

## Frazier Defends Slumlord On Condemnation

By JEFF BLOOM

Is it legal and constitutional to inspect and to condemn slum housing? This is one of the questions being used by Robert H. Frazier, chairman of Guilford College's Board of Trustees and attorney for W.W. Horton of High Point, who is the slumlord of about thirteen houses on Greensboro's Gillespie Street.

The city of Greensboro has inspected and has gone through the process of condemning some of these shacks. The case presently at point, the residence at 305 Gillespie St., was condemned at the first inspector's hearing, but was appealed by Frazier and Horton and will now go to the Guilford County Court.

According to Archie Andrews, of the office of city inspection, if Frazier cannot get the court to rule that condemnation of property is unconstitutional, he will probably question the procedure of inspection. But Andrews said recently that he was sure that his office has held to the set legal procedures.

The decision to condemn a house is made when it would cost 60% or more, of the value of the house to bring it up to legal standards of health and safety. Horton has argued that he could fix these houses up for less than that by his own standards. One of the differences between his standards and the city's is hot water, which he considers unnecessary in these houses renting for about \$50 a month.

But then Horton has a pioneer mentality himself. He may not rough it like his tenants are required to, but he goes to collect their rent wearing a gun in a shoulder harness and walks up the street like he owns it and the people too. One time he even told some inspectors to get the hell out of there; as he flipped open his jacket so that the gun showed; and they did.



**Sunday afternoon at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gilcrest of Gillespie Street.**

### SEVERAL VISITS

I have visited Gillespie Street several times. The first time, I got out of the car and was greeted by a few jars from one old man and cold stares from everyone else. To say the least, I felt unwelcomed by these people who were so indoctrinated with fear that it was pathetic. I was afraid, too, but I walked up to the house where the old man, Thomas Gilcrest, was sitting with his wife.

I asked Mrs. Gilcrest what she was going to do now that the houses were being condemned. She replied, "I got to move; I just don't know where to go." Although weary and hopeless, they showed a certain pride. When I asked what they thought of Horton and Frazier, she said, "Just what do these people want?" And Mr. Gilcrest yelled out, "You can just tell Horton to go to hell!"

A few minutes later a couple more people came over, a Mr. and Mrs. LeAnden Herring. They lived next door, but were evicted and were relocated in a housing project just up the street. When I explained to Mrs. Herring that we were trying to help the people here she repeatedly said, "God bless you!"

I asked her what she thought of Horton and she went into a rage: "If I ever get my hands on him!" They explained to me that they had received a water bill which they paid off, and which, they said, Horton mixed up with theirs. He tried to make them pay this larger one, and when they refused he had the water cut off and evicted them.

Mrs. Russell said that with the help of the city inspector, Andrews, they were able to move into the housing project. "This whole thing is a mess!" she said, "It's unsanitary!"

Concerning Horton, she said, "He's just not doing a thing right." She followed up by saying, and making a point of it, "But don't say anything bad about Mr. Andrews! He has really helped us." Her one last concern was, "All I have to do now is get my mother out of here."

Further down the street three women were sitting on the porch. As I approached, one got up and ran away screaming that she did not want her picture taken. When she found out that I was not going to take her picture she returned. One of the other ladies, Mrs. Rosa Stine, lived in this house. A widow, she lived alone and was self-employed as a baby-sitter. I asked her what she thought of these houses—she answered, "They aren't fit for nobody to live in! —Except for the rats-yea, the rats. They sure can have them!" She went on, "We got to pay so much for rent. But we stopped. We don't pay it anymore." Most of them have become so fed up with Horton and the houses that they went on rent strike. She told me to come in the house and take some pictures. I walked into the small combination living-room-bedroom. There was an old wood heater in the center with a pot on top of it. To the left of the door was a bed that was made up neatly. Next to it was a desk, and next to that, in the corner, was a dresser with a couple of bottles containing flowers. On the wall was a calendar with a picture of Martin Luther King, the person they could once look to for hope. I might add that, although she was not expecting me the room was neat. The rooms, however, were lopsided—one of the lesser evidences of the poor construction.

Mrs. Stine told me to take some pictures of the kitchen and of the bathroom: "They're really bad!" she said. These were the only three rooms in the house. In the small kitchen I saw an old wood stove, and a small porcelain sink that was falling off the wall. There is no outlet for an electric stove, and, of course, only a cold water tap in the sink. Her pride still showed through in her care of this miserable room. She would not let me take a picture of the two tables on which were a couple of pots and pans, and because they were "too messy." The bathroom was unreal! The tiny, unheated room held only a broken toilet, and no shower, bath tub, or wash basin.

I walked outside again and talked with the lady who had run off earlier. By now I was accepted as a fellow human. She said, "I've been trying to get after that man (Horton) for months to fix the water in my bathroom. It runs all over the place, that's why my water bill is so high! We don't have no hot, only cold! 'You don't need no water,' that's what he (Horton) said!"



**A scene in the home of Mrs. Stine—a Gillespie Street tenant.**

The largest family on the block has seven children plus the two parents. Their house has four rooms in the same amount of space as those with three rooms. The very tiny bathroom has a continually running

toilet and sink that does not work. There were originally thirteen families living in this section but this number has been cut by over half. Those who have been able to get into housing projects where the rent depends upon each individual's income and the maximum is \$75 a month. This rent includes electricity, gas, and water up to a certain reasonable limit. Not all have been so lucky yet, but if the city successfully condemns the property they will relocate these remaining families into standard housing. Many of the people have been evicted by Horton before the city could do this, however.



A row of Gillespie Street shanties owned by W. W. Horton.



The residence of Robert Frazier—an attorney of W. W. Horton.

## The Gillespie Defenders!

The shameful refusal of slumlord W.W. Horton to provide decent housing for the tenants who occupy his infamous shanties on Gillespie Street, is a sad reminder that southern ante-bellum chivalry still reigns supreme in Greensboro.

Particularly chivalrous is Horton's generosity in providing his tenants with such luxuries as cold water, out of order toilets, and energy absorbing floors which collapse on impact.

But even more worthy of mention is Horton's dedication to white paternalism. This is the virtue which enables him to arbitrarily decide that his tenants have no need for hot water, bathtubs and wash basins.

Not surprisingly the presence of Horton, a southern gentleman so dedicated to the welfare of his subjects, parking his Cadillac Eldorado in front of

a shanty on Gillespie Street provides a productive setting for mistrust, fear, and resentment.

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Robert Frazier's defense of W.W. Horton's Gillespie Street shanties leaves a deep almost incurable scar on the reputation of Guilford College as an institution of Quaker thought.

Certainly any lawyer's decision to dedicate his keen legal mind to circumventing North Carolina law and turning the courts into chambers of slumlord mockery is regrettable.

But for Frazier, president of Guilford's Board of Trustees and long time defender of Quaker traditions which include a respect for human beings as individuals and a deep sense of social concern, the decision seems absurd.

A cartoon, by an unnamed person, that appeared in this issue.



Included as a hit of the contexts of 1969. Appeared under “The Gillespie Defenders!”

## A Judicial Contradiction

The failure of the Student Affairs Committee to deal firmly with a student who shed his garments and sprinted naked through the streets of Greensboro is another contradiction in Guilford's long history of judicial disgraces.

The decision of the committee (possibly wise) to coddle the student with a relatively token sentence of disciplinary probation is a sharp contrast to the harsh punishment it imposes on students who leave marijuana unattended in their dresser drawers.

Apparently the committee is of the opinion that naked students who disrupt

businesses, invade women's dorms, and harass motorists are more deserving of mercy than students who forgetfully leave their marijuana unattended.

But even more revealing than the sentencing policy of the Student Affairs Committee is the failure of those who so gloriously led the crucifixion mob against Doug Reu to protest the sentence imposed on the naked student.

Evidently the mob's cries for Reu's permanent department were merely expressions of prejudice and resentment rather than sincere pleas for law and order.