



Members of the Women's Action Committee who have occupied premises at 24 Pump Street.

BUILDING TAKEN OVER FOR HOMELESS

The Derry Women's and People's Action Groups have taken over a three-storey building in Pump Street which they say will be used to house homeless people in Derry.

Mr. Pat Flanagan, speaking on behalf of the groups, told a "Journal" reporter that the building in question, number 24 Pump Street, had been empty for about a year. There was a great need for accommodation for homeless people in the city and the building would provide a home for about 15 people.

Mr. Flanagan said that at the present time the Social Services were providing accommodation for eleven homeless people in Derry. They were being kept at hotels whereas they could be accommodated in premises such as those now available at Pump Street, at a much reduced cost to the public. The premises would also be more suitable for the people in question because they would run the place themselves. If necessary, help would be available for them in this capacity.

The biggest problem which the groups are facing is that they are in dire need of furniture, bedding, kitchen equipment, children's clothing and general household effects. Mr. Flanagan said that they would be happy to hear from anyone who could help furnish the premises.

One of the things which Mr. Flanagan has stressed is that the centre is non-political and non-sectarian and is open to anyone from any area of the city. "Anyone who is homeless is welcome," he said.

Future plans for the centre include group therapy.

While 15 people would be the ideal number for which the centre would cater, Mr. Flanagan said that in an emergency it could cater for almost 40 people.

In a statement the Derry Women's Action Group

said: "Some months ago we mounted 'Operation Desperation' to highlight the lack of accommodation for battered wives, unmarried mothers, alcoholic women and homeless teenagers in Derry. Hostels are available for men none for women and children. For too long these people have been ignored by the community at large which has refused to recognise the appalling situations that many of these women find themselves in.

"63 Clarendon Street has been allocated as a night shelter for women after negotiations which lasted over 18 months. Such a shelter, while badly needed, still does not cater

adequately for the battered wife and her children who desperately need a 24-hour home. We have occupied 24 Pump Street for this purpose.

"For some months now we have spoken to individuals intimately concerned with the problems of battered wives. All agreed that action needed to be taken in the immediate future. We have taken that action by occupying a public building that has been left lying vacant since May 1975. Now we look for your support. We need volunteers, furniture, clothes, crockery, babies' cots and anything else that you can spare.

"Please play your part as a member of our community in helping the battered wives and children of Derry."