall. You can generally assume that brick, block or stone walls, exterior walls, are load bearing walls and that interior walls, studs with lath and plaster, are probably

#### NOTE

Having a front door with a lock, having beds and other basics such as a kitchen, is good for your own well being but it is also important in establishing that you are a resident and not a trespasser. It may resident seem like a small point that a being a resident, even though an illegal one, is different from being a trespasser. Its an important point because it can make the difference between getting run out by the cops if they feel like getting rid of you, and backing them down so they'll have to wait until the department of Housing Preservation and Development manages to go through the lengthy process of legal eviction (which they often screw up).



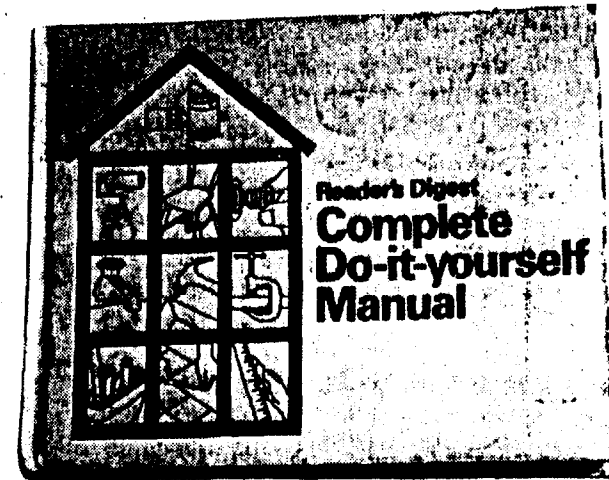
#### 4. EMERGENCY REPAIRS

**The roof.** In most cases the most important repair which abandoned buildings need is the roof. It will almost certainly leak. It will usually have a large hole or two caused by fire, fire fighters, or city government vandals. For your own comfort it may only be necessary to locate a room where there is no leakage. However, a building where the roof leaks will have lots of spaces that no one will be able to live in, and the more people you have living in your building the better your chances of resisting eviction, other hassles from the city, and hassles from drug dealers and thieves. The more people you have the more you can make your place comfortable and secure with all the normal conveniences.

The long term maintenance of a building depends more on the roof than any other single thing. If it is not maintained it will eventually rot until it collapses, the floors will go and sooner or later the exterior walls will collapse. Then there will be a pile of useless rotten lumber and broken masonry where maybe a hundred people used to live. At this point it will cost the city a lot of money just to make the place into a vacant lot. This is exactly what the city is doing with the abandoned buildings it supposedly owns. Don't let them get away with it.

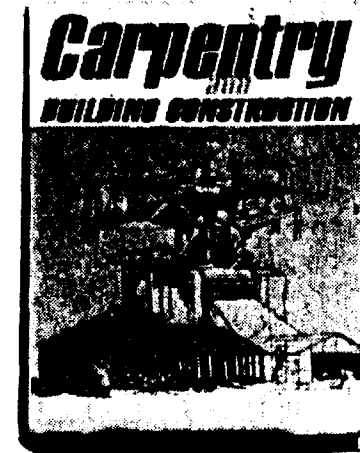
Clear the roof of any debris and sweep it. Patch the holes. If nothing else, just lay plywood over them (5/8 inch is the minimum you can walk on for a hole of any size). Use mineralized felt paper and roofing tar. If your roof is so far gone that you have to cover it entirely, get someone who works as a roofer for a living to advise you. To do this work you should be able to get the materials donated, try the Riverside Church, the Church of Saint John the Divine or Listener's Action at radio station WBAI.

If you have some work to get done it's helpful to write plans down on paper, step by step. Also make drawing diagrams as best you can to show how to do jobs that hard to explain. This will make it easier to organize help get people involved.



good for handyman rep has clear, explanations lots of pict covers basics as how to tools

Books like these are handy for dealing with construction problems and can be found in Public Libraries. Books deal specifically with roofing, electrical work, plumbing other trades are also available.



covers every aspect construction from foundation roof, a book of this type essential if you're planning major work