

83 FAMILIES MAY LOSE THEIR HOMES

THE Housing Department may be forced to evict 83 Wongchukhang Estate families who have refused to pay the new scale of rents, a spokesman said today.

He said the deadline for them to pay up expired yesterday and the department is considering evicting them.

The families owed a total of \$38,000 and they have been given more than enough time to pay, he said.

The spokesman said these 83 families — out of 130 which moved into the estate in June last year — have refused to pay the new scale of rents which is from \$97 to \$160 a unit. The old scale was from \$65 to \$112.

Policy

Under a new policy flats still vacant on January 1 last year had their rents revised while those occupied were not affected.

"These families moved in from the Tinwan licensed area after the new policy came into effect," he said.

The department has checked on the background of these families and felt claims that they could not pay the arrears, ranging from \$695 to \$992, were not true, the spokesman said.

Several of the families interviewed by The STAR said they have refused offers from the department to move into other estates where the rent is cheaper.

They said it was unfair for them to pay more money for a flat while some of their neighbours paid less.

"This is very unfair," said Kwok Chi-ming, one of a family of 17 who occupies three units in the estate.

Mr Kwok said they owed

the department \$992 in rent because they continued to pay the old rent and have applied to the department to help them seek public assistance to pay the arrears.

Trouble

A representative of some of the families in Block 10, Mr Leung Tai-hei, said the 83 families were not trying to cause trouble.

"We just could not afford

to pay the new rent — it is also unfair that our next door neighbours are paying less, he said.

A Mr Ng Choi, father of a family of seven, said the new rent meant a difference of \$32 a month to him and he could not afford it in the present economic recession.

All residents interviewed have refused to comment on whether or not they will agree to move to cheaper flats in estates if the department force them to move out.