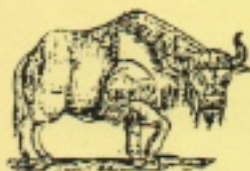


NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BISON TENANT



9, Eskin Close,
Dee Road Estate,
Tilehurst,
Reading, Berks.
Tel: (0734) 417124

5, Sandpiper Court,
Woodland Drive,
Smethwick,
West Midlands.
Tel: (021) 565 0119

Alternative Tel:
(0602) 865959

National Week of Action

TO ALL JOURNALISTS AT AMA PRESS CONFERENCE.

Bison was the largest system builder in the 1960s. Despite a major World In Action expose last June, nothing has really happened for the 150,000 plus tenants living in 50,000 flats.

So the NABT is launching a week of action from *March* 25th to March 31st. Plans include a Bisonmobile coming down from Scotland to London visiting Bison estates throughout the week, an exhibition of conditions, the launch of a Bison Factpack for tenants groups, taking summons against Councils, competitions for largest mushrooms, asbestos and heating events, revelations on secret Bison reports and conditions, evidence from architects and environmental health inspectors.

More details will be sent to the national press in the next week. If you would like more details phone the co-ordinator for the week Roger Critchley:

0602-412563 work -

0602-865959 home *0115 : 9 865959 a v/s number.*

National Week of Action

BISON EXTRA

Despite a major World in Action expose in June 1983, the government has ignored over 150,000 Bison tenants living in damp, defect-ridden and dangerous flats. Whilst a few Councils have taken some action almost all have failed to seriously investigate the many faults in the Bison system.

The story begins with the Bison Group Ltd, specialists in pre-cast concrete who were market leaders in the industrialised housing boom in the 1960s. The chairman of the company then called Concrete Ltd was Sir Kenneth Wood who as Granada said "rose from obscurity to become the millionaire High priest of system building." Housing Minister Crossman organised a special party when he appointed Wood as the government's advisor on industrialised housing in 1968!

Bison hired important politicians like Alderman Teggs Bowen in Birmingham and up and coming MP Richard Inoué Lord Marsh to sell the system. The company took key councillors and officials on expensive trips to Europe and had an extensive list of influential people to give Christmas presents to.

HOT CAKES - COLD BLOCKS

They soon were selling their blocks like hot cakes. Yet from the very start their lego like buildings were failing to keep the rain out. The first 3 Bison Wallframe blocks were opened in Kidderminster in 1963. Only a year later the Building Research Station was investigating them and finding: cracked panels, reinforcement in the wrong place, noise, joint and wall tie problems - to name a

few. By 1965 Bison engineers were secretly testing many blocks but Bison itself did not reveal their system was failing.

They continued to sell the Bison system in ever increasing numbers despite the fact that tenants were finding more and more faults.

Councils did precious little until tenants started organising. Over many years tenants have campaigned to get dry, warm and safe flats. The most successful campaigns have ended in demolition. Now 9 Councils have decided to demolish some, or all, of their Bison blocks - Hillingdon, Nottingham, Didham, Reading, Smethwick, Newcastle, Barnet, Manchester, Setfield.

JOINT ACTION

Since 1982 tenants groups have joined to form NABT. Indeed it was in preparing for this national action that tenants contacted World in Action and provided them with invaluable information to make their programme. Since the formation we have built up a goldmine of information and experience that can be used for local and national campaigns. We are determined that either all Bison blocks will be demolished or all the problems for tenants will be solved.

FAULTS

There are endless faults in Bison flats. We don't claim that every flat has the same problems to the same degree but we have found a common pattern of faults throughout the country.

For instance the stability of low rise blocks has been questioned eg Hillingdon and Hounslow. It's been found that Color gas explosions could cause progressive collapse at Salford and Pollockshaws (Glasgow). Whole panels have had to be totally removed eg Portsmouth. Missing wallties (which hold inner and outer panels together) have been found missing or panels have started slipping in Birmingham, Brent and Glasgow. Asbestos exists in many flats eg Ebbw Vale and Metherwell. Widespread condensation exists in many estates eg Smethwick and Barking. Water has penetrated through joints, roofs and balconies eg Greenwich and Edinburgh. Cracking and falling concrete is also epidemic eg Wrotham and Nottingham. Missing dry pack (which joins floor and wall panels and is crucial for safety) has been found in many of these estates and in Liverpool.

The list is horrific. Apart from building workers telling how the blocks were often put up with little effort to achieve quality and the fact that many panels transported in from Bison's concrete factories were defective, there are many other faults. For instance in Portsmouth they found that when concrete was poured into the moulds to make panels it would often displace reinforcement, insulation and the floor bolts. The Architects Journal summed up 6 fat volumes of reports on the Hillingdon blocks. "Problems have arisen from almost every stage of the building process: faulty manufacture of components, bad assembly and poorly executed repairs to components damaged in the first two stages."

INDOOR LIGHTNING

The faults have a dramatic effect on many tenants lives. As Mrs Hood from Pendlegreen in Manchester reported (when Bison were on site trying to cure the problems in 1971-9): "I was woken up by this banging and went into the lounge. There were sparks flying across the room and between the ceiling and the floor. It was like indoor lightning. Frightening? - I was terrified."

Or the secretary of the tenants association in Newcastle where demolition is progressing: "nearly every baby in these flats has a chest complaint because of the damp."

Or John and Christine Kealy of Barking who had mushrooms growing in their flat: "we pull them off but they just keep growing." Or the pensioner in Salford who says we've had problems with running water for 16 years."



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BISON TENANTS



WHAT IS NABT?

This leaflet has been produced by the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BISON TENANTS.

Our aims are to -

- Campaign for the acceptance of the Bison Charter.
- Support each other through regular meetings and sharing of information.
- Gain publicity about the scale and nature of Bison problems.

Tenants representatives from many parts of the country have met to exchange ideas and plan national and local action. We don't pretend to represent every single Bison estate, many have yet to form associations. However about a dozen groups are involved actively in NABT and we have contacts with a further dozen.

From this National Association we know what Bison problems are really like. And we know they will only be changed through tenants action.

We are determined to campaign locally and nationally, meet councillors and MPs for as long as it takes for tenants in Bison flats and maisonettes to get warm, dry and safe homes.

THE BISON CHARTER

In June 1983 NABT launched a 14 point charter. It's main points were that:

- all Bison flats should be demolished unless all their major problems were dealt with.
- central government must provide extra cash for this national scandal and the money to provide new homes.
- tenants should be fully compensated for all the damage and inconvenience.
- local Councils should investigate all Bison faults, call a special conference and pressure central government for extra cash.

REPAIRS NO GUARANTEE

Barnet said it would cost £26,685 to repair their flats and even then "there can be no guarantee that all the technical difficulties will be overcome".

CORRUPTION

In April 1978 3 directors of Bryants, responsible for building some 100 blocks in the Birmingham area were sentenced to a total of 12 years in prison for bribery and corruption. The judge talked of a "Municipal Gomorrah".



GOVERNMENT COULDN'T CARE LESS

Ion Gow, Minister of Housing was forced by the World in Action and NABT pressure last year to write to all Councils asking them to let him know what they were doing about their Bison estates. But that's all he's done. No special investigation. Not a penny on the table. He's refused point blank to meet NABT representatives.

We say that if the government can get the Building Research Establishment to investigate Airey, Dikt and other post war system housing they MUST get a FULL investigation by the BRE into Bison. NOW. And then ACT on its findings with CASH.

CONTACT US

If you want to know more about NABT or would like our help in any way, please contact us at:

5, Oak Close,
Der Road Estate,
Tipton,
Birmingham,
B26 1AA.

0781 - 437124

8, Sandring Court,
Woodland Drive,
Suttonville,
West Midlands.

021 - 465 0710