

RENT STRIKE CHIEFS FACE PROSECUTION

District Attorney Orders John Doe Inquiry Into Activities of Agitators.

WANTS LAWYERS PUNISHED

Says Members of the Bar Di- rected Men Who Swindled Hundreds of Poor Tenants.

District Attorney Swann announced last night that he had assigned Assistant District Attorney Waugh to conduct a John Doe inquiry into crimes alleged to have been committed by persons who have organized "fake tenants' associations, particularly on the east side." These men, the District Attorney says, have fleeced thousands of tenants who have trusted in them to reduce their rents.

The inquiry was suggested by information furnished by Nathan Hirsch, Chairman of the Mayor's Committee on Rent Profiteering.

"Evidence in our possession shows that these conspirators have fomented rent strikes for their own private profit," said Mr. Swann. "They have stirred up dissension between landlords and tenants and have collected large sums of the tenants' money for services which they knew they could not perform. These men have been guided in their operations largely by lawyers, who should be disciplined if the information we have is true. There is no need for tenants to listen to these adventurers or part with a single dollar, as all complaints receive careful and individual attention from the Mayor's Committee on Rent Profiteering."

"Some weeks ago reports came to the Mayor's Committee that persons operating on the east side and in the Bronx were forming tenants' associations to prevent landlords from increasing their rents," said Mr. Hirsch yesterday. "Inquiry established that the persons responsible for this move had set out to make money by preying upon the credulity of tenants and had no thought for the tenants' welfare.

"Those engineering these associations collected money from tenants ostensibly for legal services, fomented strikes against landlords, and brought about dissension. As a result thousands of tenants have not only paid for legal services never performed, but have lost their homes and have been actually thrown upon the streets. Mostly these tenants were of foreign birth, unfamiliar with our ways and easy prey. Evidence collected by the committee shows that some of these promoters were Bolsheviki.

"We want all who have been deluded by these parasites to come to the committee for aid. We will take every case, no matter what its past history may have been, and effect a settlement if possible."

Municipal Court Justices throughout

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the city continued to hear dispossession cases yesterday, but practically no evictions were ordered. In many cases compromises were effected by tenants agreeing to pay the October rent, and to move on Nov. 1.

In the First District of the Bronx Justice Harry J. Robitzek disposed of 740 cases. Of these 130 were set for trial, and in twenty-eight the tenant demanded juries.

William Middleton, 25 years old, of 11 East Sixty-eighth Street, who described himself as the Treasurer of the Sixty-first Street Realty Corporation, which owns seven buildings in that street, was arraigned in the Yorkville Court yesterday on a summons charging him with assault. The complainant was Miss Betty Randolph of 48 East Sixty-first Street, a former Winter Garden performer. She charged that Middleton had knocked her down in the hallway of her home late on Friday night. Middleton was held in \$500 bail to keep the peace for six months by Magistrate Bernard Douras, who changed the charge to disorderly conduct.

Miss Randolph told the court that since last May Middleton had been annoying her because he had been unable to evict her from her apartment, for which she has a three-year lease, which does not expire until 1921. She said Justice Friedlander had decided in her favor in the Ninth District Municipal Court three weeks ago, and that since then Middleton had flashed lights into her bedroom from across the street, and had shuffled his feet in front of her bedroom late at night to prevent her from sleeping.

The Young Men's Christian Association, which has been unable to lodge hundreds of young men coming to the city, has appealed to the public to lend spare rooms to the organization to be rented to young men who are strangers in the city. The Y. M. C. A. dormitories are overflowing and at each branch there is a long waiting list of applicants.