Questions to Ponder

IF RENT TRANSACTIONS are really freely made contracts, why is it that one person can make all specifications, and the other none? The landlord can tell you exactly how he expects you to make use of the property, but you certainly can't specify how he is to utilize your rent money. He might well demand, for example, that you not perform certain actions that irritate him, such as holding parties, having overnight guests of the opposite sex, or working on your car in the driveway. But can you then, in return, demand that he not use your rent money in a way irritating to you, such as in supporting right-wing political candidates or campaigns against abortion? Of course not — he has all the power and you have none. *Rent is not a free agreement because one party has more power than the other. Unfree interactions are varieties of coercion.*

If renting is just another form of economic transaction, why does it have a characteristic completely unlike any other, in that it posits A DEBT THAT MUST BE PAID FOREVER? In no other dealing between people is it considered fair that infinite prices will be attached to items. *No one would pay an infinite price for anything except when forced to do so. Since the alternative to renting, for those without wealth, is homelessness, people are forced to agree to wildly disadvantageous terms. Is such victimization compatible with a free society?*

If there's no harm in rent, why is there harm in blackmail? Every argument for the justness of rent can be used to justify blackmail: it's simply a transaction in which one person pays for what the other has got, etc. *In what way is rent different from blackmail?*

If A has $10,000 all at once, and buys property with it, while B only accumulates $10,000 over a period of several years, why does A gain the power to make B pay him, not just for several years, but FOREVER? *Isn't this a form of discrimination against those who do not have a specific sum all at once? Can the social goal of equal freedom be achieved when such a wildly outrageous kind of disadvantage is enforced by law, acting as the servant of the wealthy?*

Any projected improvement in society necessarily includes an end to landlordism and rents. Property, as a collective product of centuries of human labor, can only be owned by those individual persons who make direct use of it. Only in this way can a fundamental injustice, and a source of frustration, unhappiness, and exploitation, be eradicated.

RENT: AN INJUSTICE

a reprint of
THE MATCH!
Pamphlet Series

By I. R. Ybarra

RENT— AN INJUSTICE

I. R. YBARRA

BOOK OF THE DEAD

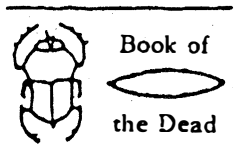
2003

enemy combatant publications
2017

Rent— An Injustice
by I. R. Ybarra

NOTICE:

This booklet has no ISBN (International Standard Book Number) because we have refused to compromise our freedom of press by obtaining one. We believe that forcing publications to have "standard numbers" is a definite step toward eventual censorship through regulation. Already a hefty fee is being charged for the granting of the numbers, and although ISBNs are a "voluntary" license at present, it is a widely-understood fact that no book can effectively circulate without one. When it becomes *impossible* for ISBN-less books to reach the public, whoever is in charge of granting numbers will have de facto control over published works, and thus the power to censor them by *refusing* to award numbers to certain kinds of material (for which a thousand rationalizations, refined over the long, ignominious history of censorship, stand ready). The author of *Rent— An Injustice* hated all such types of attempted censorship or unthinking regulation that leads to censorship, *AND SO DO WE.* Therefore, we've made the physical production of this book reflect our adamance against being ordered to conform.



This Book of the Dead edition, first published in 2003, is an unabridged new issuance of the booklet published in 1984 by The Match, Tucson Arizona. The present edition is newly typeset and produced wholly without the use of computers.

a woman's divorce and subsequent living with another man, to evict her (evictions are a source of income second only to rent itself for a landlord, since eviction "for cause" is a prime opportunity for landlords to retain for themselves all the "deposit" money tendered by the tenants, as well as to collect more from the next ones).

The slogan of the National Association of Landlords, as shown in the tabloid, is "We shelter you America". The truth of the matter is, however, that landlords shelter no one, while in fact the *LAW* shelters *THEM*... from the immediate expropriation that would occur if there were not force of gun and jail to back up this phoney, abusive, so-called property right.

No one has a right to extort rents anymore than he or she has a right to blackmail a person. A few "social reformers", who have been in a quandary about rents and the like, have acted as if the "rights" of landlords should still be respected even while doing away with the basic practice; and in this their irresolution is clearest. Landlords have no rights— they forfeit them by engaging in a criminal enterprise, for which seizure of dwellings by those who actually live in them, and complete discontinuance of paying of "rents", are the only remedies.

look forward to being repaid *FOREVER*, though the payments by renters total hundreds or even thousands of times the initial "investment". Thus a "profit" that generates at the expense of persons who had not that first lump-sum— a profit that arises with no creative or productive effort whatsoever.

Landlordism actually adds nothing to the world in the sense of bringing into being, through *WORK*, something that wasn't existent before. It is merely a legalized swindle which prevents small periodic amounts of money taken in by a wage-earner from ever adding up to the potency of their mathematical equal, so that ten-thousand dollars possessed by the landlord at a single moment, can produce lifelong obligations to him among the class of persons whose status allows ownership of perhaps one hundred dollars at one instant. Not surprisingly, the class of parasites on humanity reaps such succulent rewards from this practice that ownership of private dwellings falls, every year in an increasing portion, into the hands of non-dwellers who compel tribute from others, while feeling authorized at the same time to lay down conditions by which these subordinates are to live.

"Basically there are two types of people, leaders and followers," the *National Landlord* states. "You must decide which you intend to be. The difference in compensation and life style is vast. The follower cannot expect the riches to which a leader is entitled." This from some robber, some non-working "investor", some manipulator of inherited wealth! The fascistic philosophy of the landlord is fully exhibited in this statement as it arrogantly assumes the proper superiority of an occupation that draws the worst men and women to its ranks.

In other articles, the *National Landlord* discusses legal tactics to carry out against tenants; offhandedly remarks on the "numerous" evictions that are routine throughout the year, and gloats over a court ruling that allowed a landlord to use the excuse of

RENT— AN INJUSTICE

ENTING, the collection of rents, and the relation of landlords and tenants are, respectively, among the most humiliating, vicious and deplorable interactions that the human race, to its sorrow, has devised. Landlordism provokes unhappiness everywhere, and yet this shameful abuse pervades society unabated. It is worthwhile to examine first, before undertaking the abbreviated economic analysis which I will offer, the purely psychological, moral, and physical degradations which are thrust upon both parties to these execrable transactions. With a view toward demolishing the feeble defenses which the apologists for landlordism usually offer, I intend to show that this practice not only adds to the unwanted, harrowing authoritarianism that pesters our society, but it promotes also ugliness, sloth, and despair.

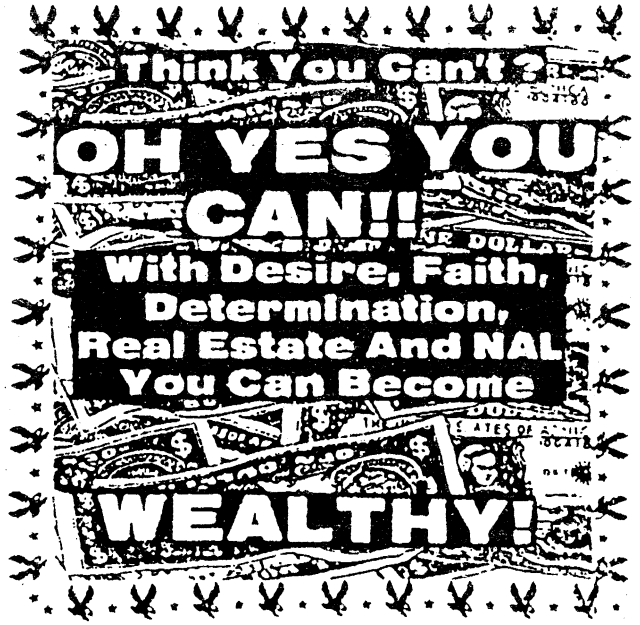
Let us begin by examining the nature of the relationship that exists between tenant and property-lord. Obviously this is an unequal sort of dealing, because one of the parties is in complete control, while the other has virtually no power whatsoever. Landlords can and do set the conditions by which tenants must abide, while tenants are in most cases not free, practically speaking, to quibble with the terms these authoritarians promulgate. Arbitrary conditions, the essence of snooping busybodyism, are listed or declaimed with a smug satisfaction that only the mentally emaciated can aspire to. Dozens of useless admonitions, comical were they not intend-

ed seriously to be obeyed, assail the would-be occupant of a simple dwelling. Woe to him who does not heed these silly regulations of fat, slatternly old men and women; his "deposit" will then be forfeit surely (as if it weren't in serious jeopardy anyway), and he can count himself lucky who escapes without at least a rent rise, or worse, a forcible subjection to the inconvenience of a sudden move.

For the tenant, or prospective tenant, all this forms the basis of an enduringly nasty realization that strident, boorish arrogance exerts a significant influence which, though he despises it, he is compelled to heed. The freedom-destroying and humiliating nature of this one-sided dealing is plain. The prospective tenant is moved by considerations of where he must live, the money he can spend, and limits on his available time to search for an acceptable "home". The landlord is complacent and uncaring about any such problems. The landlord can demand impossible terms, and will do so, first and last months' rent in advance, plus considerable deposits, in the certain knowledge that somewhere, someone will be able to afford his terms.

That this should lead to indolence, and consequently to stupidity, on the part of landlords is not difficult to apprehend. For the landlord, all healthy striving has now ceased; like a sluggish python digesting a deer, the propertied class swells and snores, its pudgy thumbs hooked in rolls of foulsmelling, unwashed fat. Unearned incomes breed complacency; complacency breeds mental stultification, and this last evokes greed for more unearned income.

With the passing years, accumulated dissipated moments and a lifetime of pure greed crystallize upon the leering, ignorantly chuckling faces of these parasitical, meddling robbers. Meanwhile, the victims upon which these vampires slake their thirst, struggle and worry month after month, year after year, to meet the exorbitant demands for ever-increasing, taxing, killing payments. Nor do these awesome expenditures even



Typical jumbled illustration from "The National Landlord". Yes, you can be wealthy— by robbing PRODUCTIVE people.

Nowhere in this publication is there the slightest hint of discussion about rightness or wrongness of making a controlled commodity out of a necessary prerequisite to human life. Instead, landlordism is seen as the opportunity of the century; by juggling "mortgages", "credit", and "contracts", an individual who already has a place to live can seize yet another home that is on the "market", can provide a "down payment" out of money collected by the process of extorting rents from other individuals who need a roof over their heads, and from this base can

issued by the National Association of Landlords in Washington, D.C.

The first thing that forcibly strikes the eye on gazing at this tabloid is the complete artistic degradation of the written word. This is, before anything else, possibly the most unattractive periodical one is likely to ever see. Heavy black lines, clip-art graphics, jumbled illustrations, frequent muddy borders of eagles and stars, blaring headlines an inch-and-a-half tall that say only such fragments as "RENTS" or "WILL" vie with gigantic exclamation marks and white-on-black reverses to create a hodgepodge that cannot be the product of a reflective and advanced intelligence. Screeching disorder and strident typographical cacophony combine with an ignorantly-written text to produce, on paper, a replica of the disagreeable mentality of the writers and editors as well as their intended audience— other landlords. The appearance of the issuance and its disconcerting ugliness are so abnormally striking that to mention the fact is almost obligatory, and is certainly not a variety of "ad hominem" attack. Confusion in print is probably the result of actual confusion; likewise tastelessness and mental impoverishment. Large interior slogans in a periodical, where there is not even the rationale of a potential reader's seeing them from a distance on a news rack, simply indicate an irrepressible desire to shout... and to be obeyed.

Style of what's being said is just as flat, stupid-sounding, and graceless; we read: "It is real dumb to operate your business in a haphazard way." This is on page 13; ironically, on page 9 a filler reads: "Be smart— Develop intellectual curiosity and there's almost no boundary you can't reach." (The filler is one of a number in the paper, ranging from such profundities as "Your success depends on you," to "Remember this, fellow landlords: DO buy one house or more a year for the next five years.")

guarantee that a person will have a *home,* since the tenant's privacy is no right which the landlord is bound to respect. Monthly, weekly, or even oftener "inspections" are commonplace, wherewith the owner purports to ascertain needfulness of repairs (which, however, he never will make). Of course actually these inspections are just dominance-submission rituals intended to unnerve the vulnerable dweller who practically exists on the mere license of this disgusting creature, and impress upon him for the umpteenth time that this property he lives on and in is not *his,* but belongs to the *LANDLORD.* Yes, the belching, imaginationless nobody professes to "own" the place where the tenant actually lives! Can anything more absurd than this be conceived of?

As if "ownership" of anything except for *use* had the slightest validity or defensibility! And since greed calls the shots, rental properties, homes, apartments, etc., are almost universally poorly-appointed, dreary and expensive. Plainly the degrading nature of this interaction infects the sensibility of the landlord and inflames or dulls the tenant. A poorer quality of men and women and children in the world is the result. How can there be responsible, mature, freedom-loving individuals when the world is divided up among those who, degradingly to themselves, live from the rents paid by others; and those who are forced to pay these rents and to tolerate the snooping, prying, laying down of arbitrary conditions, invasions of privacy, and frustration which are inevitable hallmarks of this practice?

A recent newspaper feature entitled "Some Professional Hints for Amateur Landlords" delineated these attitudes in a crudely callous form. "Failing to make regular inspections... is a mistake," the article's author claimed. Indeed, a blithe disrespect for the fears, pains, discomfitures and bitter humiliations of a whole class of people marks this expressed attitude. Not surprisingly, the author of the article is in the employ of one of the worst kinds of landlords of all, a professional real-estate company. To these haughty managers, "tenants" is a word denoting those from whom all human emotion and spirit have

evaporated so that they are left only with the quality of being an unfeeling source of money for property "owners". The ideal landlord, in this view, is one who never lets us forget for a moment that we are weak, rootless nomads who have a place to live, not by right, but by his lordly whim.

Yes, failing to make "regular inspections" is a mistake, from the landlord's position. And why? because otherwise there might grow to be a feeling among mere *tenants* that they had a home, a place to live and love in, a spot that was their own, where their humanity was respected. The "ideal" landlord is driven inexorably by the internal logic of the situation to be exactly what I have described, a *LORD,* and one who keeps his obtrusive presence constantly on hand to rub in the fact that that little humble room or apartment of yours is just a commodity which can be sold to somebody else any old time. Psychologically this leads to a poor image of self among tenants, while landlords are automatically in a position of some power, which corrupts somewhat. Yes, an exceptional person here and there contrives to retain a modicum of decency even while acting as a landlord but even still the master-slave relationship is present as at least an undercurrent, and its erosive ebb gnaws faintly but surely at the possible friendship and spontaneity that might otherwise exist unchecked between the two parties. There is nothing good that can be said about this practice whereby some own and others rent.

For concrete examples to illustrate the complete destructiveness and the injustice of landlordism, I turn to the cases of two acquaintances of mine, whom we can call Fred and Larry. Fred and Larry tenanted two separate apartments in a property owned by one landlord, a Mrs. E. She had purchased this bloc of apartments comprising some nine units in all, in 1947, at a total cost to her of $35,000.

During the first few years of her ownership of the property, Mrs. E. was able to rent out the units at an average of $50 per month apiece, or $450 per month. With rent incomes amount-

THE NATIONAL LANDLORD

RUSH THE INFAMOUS THING! This snarl of revolt, long ago prompted by religion, is the slogan I wish everybody would hurl toward the foul, *FOUL* abuse, landlordism. As I've noted, landlordism putrefies the very atmosphere of life, by imposing a *debt that can never be paid.* I've examined how this burden penalizes those who had the disadvantage to be born later than others; how it compels subservient attitudes in "tenants" and therefore caters to the interests of an UN-free society. My remarks, however, barely scratched the surface of the psychological cesspool of the landlords themselves.

The fact of a person's acting to bully, harass, and worry others is of consequence not only for its bearing on the victims, but for the depths of malignant callousness it pours into the psyche of such criminals. That tastelessness, ignorance, and oafish busybodyism are common traits in landlords, will have been observed by anyone who has ever had the misfortune to have to rent a dwelling-place. While some rare individual may escape complete depravity, though acting as a landlord, the general rule holds frequently enough to illuminate the unmistakable conclusion.

Since publications of tendencies or groups express the common denominators of behavior, attitudes, and opinion shared by the constituency, it may be worthwhile for the renter and non-renter alike to glance at a periodical called *The National Landlord,*

likes to think that *his* improvements result in a bettered living condition for the tenants; however, since *his* rent rise forced both Larry and Fred to move into inferior apartments, it can be seen immediately that injustice leads only to more injustice, and *NOTHING* within this capitalistic system results in an improvement except at the severe cost to *somebody*

Larry's new home is a single slum-room in a depressing architectural hideosity where there is not even running water, and where he must begin all over again the tiresome payments that never pay anything off, to another landlord. Fred moved away, leaving behind property in which he had invested $4500, but which he now has no claim on at all.

Any projected improvement in society necessarily includes, in view of the facts outlined above, an end to landlordism and rents. Property, as a collective product of centuries of human labor, can only be "owned" by those individual persons who make direct use of it. Only in this way can a fundamental injustice, and a source of frustration, unhappiness, and exploitation, be eradicated.

ing, therefore, to at least $5400 a year, Mrs. E.'s initial expenditure was repaid in some six and one-half years; in other words by 1954 at the latest. Being generous we can grant another whole year of rent incomes as having been used to pay taxes and upkeep until then (although very few repairs were ever actually made). This means that during the years 1955-1975, tenants continued to pay Mrs. E. on a completely irrational basis, since she was doing nothing whatever to deserve payments from them. Her expenses and even efforts were long since amply repaid. Why, then, should she deserve anything else?

Now, when Fred took up occupancy in an apartment owned by Mrs. E., in 1969, he paid $65 a month, plus tax and utilities. Between 1969 and 1975, therefore, Fred paid nearly $4500 in rent to Mrs. E. Considering that Fred lived in the apartment he rented for some six years, or 21% of the total time that Mrs. E. had retained possession of the property, the limits of fairness would seem to dictate that, at most, he should have to pay only about 21% of the total cost of *his own single unit* (and there were nine, bear in mind). Nevertheless, an examination of these figures shows that Fred actually paid *more than 100%* of the original cost to Mrs. E. of the unit he was living in, which, besides, had long before already been paid to Mrs. E. by the rents she had received during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In fact Fred really paid about 12% of the *total cost* of the entire bloc of apartments just during his six years of occupancy. Since, during all those years, and assuredly also in those preceding, effort put in by Mrs. E. into maintaining the property was minimal, it will be seen that an unjust payment was exacted for over 15 years from persons desirous of having a place to live. Owing to their economic misfortune (usually in not having inherited wealth), they were not as able as Mrs. E. was, to amass either the cash or the collateral all at once, so as to be able to do the same as she had earlier done, and in order to live at all they were forced to rent from either Mrs. E. or from someone else very much like her.

Inasmuch as many thrifty, industrious, hard-working tenants came and went during the nearly three decades that Mrs. E. held the property, it must be asked whether any innate, intrinsic quality of Mrs. E.'s set her apart from everyone else in that area, and made her deserve that the others' efforts for certain periods each month should be expended in earning money with which to pay her, while she did not work at all. No such extraordinary qualities were possessed by this woman, and thus it must be concluded that the payments of rents to her over those years since her investment was recouped, was unjustifiable. It is therefore plain that an economic injustice was perpetrated against the many tenants during the time since 1955.

A further irrational fact becomes evident: The property itself, the land, that is, was a part of the surface of the planet, and was created by no one at all. At some point it was appropriated by an unknown person or persons who subsequently passed down "title" to the sector to others. Since this original person or persons obtained the land for nothing, any payment he or she may have been accorded beyond their own costs of improving the land, when it passed out of the original owner's possession, was likewise unjustified. Whenever the land is today bought or sold, absurdity is compounded.

Moreover, the apartments on this land were constructed during 1919 and 1920, and whoever constructed them or arranged for their construction was no doubt amply repaid in about the same length of time as was Mrs. E. to be many years later. Thus, by 1930 at the latest, *NOBODY*, aside from the actual dwellers in the buildings, had any just claim to what was there. Therefore, Mrs. E. really had *no right* to buy the property in 1947 because at that time *no one had the right to sell.* By 1930, to state this in the plainest terms, no person had any legitimate claim to deserve recompense, since the original builders, improvers, etc., had already been repaid and had had the use of the land besides. The property "belonged" to whomever used it. All the subsequent "owners" and landlords were, in fact, impostors.

Now consider the other tenant. Larry was hardly able to afford the apartment which he rented from Mrs. E., but to augment his income by decreasing his rent he trimmed trees and grass, repaired porches, and so forth, for which work he was "compensated" by a reduction in the sum that he had to pay in rent. Larry rented for over three years, or one-ninth of the total time Mrs. E. had owned the property, and during that time he paid about $1800 to her in rents. This was 5% of what Mrs. E. herself had paid long ago and which she had no further right to be paid for, since her claims against the property, even such as they were, were already satisfied.

In early 1975 Mrs. E. decided to sell "her" property, and consulted neither Larry, Fred, nor any of the other tenants whose payments (which often, as in Larry's case, involved a real hardship at times) had made life so comfortable for her. Thus neither payment, nor work of upkeep on the property, nor occupancy, resulted in either of these tenants being afforded the opportunity to say anything about the disposal of the dwellings they inhabited. Since no other rational basis for ownership exists than those mentioned, it is clear that the rights of the tenants to their homes were completely abrogated. Yet, all this abuse was carried on with the full sanction of law and prevailing social morality. Obviously these last have nothing to do with what is correct or just.

After the property was sold, both Larry and Fred were forced to leave when the new "owner", after walking through the buildings for the very first time, emphatically declared that the heating, wiring, and other systems contained in the apartments were "inadequate", a fact which it would seem is to be determined actually by the tenants who live therein, and not by an ignorant interloper seeing the properties for the first time. Such "repairs" naturally would mean that enormous rent rises would be in order, and again, naturally, tenants were given no choice about whether they wished these so-called improvements to be made. Mr. N., the new landlord, smiles and chuckles and lives in a fancy home outside of town. No doubt he