

A few points to clarify the situation

WE were most happy to see Mr Husband's response to our letter regarding the rehousing of the residents of Fuk Wah Village. The morning after it appeared in print we contacted Mr Husband and he directed us to Mr Lau, the assistant housing manager for Lettings. Subsequently, the Housing Department Staff met with the residents and us to work out some of the remaining rehousing problems.

We deeply appreciate the time both Mr Lau and Mr Hau of the Ngautaukok Cottage Area Office spent with us in looking for alternatives for the various family rehousing needs. We would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the staff at the Ngautaukok Cottage Area for their concern for the people in Fuk Wah Village.

There are, however, a few points in Mr Husband's letter that we would like to address based on our own experience in this case. When the families first returned from their visit to the Housing Department in Homantin they were not aware that they had other options besides the original one offered to them. Therefore, the residents appealed to various Community Development Workers, the Kuntong Inquiry Service and concerned neighbours to give them advice and direction. They began to meet and later drew up letters which they sent to the director of housing. Since then definite steps have been taken, as Mr Husband states, to deal with the families on an individual basis.

We would also like to make note that before sending our original letter to this paper we first sent a double registered letter to the Housing Department. We did not receive any reply until October 29 almost three weeks later.

Looking back over the issue it would seem that misunderstandings initially developed around the

question of (1) whether or not the residents were given options for rehousing, and/or (2) whether or not they were informed about various options. Mr Husband stated in his letter that besides Shatin and Kwaichung "the possibilities for rehousing in other districts" were discussed with them. However, the residents maintain that they were not given other options. Because neither we nor Mr Husband were there at the time it is impossible to resolve this question.

But, in order to avoid this confusion in the future we would like to make the following suggestion. When a sudden natural disaster makes rehousing imperative for a certain group of people, a Housing Department Representative should first meet with the people as a group to hear their needs, to explain Housing Department policy,

general options, and to answer questions on where to seek financial help etc. Then appointments can be made to deal with the rehousing needs of the individual families.

We feel that in this group meeting the residents would be able to hear each others' questions and thus clarify the situation. This meeting would also give the Housing Department personnel a chance to explain policy and discuss the problems they face in entertaining individual preferences for rehousing etc. This open meeting would create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and co-operation and help to eliminate some of the anxieties experienced when people are confronted with an unexpected need for rehousing.

MICHELLE REYNOLDS and
HELENE O'SULLIVAN