

should have to trudge 20 yards through the snow to go to the toilet. I am unable to heat their room properly without power plugs". The Gilbert family had lived in the road for six years and had in that time seen the rent almost double, without any modernisation or installation of new facilities or improvements. Gilbert conceded: "We are luckier than our neighbours as far as the toilet is concerned. They have to walk anything up to 45 yards!"

The press focus on the Gilbert family was due to perceived double standards by Birmingham Corporation's Health Committee who had identified 30 to 50,000 homes rented by private landlords which were deemed to be below a "civilised standard". The first district to be closely surveyed was Sparkbrook which Alderman Bowen of the Health Committee said was "steadily going downhill". The Corporation planned to make improvement grants available and if this failed they would then apply for compulsory purchase orders.

While the campaign to modernise housing was welcomed by all it was evident that it would not be easy to implement. One issue was the necessity for a tenant to give consent for improvements IF they were to increase his rent. Then, for example, there were tenants who needed the third bedroom, which was earmarked for an indoor bathroom. For their part private landlords and owner-occupiers claimed they could not afford their half of the outlay to make the essential improvements as specified by the Health Committee.

EVENTS

- Blakesley Hall: 10th December. £5.00 (Contact: Bron Salway)
- Dad's Army: 12th December at Crescent. £5.00 (Contact: Pat Johnson)

NEXT MEETING: 16TH DECEMBER

Members' Evening

'Tis the season to be jolly again. And with it comes the annual Christmas Social for our members. Good company, drinks and nibbles, with entertainment provided by Peter Spencer and his wonderful lantern slides.

