

Landlord vs. Tenant

The child prefers a stick of candy to his penny. The candy-man would rather have the penny than his candy. Similarly, Dad happily gives all of his savings for a car; while the auto salesman isn't happy until he gets rid of his cars. After every exchange between buyer and seller, both are satisfied that they received more than they gave. Not so with the tenant and his landlord.

No hatred seems to equal that of the tenant for his landlord; unless it is that of the landlord toward his tenant. The landlord feels he is not getting enough rent for his property, and the tenant usually believes he is paying too much for too little.

Why should the exchange of money for goods result in mutual satisfaction, and the exchange of money for shelter breed a mutual hatred? Is it because money representing material goods makes buying a car -- or a stick of candy -- an exchange of goods for goods; while paying for shelter is to give material goods and to receive nothing material in return? That difference cannot explain the hatred; because doctors, lawyers, and actors aren't hated even though they give nothing material for the money they receive. All give services--but the landlord's services and those of the others aren't really alike.

Papa is not compelled to use the services of the doctor, lawyer, actor, barber, etc; he can choose to use them or not. But he must have a home, month after month; and

throughout his life. His only alternative is to become a tramp; but making a living while hopping freight trains is very trying for the tramp encumbered with a wife, kiddies, and their assorted pets. So papa is compelled to pay rent.

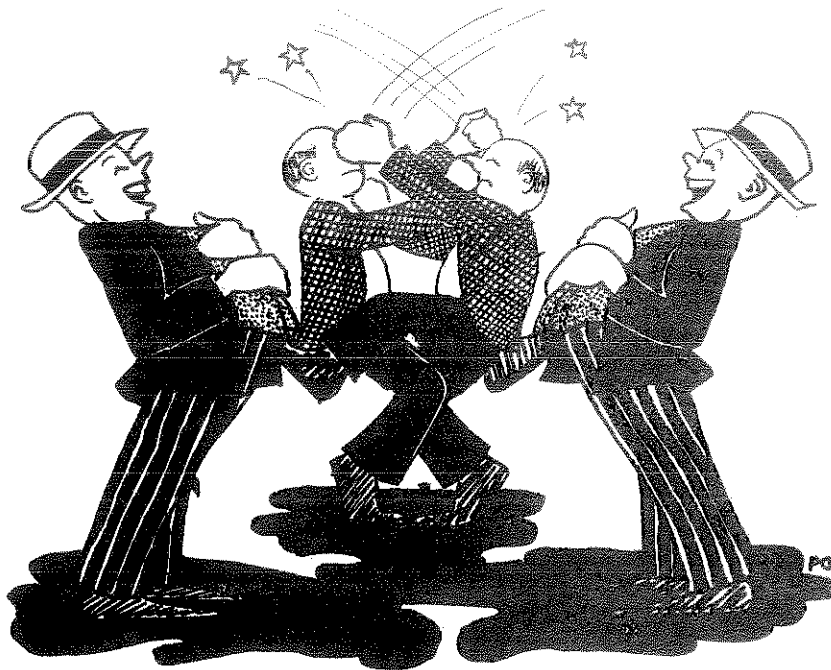
Other important differences are (1) the landlord's service doesn't stem from special training, talent, or skill; (2) the world's supply of talents, skills, etc., is unlimited in quantity, while land, which is the basis of the landlord's service is a fixed quantity. All shelter must rest upon land! So, if all land is owned, the owners can demand, AND GET, as much money as the homeless tenant has!

It is seldom mentioned that almost every square foot of the earth is owned; and by fewer than 5% of the earth's population. That means that 95 out of every 100 children born today are doomed to pay monthly tribute, in advance, as long as they live, for the privilege of having a dry place to sleep, a place to raise a family, a place to call home.

It is only human to resent being compelled to pay tribute. For tribute is something that is not paid for benefits; but to escape punishment. Racketeers, tax-collectors, customs-men, union-leaders; conquering armies are collectors of tribute. So are landlords. And that might explain why tenants instinctively hate their landlords.

But why does the landlord hate his tenant? The tenant isn't collecting tribute. See TALES #19. The answer might be there.

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Landlord vs. Tenant *PART II*

The landlord hates his tenant just as much as his tenant hates him. Why this should be so is difficult to understand; especially since "no tenants are as bad as no tenants." It may be that the landlord's hatred stems from his taking his title too seriously.

Originally, a landlord was a landowner; and as such he was truly lord of the land. He was absolute master. He could command his tenants to do whatever he wished. He could send them to war, take what they produced from them, choose the church in which they were to worship, and permit or forbid marriages if he chose. And most agreeable, the landlord was the only member of society who didn't have to do any work whatever; not even as a manager. His tenants believed it was their duty to keep their lord, and his heirs, luxuriously cared for. Tenants seem to have been nicer in those days.

But today, a "landlord" doesn't usually own any land. That which he calls his land is usually mortgaged so heavily, the mortgage holder owns a greater part of the "landlord's" land than he does. The "landlord" just pays the taxes.

Most often, the "landlord" doesn't even own the dwellings he rents out because they, too, are so heavily mortgaged. But he must pay the taxes on the dwellings, too. In other words, he's just a guy who has acquired the meaningless title, "landlord" which gives him no authority, but does permit him to pay the taxes on the land and property belonging, for the most part, to the mortgage holder.

In reality, the "landlord" is a speculator, a gambler, who according to the records,

loses his shirt more often than he hits a jack-pot. During hard times he can't keep his apartments fully rented. He must give rent-free concessions in order to get tenants; he must redecorate once a year to keep them. He must supply heat to tenants who love to keep their windows wide open in winter, and hot water to tenants who forget to shut off their showers. He is hounded for window shades, Venetian blinds, new wall paper, refrigerators, new stoves, and anything else the tenant may have seen advertised in House Beautiful.

When a war comes along to bring "good" times, and apartments become scarce, the "landlord" has a chance to jack up his rents. But then the government steps in and forbids him, the landlord!, to raise the rents. With "good" times, when jobs are plentiful, he must pay his janitors, elevator operators, and handymen higher pay to keep them from leaving him for better paying war jobs. But in good times or bad, he is taxed and taxed and taxed.

Any man in such a spot would have to hate someone. He can't hate the tax collectors because he realizes it takes a lot of money to run the government. He can't hate the banks after they so generously lend him money, keep his property well covered with mortgages, and thus give him his title, "landlord." Because there is no one else, he hates his tenants. He must blame someone!

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How about hating the two hilarious gentlemen in the above cartoon? They seem awfully happy; and that is a very suspicious attitude these days. Who are they? TALES will investigate them in later issues.