

'HEIGHTS & 'VALLEY

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NEWS

FREE

PUBLISHED BY COLUMBIA TENANTS' UNION

COLUMBIA TENANTS' UNION

RENT AND HOUSING CLINIC

EVERY TUESDAY, 6-8 PM and EVERY SATURDAY, 12-3 PM

at the
C.T.U. LOFT
250 West 106th Street



FED UP TENANTS LAUNCH STRIKES

BLOOMINGDALE LIBRARY SIT-IN



Throughout the West Side, the record-breaking cold spell stimulated a large number of tenant actions against landlords who failed to provide heat, or who otherwise welched on their obligations to tenants.

The tenant organizing efforts ranged from semi-abandoned blocks in Manhattan Valley (see article on 61 W. 105 St. in this issue) to middle-income apartment houses in the Columbia neighborhood. On W. 111 St. between Broadway and Amsterdam, a block with many problems, there have been meetings in several buildings.

On Morningside Heights, the most significant of these actions to date is the rent

strike that began in January, with the participation of 40 families, in 535 W. 110 St. This building has made innumerable attempts in the past to organize and put pressure on their landlord; apparently, this time, they have gotten it all together. The building has a network of floor captains, the tenant committee collects the rent at a table in the lobby, and a colorful, witty newsletter is appearing under each tenant's door once a week.

An article on 535 W. 110 St. begins on this page; other tenant actions are covered beginning on page 4. We regret that we can't cover *all* of the many worthy tenant efforts that are occurring up and down the West Side this month.

535 W. 110 St. in action

by Harold Seiden,
535 W. 110 St. Tenant Assoc.

respect Mr. Borg is very peculiar.

The tenants of 535 W. 110 St. are on rent strike against Abraham Borg of

Mr. Borg is what you might call a "blamer." He blames the city for a week water failure over the holidays that was supposed to be Ymas and New Year

week in protest over recent 10-hour cuts in service. Above, sit-inners on the first day of the protest. Roziewski, a library administrator from downtown. They asked why Bloomingdale has been cut from 60 hours to 28 hours in only five years. "No money," Roziewski said. The sit-in schedule is: Mon., 7 to 9:30 PM; Tues., Wed., Fri., 6 to 8:30 PM.

WANTED

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COLUMBIA TENANTS UNION
RUMMAGE AND BOOK SALE
FOR OUR PICKUP SERVICE, CALL
850-5593 or 865-9146

This sale, held every Saturday from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the C.T.U. Loft (250 W. 106 St.) offers real bargains to the community: all items are 25 cents each.

The proceeds help to sustain the C.T.U.'s fight for tenants' rights on the West Side.

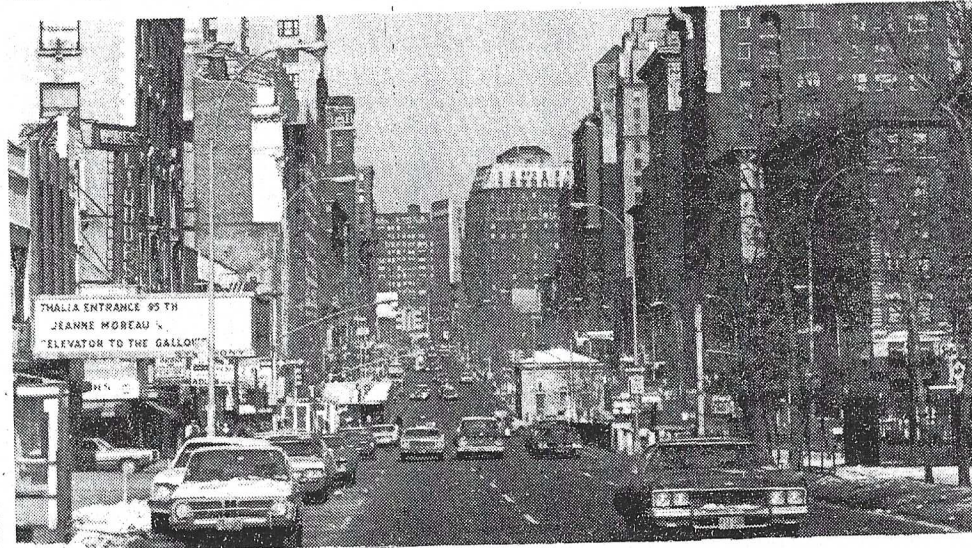
Over 60 buildings abandoned

A little over two years ago, *Heights and Valley* reported that building abandonment was beginning to run rampant in Manhattan Valley. In a survey then, we reported 30 buildings abandoned and 30 more on the brink of abandonment.

On Feb. 1st of the current year, we conducted a new count of the area between 101st St. and 110th St. east of Broadway, and found 61 buildings completely vacant. From tenant organizing efforts of the Columbia Tenants Union, we have information which leads us to conclude that the landlords in at least 40

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IS OUR MERCHANT COMMUNITY DYING?



The 'Broadway spine'—looking north from 94th St.

by Dennis King

The Broadway spine is in serious trouble. That vital commercial strip which binds together our community and offers the goods and services without which residential life is impossible, has entered a decline that may very well be irreversible.

This problem is a topic of extreme worry to the 24th precinct police, who are quick to see the significance of new economic and demographic changes in our community (after all, they experience the results most directly). But the decline of Broadway—and also of the business communities on Amsterdam, Columbus and the major cross streets—should be a topic of worry in the community as a whole.

A study by the State Department of Commerce in 1970, revealed a total of 5,900 street-level retail stores on the Up-

per West Side from 57th St. to 125th St. An update of this inventory in 1975 showed that the number of businesses had declined to 3,700.

A third inventory in 1976 revealed that the total of retail establishments had fallen to 2,611. In other words: a 58 per cent drop in the total number of merchants in only six years.

Heights and Valley talked with Murray Siegel of the West Side Chamber of Commerce, and with many merchants up and down Broadway.

Redevelopment sites

According to Mr. Siegel, the clearing of urban renewal sites, and other redevelopment sites where demolition has occurred and new construction has been delayed, accounts for 500 to 600 of the

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He blames the weather for the January 18 failure. He blames the weather (again) for the February 3-5 failure.

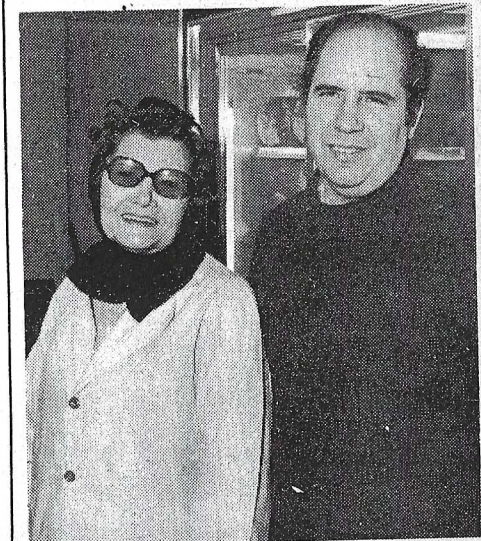
He blames the tenants in all these instances for greatly prolonging the water shortage because they stored too much water and used buckets of water to flush their toilets and filled their tubs with water. Borg blames everybody else.

BORG NEVER BLAMES HIS OWN GREED FOR THE DOLLAR. That is why he doesn't keep the building water system in good repair.

Borg admits that the building's pipes are corroded. He has two pumps in the basement which he could use at the same time. But he is afraid to use more than one pump at a time because the corroded pipes might burst. He told tenant committee member Langdon Williams that he would use both pumps only if the tenant committee would sign a paper taking full responsibility for bursting pipes and water damage that might result!

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MERCHANT OF THE MONTH



Mrs. Joy Estrin ('Mama Joy') with her son Herb. Their popular delicatessen at 113 St. & Broadway has opened a new section. See 'Merchant Notes' on page 12.