

Squatting is Not the Answer

With the recent criminalisation of squatting in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, there are now few legislatures in the Western world that are as lenient with regard to squatting as our own. There is an unfortunate tendency to see squatting as a solution to homelessness, but such a view is a myth. Furthermore it is an idea that is corrosive to one of the great sources of cohesion in countries such as our own – people’s ownership of homes.

Home ownership is sacrosanct in this country, and a right to be enjoyed by all citizens. As a result, any violation is an unacceptable desecration. Squatting is just such a desecration, which is why it should be penalised much further it is currently. Squatting is not fair to those who have waited to save up and buy a house – it’s a form of queue-jumping, flouting the current conventions of home purchase and just occupying the place of your choice.

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At present laws on squatting are far too lenient. They allow any vagrant to come in and take control of property that isn’t theirs. Academics and leftists might think that’s a good idea but we as ordinary citizens and homeowners realise that we must protect property. There are stories of those who have gone on holiday and returned to find it very difficult to evict squatters. In other cases they have moved in after the death of the homeowner, causing yet more anguish for a family already grieving. They treat the property with utter disrespect. This is no better than theft.

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I know that some will say – with housing costs so high, and with the homeless struggling to find accommodation from day to day, what can be wrong with squatting? The fact of the matter is that squatting is often not conducted by the genuinely homeless but by middle class beatniks and punks seeking to subvert the system. These hooligans need be dealt with properly before we can provide better accommodation solutions to the truly homeless and destitute.

There are other, better ways to solve homelessness. The current Conservative administration’s policy of accommodation vouchers seems a step in the right direction. Other proposed projects could also make a big difference. The tiny houses scheme pioneered in Barsfield is promising, and could easily be scaled up. Moreover there is before the government a Homelessness No More program waiting for approval, which would see thousands of extra beds combined with a scheme to get the homeless the assistance they need to permanently stay off the streets.

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