



CO-OP

Contact

UNITED HOUSING FOUNDATION • COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

KAZAN ADVOCATES HIGH LEVEL HOUSING CONFERENCE

Appearing on the CBS television program, "Right Now" on September 21, 1957, Abraham E. Kazan, executive vice-president of United Housing Foundation, suggested that Governor Averell Harriman, and Mayor Robert Wagner, jointly call a conference on the middle-income housing situation.

Later, Mr. Kazan said that he would call this a "conference with a purpose." The purpose would be for developing plans for construction of twenty thousand new moderately-priced units every year for the next five to ten years. Adequate housing cannot be provided by piecemeal methods. A constructive co-ordinated program must be undertaken. He made it clear that it was not up to the government to solve this problem. The suggested conference would include the participation of all savings banks and insurance companies in the city; it would also include labor unions with large

retirement funds and foundations which have large funds to invest.

The organizations would be asked to set up a mortgage fund of \$200,000,000 a year at 3½% for housing which would run for between \$20 and \$25 a room a month. He added from the experience of cooperatives, the prospective tenant-applicants would be willing to supply about 20% of the equity money needed. This would guarantee full occupancy and the success of the project.

Ira S. Robbins, executive vice-president of the Citizens' Housing and Planning Council, and Samuel Lefrak, a private developer, participated in the television program. Mr. Robbins proposed that the city should adopt a definite policy on granting tax abatements to non-profit and limited-profit groups who are willing to build middle-income housing. He said that such a program should provide tax assistance for fifteen thousand units a year for a five-year period.

UNITED HOUSING FOUNDATION MOVES TO NEW OFFICES

On October 1, 1957, the United Housing Foundation moved to new offices at 500 Fifth Avenue, New York 36, New York. The telephone number remains the same, BRyant 9-9852.



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A NECESSITY

*Harold Ostroff**

When we went to school, one of the things we learned was that there are three basic necessities of life, food (water), shelter, and clothing. These are necessities which man must have to exist — without them, he would perish. Of course, even before food and water, man must have air to breathe; but that is the one necessity with which man is provided without cost.

Much of man's time and energies have been devoted to providing himself and his family with fresh water, food, a covering for his body, and a place to protect himself from the elements, heat, cold, rain, and snow, as well as from the dangers of attack from animals and other men. In most cultures, a man's shelter also provided privacy to which a family is entitled. Even when man lived in caves (perhaps they can be considered the first apartments), each family usually had its own "unit".

In primitive society, man spent most of his time hunting for the food he ate, building his own hut, and making his own clothing. Today, most people work in order to earn the money to buy the food, shelter and clothing which is made for them by others.

Society has become much more complex. People's concepts of what the necessities of life are have drastically changed. A television set, a car, and if you have one, a second car, a dishwashing machine, a hi-fi set, a vacuum cleaner, these appliances and countless other gadgets, are considered to be essentials of life. Things which were once considered a luxury in time became commonplace and are accepted as being essential for living.

In a way, people become dependent upon appliances as necessities, but when the appliances break they find that they can do without them — at least for a short time. A family recently said that when their television set broke, they rediscovered the real important things in family living. For one thing, they talked to each other again. They began to read books, listen to music, etc. When the set was fixed, however, they once again became hypnotized by it.

In our modern society, our institutions, both public and private, have become exceedingly complex.

The federal, state, and municipal governments have become involved in almost every aspect of our daily lives. The budgets of many large cities today are far greater than the budget of the federal government in the 1800's. New York City spends 5.3 million dollars a day for the services of government.

It is, of course, recognized that the government is called upon to provide many more services than it ever did before. Many of these services cannot be provided by any other organization. Yet, we may wonder if government, as well as individuals, has lost sight of the basic necessities.

One cannot but question what has happened to our sense of values when more money is spent on building one super aircraft carrier than on the entire national housing program. One reads of billions of dollars being spent for new warships, and at the same time other ships are being put into the "mothball fleet".

One reads of fifty million dollars worth of army supplies being buried in the snow, and envisions the housing which could have been created for that amount of money.

One reads of the vast sums of money being spent for increased police protection, and wonders why a small part of that money cannot be used to attack the basic cause of crime and delinquency — poor housing.

One reads of the tremendous expenditures being made for roads, bridges, and tunnels so that people can leave the City with greater speed. If a fraction of these funds would be spent for decent housing, perhaps more people would want to stay at home.

One reads of the billions of dollars for subsidies which are given to corporations for one reason or another, and wonders why so little is spent to subsidize adequate housing.

In the recent war, as any veteran who was there can tell you, the three basic necessities of food, shelter, and clothing took on real meaning to the people of war-torn countries. It was indeed a sad sight to see men, women, and children fighting over the garbage outside of American army mess halls. It was pitiful to see the people living in the rubble of bombed cities and shivering because of inadequate clothing.

After many years, these people, their governments,

* Mr. Ostroff is the vice president of Community Services Inc.

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and our government with its aid programs, concentrated on providing the basic necessities of life to the people of these war-torn countries. It was a long time before the people concerned themselves with appliances and gadgets. Factories which once produced bombers turned out prefabricated houses. Cities were rebuilt with modern, non-luxury housing.

Without suffering the catastrophies of war, we

should be able to cope with our housing problems. This could be accomplished without tremendous sacrifices on anyone's part.

The purpose of the United Housing Foundation is to show people how, by a cooperative effort, they can help themselves obtain good reasonably-priced housing. The existing cooperative communities and the ones being planned provide ample evidence that this is a workable practical method of providing the average family with the basic necessity of housing.

World Conference on Cooperative Housing

*by Wallace J. Campbell**

"Cooperative housing has maintained its leading position in Sweden because it has pioneered in new architectural and technical developments in housing in addition to providing better housing for less money for the consumers."

This was the concluding note of the International Conference on Cooperative Housing held in Stockholm last July. With these words, Sven Kypengren of the Swedish housing organization, HSB (Sweden's leading Cooperative Housing Organization), challenged cooperative experts from all areas of the world to keep pioneering in the housing field.

Among the experts from 18 countries who participated in the conference were cooperative leaders from all the Scandinavian countries, the major nations in Europe, Malaya, Japan and the new nation of Ghana, and from Canada and the United States.

Cooperative housing associations are currently building 20% of the total dwellings in Sweden and Norway, according to a report presented to the conference by Leon Robert of France. The Danish co-ops are building 15% of the new dwellings in that country; and in the German Federal Republic (West Germany) where the building of dwellings has reached a particularly high rate, housing co-operatives were responsible for building 10% of the new homes. The same proportion also applies to Austria.

"Cooperative housing must adapt itself to quickly

changing economic conditions," Dr. E. Bodein of Germany told the delegates. "Major factors in these conditions are automation, atomic energy, the development of the common market (uniting the economics of western Europe), and steadily decreasing money values reflected in the growing inflation. Cooperative housing in all countries suffers from the need of adequate capital to meet tremendous needs for new housing," Dr. Bodein said. "In Sweden, HSB has such a long waiting list of prospective members that it will take five years to build enough houses to house present applicants."

Arne Amundsen of Norway presented a paper to the Conference, sponsored by the ICA (International Cooperative Alliance) Housing Committee, on "Technical Development in Building in Europe - 1945-1957." In it, he reviewed the development of new materials and construction methods, use of modular co-ordination and standardization, mechanization of building operations, prefabrication and new methods of planning and coordination.

Dwight Townsend, assistant to the Commissioner of FHA for Cooperative Housing, outlined the new U. S. cooperative housing program and said that "America has much to learn in cooperative housing, particularly from the Scandinavian countries."

Following the Conference, delegates devoted a day to visits to outstanding cooperative housing projects in Stockholm and vicinity as guests of HSB. Particular emphasis was placed on the role of consumer organizations in the development of new types of housing combining low cost and inward livability.

* Mr. Campbell is the director of the Washington office of the Cooperative League of the U.S.A.



Applicants for the James Peter Warbasse House at an informational meeting in the auditorium.

WARBASSE HOUSE

Undoubtedly many Brooklynites are concerned about whether or not the Dodgers will be leaving Ebbets Field. However, in the past few months we have met thousands of people from Brooklyn who have something much more important on their minds — housing.

The United Housing Foundation is sponsoring a 5000-unit cooperative in Brooklyn. It will be known as the James

Peter Warbasse House in honor of the founder and first president of the Cooperative League of the USA. This cooperative is in the planning stage, but already there are almost two thousand applications for apartments.

During the past month, two informational meetings have been held for prospective cooperators. The applicants have been invited in groups of six hundred



asse Houses attending the second informa-
ie Cooperative Village.

HOLDS MEETINGS

to attend these meetings. Both meetings have been well attended. Similar meetings are being planned for future applicants.

These meetings are being held to acquaint the applicants with the cooperative idea. They are told what is being planned, how it will be financed and built; they are given the opportunity to examine the layouts of the proposed apartments; they are

briefed on the progress of the plans; and they are given ample opportunity to ask questions.

It is envisioned that as the plans progress, each group will be invited to attend a number of these orientation sessions. The first meetings are being held in the auditorium of the ILGWU Cooperative Village in Manhattan to give the applicants the opportunity of seeing a cooperative community of 2700 families.

PROGRESS ON SEWARD PARK

As we go to press, the final t's are being crossed and the i's dotted in the Seward Park contract. Before this issue of CONTACT appears, the contract should be signed, sealed, and delivered.

Abraham E. Kazan, president of the 1728-unit Seward Park Housing Co-op, said the negotiations with contractors have been completed, and as soon as the contract with the city has been signed, the \$22,500,000 job will start.

As a matter of fact, some very important work has already been accomplished. To the average layman, the test borings being made in the accompanying picture, mean very little. But to the engineer, who must determine the kind of a foundation the building will have, it is a vitally important step. These test borings have been completed and the samples of the subsurface material are now being studied. This is the important first step before construction can start.



MUCH TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

"I believe there are certain things which are still crying for accomplishment in this country. I shall continue to raise my voice for them.

"I should like to live to see every American family living in a comfortable home, and every American child born and reared in an atmosphere sufficiently wholesome to guarantee an even chance for health and intellectual and moral development consonant with the responsibilities of American citizenship. I should like

to live to see the world at peace, where the inventive genius of man would be utilized to improve the conditions of life throughout the world. I should like to live to see the pledge of every nation respected by every other nation because it was made in good faith and observed to the letter."

Alben W. Barkley

Senator Barkley, or Mr. Veep as he was affectionately known, did not live to see the above accomplished. Much is left for the living to do.

Open Membership

Donald D. Martin*

When new social science and history books are written, a new memorable date and event will be recorded. The date will be September 24, 1957; the event, the federalizing of the Arkansas National Guard to preserve order and to uphold the laws of the United States government.

On the morning of this historic date, the following incident was observed. A little girl about eight years old (white) and a little boy about six years old (colored) left the main entrance of their apartment house together. The little girl was carrying a few school books; the little boy was busy counting pennies. He announced that he had ten cents. The little girl was impressed by two things. First, the wealth of the little fellow and secondly, that the little boy was going to school by himself.

She asked him if he was allowed to go to school by himself. He replied, "Sure I can go to *my* school by myself." Both children were leaving their homes in the ILGWU Cooperative Village to attend their school a few blocks away.

Later the same day, two visitors from Israel visited the same cooperative. They were both high officials of the Histadrut; both lived in cooperatives in different cities in their country. They were studying housing, for as they said, "Housing in Israel is one of our most acute problems."

Our guests were interested in all aspects of this cooperative community of 2700 families living, with a purpose, peacefully together. On a tour of the buildings, gardens, playgrounds, supermarkets, nursery school, etc., one could not help but notice the people with different racial characteristics. Our visitors, like many others, who have come from many other countries of the world, were surprised at the inter-racial character of the community. As cooperators, they know that cooperatives are open to all, but they had heard that in the United States it was different.

Perhaps they, like we, were even more conscious of the fact on September 24 because of the headlines in the newspapers they were carrying. "How does it

work?" was the first question they asked. It was a common question. We answered that a basic principle of cooperatives is open membership and that in this community we have people of almost every race, religion and nationality. The relations between the people in this cooperative and in other cooperatives where similar conditions exist, are excellent.

The next question was, "how many negro families live here?" Again we answered frankly, "We do not know; we do not count, and there is no way of telling. Applications are not marked to give a man's race, color, or religion. We know there are white families, negro families, Chinese families and Porto Rican families living in the development. The figures which tell how many of each do not exist. We do know that while every cooperative has many kinds of problems, racial tensions is not one of them."

Some of the news from Little Rock was just a *little* easier to take knowing that in our own cooperative-housing community, children, women, and men are living in harmony without strife and discord and that these people are helping each other in many ways. Were proud that we could show our foreign visitors examples of democracy, equality, and the other ideals which America is supposed to personify. We know that our cooperatives are exceptional in this respect.

Sadly we must admit that the hatred and bigotry demonstrated in Little Rock exists in many other places, in the North, in the West and East, and in our own city. We know that this is a disease, a disease that is a long way from being cured. It will take a long time to overcome the prejudices which have permeated so much of our society, but in time, this disease, like others, will be arrested and probably eventually cured. In searching for the remedies, the social scientists, psychologists, economists, teachers, ministers, and others who are concerned with this disease, have in cooperatives, an example of how people can live together in harmony.

When despair and discouragement is so prevalent, it is well to note, occasionally, the few bright stars of hope by which the future may be charted.

* Mr. Martin is the editor of Co-op Contact.

A True Incident

SOUP, COFFEE and EDUCATION

The demand for housing is so great that hardly an hour of the day or night passes when the officials of the United Housing Foundation are not besieged by someone who desperately needs an apartment for himself or a close friend. As is their custom, the officials of the United Housing Foundation take time out for lunch, and frequently they eat in the same place. It is natural, therefore, that the waiters and others in the restaurant have learned that these men are connected with housing.

During the course of a day, a waiter walks many miles and is seldom off his feet. If he lives on the fourth floor of a walk-up apartment, the long flights of stairs are apt to appear quite formidable when he gets home.

On a particular day, not long ago, a waiter, after serving a United Housing Foundation official his soup, asked what the chances were of getting into a new cooperative being built in the Bronx. He was surprised that instead of a yes or no answer, he was asked, "What union do you belong to?"

"Local #1," was his reply.

"How many members in your union?"

"10,000."

"What does your union do with its retirement fund?" was the next question he was asked.

"I don't know. After all, the average member does not have much to say," was the waiter's reply.

"If you and others in your union would talk about how your union might invest your pension funds in

cooperative housing, perhaps you would be able to find a decent place to live," was the UHF official's reply. "But it is a small union," the waiter said.

"Yes, I know, but could not several small unions join together and each help finance a cooperative development? That is being done now. Your union and others can do it also," was the answer.

The waiter departed to attend another table. When he returned he said, "It's a good idea for the union to get interested in housing. I never thought of it. Perhaps something could be done."

Yes, it is a good idea. If enough unions would get interested, something could be done. Only a few unions have participated in financing cooperative housing developments. Where they have done so, their funds have been instrumental in providing housing which thousands of families, members and non-members alike, are enjoying for less than \$20 a room per month.

Only the largest unions could afford to undertake financing of a large project alone — but together, a number of smaller unions, each investing one or two million dollars, could underwrite the financing of a large project.

If our friend, the waiter, and the linotype operators, the elevator operators, the postal clerks, the machinists, the telephone repairmen, the barbers, etc., etc., etc., hope to find decent places to live, they had better start an educational job to enlist their unions' support.

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