

South China Morning Post

Jan. 22, 1976

## Assistance for Mutual Aid teams

The Home Affairs Department has appointed some 113 community organisers to assist Mutual Aid Committees in their work, part of which is the collection of maintenance fees through persuasion and mediation.

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Denis Bray, stated this when he replied to questions on the work of the MACs yesterday.

He said the Small Claims Tribunal, when set up, would simplify the procedure for a civil action to collect maintenance fees owed to an MAC.

But he said the tribunal would not in itself ensure there would be no more problems over the collection of fees because it did not alter the fundamental law relating to contract and tort; nor did it create any new rights to enable MACs to collect fees from tenants.

The tribunal, he said, would probably be of more help to

those multi-storey management organisations, which had formed themselves into owner-corporations, than to MACs.

On another aspect of the work of an MAC, Mr Bray said it was a good idea that a Mutual Aid Committee should become involved in assisting and counselling discharged prisoners.

"Although they are not trained social workers there may be occasions when members of an MAC could assist and advise a young discharged prisoner living in the same building who is anxious to make a fresh start in life."

But Mr Bray stressed that two points had to be made:

First, the initiative to seek assistance and advice had to come from the ex-prisoner himself so that there would not be any element of compulsion.

Secondly, what the MAC does must complement, and not replace, the excellent work already being done by the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society.