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October 31, 1966

STATEMENT TO THE SKOKIE VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ON THE SKOKIE PLAN

From: THE SKOKIE FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE and THE NORTH SUBURBAN ORGANIZATION FOR FAIR HOUSING

When the Village Board of Trustees passed its highly commendable open housing resolution, it also authorized the Skokie Human Relations Commission to make that resolution a "working reality." We are here tonight to point out to the Trustees that certain aspects of the plan devised by the Commission for this purpose contradict and subvert their resolution. Embodied in the resolution is the following statement:

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the President and Board of Trustees of the Village of Skokie that we believe it is morally wrong to deny equal housing opportunity when based on race, creed, color or national origin whether by express or tacit agreement, silence or custom."

The "Skokie Plan," in its voluntary agreement with realtors, allows realtors to accept discriminatory listings. By doing so, it contradicts the Trustees' declaration that any express agreement to deny equal opportunity for housing is immoral. The resolution declares that discrimination is immoral under any conditions. The "Skokie Plan" declares that realtors can discriminate under the condition that the homeseller instructs him to do so. The "Skokie Plan" thus assumes the right of brokers and homesellers to enter into express agreements to discriminate. We are certain that when the Board of Trustees becomes aware of these implications of the plan, they will recognize that the Commission, and ultimately, the Board of Trustees are responsible for allowing and even implicitly sanctioning an agency licensed by the village and the state to engage in discriminatory practices in housing.

The booklet, Your Home and Skokie's Future, distributed by the Human Relations Commission, is a splendid effort. In general, that aspect of the "Skokie Plan" which is directed at educating property owners is beyond reproach. However, that aspect of the plan which is directed at realtor discrimination not only contradicts the Trustees' resolution but is ineffectual even when judged on its own terms. In accordance with their plan, the Human Relations Commission has asked for and received written pledges from twenty-three Skokie realtors to the effect that they, the realtors, will assume all property listings to be non-discriminatory unless they are otherwise instructed by the property owner. According to the plan, the broker is not to influence the decision of the property owner in any way. But it is impossible for the Commission to determine who places the restrictions on property; it is impossible for the Commission to test their own plan.

In recent weeks, the North Suburban Organization for Fair Housing has presented to the Commission lists of homes which realtors had refused to show to Negro home-seekers. The Commission was asked to in-

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investigate these lists in order to determine whether or not their plan was working. In an article which appeared in The Skokie Life on Thursday, October 27, 1966, headed "REALTORS CLEARED IN PROBE," Dr. Herman Bloch, chairman of the Human Relations Commission, expressed the view that the realtors involved "are apparently maintaining good faith with their pledge," and that "his organization is now satisfied its plan has not been violated." Anyone who will examine the report of the Commission's Administrative Secretary on her investigation will find it difficult to understand how the Commission could come to such conclusions. The facts are as follows: a sample of twenty-five cases was selected from the forty-seven presented to the Commission; out of the twenty-five cases, the secretary contacted only seventeen home-owners directly (she stated that she had checked on the remainder with the realtors themselves). Out of these seventeen cases, two home-owners stated that they had instructed their brokers to sell on an open occupancy basis; only five stated that they had instructed their brokers to discriminate; and the rest either did not want to discuss the issue or stated that their homes were sold or taken off the market. When a home-owner states that he has instructed his broker to sell on a non-discriminatory basis, how does the Commission know that the broker is acting according to the homeowner's instructions? When a homeowner is reluctant to discuss this issue with a representative of a public agency, where is the evidence that he has or has not instructed the realtor to discriminate? Or, when a homeowner states that his home is sold or taken off the market, how does this indicate anything about the owner's instructions to his broker? Given the character of these data, how can the Commission publicly inform the community that they are now satisfied their plan has not been violated? We submit that the "Skokie Plan" itself, being voluntary and having no enforcement powers or procedures, makes it impossible for the Commission to be either satisfied or dissatisfied that realtors have not violated the plan. As a matter of fact, realtors are finding it easy to "cooperate" with the "Skokie Plan" and, at the same time, to perpetuate our segregated housing patterns.

In summary, we believe that the "Skokie Plan" does not make the resolution passed by the Board of Trustees a "working reality," but, in fact, contradicts and subverts that resolution; and that the Commission is not able, under the plan, to stop (or even determine) discrimination by realtors.

We believe that the Board of Trustees should pass legislation similar to that of the Village of Naywood which would make it illegal for realtors to accept discriminatory listings.

We also believe that the Board should make public the failure of the "Skokie Plan" to produce real change so that other communities will not fall victim to the illusion of change that it creates.

If the Board of Trustees is serious about its own resolution, it must take these steps. If it is not serious, then it can allow the Human Relations Commission to continue to obscure the real problems facing the community by following a policy which prevents progress.