

Mr. Chairman and members of the Skokie Human Relations Commission - Thank you for inviting me this evening to discuss the program of the Skokie Human Relations Commission to effect open housing through^{out} the village of Skokie. I am speaking tonight not only as a fellow citizen of this fine community, but also as a member of the executive board of the Conference on Religion and Race. The Conference is a Tri-religious organization whose sponsors are the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, the Chicago Board of Rabbis, and the Church Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. The Board has been active, and we believe effective, in proposing solutions to some of the many problems that beset minority religious and racial groups in the metropolitan area. We have also been effective in implementing these programs.

We have long been concerned with the problems of housing, which while merely one segment of the overall dilemma that confronts the white community and the negro community, is one that we can begin to solve. To that end we have encouraged experiments aimed at permitting the negro to buy housing on a free and open market, just as the white anglo-saxon Protestants can purchase real estate wherever they desire.

One of these experiments that we approved was the Skokie Plan. We did it with some misgivings; however, we felt that it would be worth the try, because we knew that a goodly number of people in Skokie would exert their best efforts to make this plan workable.

We believe that the plan has failed. Now, since it is true in the language of the Psalms, The earth is the Lords, the world and they that live therein, we must now proceed with all of the tools available to a democratic society and with all possible speed, to make the inventory of housing in Skokie available to anyone who has the money to purchase it.

We believe both from a religious standpoint and from a political standpoint that an ordinance should be adopted at this time to insure that no discrim-

ation can take place in the housing market by any individual who is authorized or licensed to do business by any governmental body. We can hope that here Skokie will be one of the growing list of pioneers who will make it possible for the legislature to adopt a statewide statute. In the meantime, Skokie should do everything in its power to achieve open occupancy.

We all know too well the price of living in a slum and a ghetto. The smoke of Newark and more important, the lives that no longer exist, should serve as a prophetic proclamation. In order that those dead should not have died in vain, we must do all in our power to make it possible for the negroes in our metropolitan area to know that there is a way out. We learn in the Talmud that he who saves one life is one who has saved the entire world. Make no mistake, we are talking about saving lives. While as the ethics of the fathers tell us, it is not incumbent upon us to complete the task, neither are we free to disist from starting the task and doing all we possibly can.

We know that negroes can buy houses in our community and not cause depreciation of the homes about them.

We also know from experience in other communities, such as Boston, that if every broker is required by law to act in a moral fashion, then those brokers who attempt to steal a march on their fellow brokers who are acting morally by showing houses to one and all can be stopped. They can be prevented from forcing the real estate business to be conducted at the level of the most immoral broker in the village. With an effective ordinance, we can permit those brokers in our community - and their number is significant - who desire to treat each person, black white or yellow, as an individual human being, to do so, without fear of losing business due to backbiting by the racists.

While we can say that you cannot change the hearts of man with laws, we who understand the Christian and Jewish traditions, know that the law is

important. Sinai, and the history of man thereafter does have a meaning for man today. We sometimes paraphrase this in our democratic speeches by saying proudly "ours is a government of laws and not men". Those laws are meaningful because they help us to treat each man as a unique personality who has all the rights of every other man in our society. These laws not only require man to act legally, but they also serve to educate man to his responsibility. These laws and their positive effects, have been witnessed by every one of us. We have seen the law work to regulate the sale of securities. We have seen the law work to regulate the use of land. We all take pride in our local zoning board because it requires that no man can recklessly use his own plot of soil without considering the good of the community. Just as today we applaud the zoning laws which scarcely 40 years ago were decried as being unconstitutional means of taking a man's property from him, so too we can applaud a proposed ordinance which will put into effect those moral principles upon which our society is based.

This type of ordinance will enable every man to purchase real estate without any consideration being given to his race, color or creed. Consequently the Conference on Religion and Race strongly recommends enactment of an ordinance that will decrease discrimination in the housing market, including one regulating the activities of brokers.