

Skokie Valley Council
of
Parent-Teacher Associations

April 19, 1967

To all Presidents, Human Relations Chairmen and Legislation Chairmen:

On April 11, 1967, hearings were started in support of Senate Bill 155 concerning Illinois Fair Housing Practices before the Senate Committee on Registration and Miscellany in Springfield, Illinois. Proponents were heard only on April 11 and hearings will continue on April 25. After all proponents testify, opponents will be given a hearing.

Reprinted below is the statement on open housing given at this hearing by Mrs. Barry Norton, Legislation Chairman of the Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers. Attached hereto are statements given by Mr. Donald P. Perille, Co-Chairman, Skokie Human Relations Commission and testimony of Sister Mary Olivia Barrett of Saint Xavier College in Chicago. Many other statements were given by leaders of business, industry and labor organizations as well as the Illinois Commission for Fair Housing and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations.

"What is the contribution that the Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers can make in supporting open housing in this state?

It seems to me that the most significant factor in PTA support of open housing is that we are a tremendous organization, 650,000 members, organized and operating in every county in the state.

The PTA unquestionably represents a more accurate cross section of the population of this state than any other organization. The membership includes all races and religions; all economic groups, farm, labor, white collar, blue collar, professional and business; all levels of society, uneducated, college educated and everything in between. The one thing that binds them together is a common concern for the welfare of children and youth.

The PTA platform item reads "Support of adequate housing, on a non-discriminatory basis, to raise the standards of home life." This plank was adopted by the delegates at the annual state convention several years ago. Every local unit, each year, has the privilege of offering changes in the legislation platform, including omissions and additions. The housing position has been discussed at PTA conventions from time to time but in each instance the delegates determined that the position represented an accurate consensus of grass roots PTA opinion.

In addition to its traditional and specific concern with legislation which directly affects the schools, the PTA has always involved itself in legislation which affects the social conditions which determine the quality of life for children. The housing plank is an expression of our efforts to create, in the state of Illinois, a climate which will make it possible for all children to grow up into happy, healthy, productive citizens, capable of participating fully in the political and economic world in which they will live." -- Peggy Norton

Further information on these hearings on Senate Bill 155 can be obtained from Carol Goldstein, Legislation Chairman.

Charlotte Goodstein, Parent Education 206, 003, 047

It is both a pleasure and a privilege to be appearing before this committee today. I am here as Co-chairman of the Skokie Human Relations Commission and speak for that body today. The Commission is an official arm of Skokie Village government, established by ordinance, as opposed to voluntary councils or committees. This does not necessarily make us better... only more official.

We are here to discuss Senate Bill 155. However, in judging the merits of this bill, you gentlemen must weigh the merits of similar bills now in the legislative hopper. Concerned as to how consideration of other bills might effect your thinking on Senate Bill 155, I believe it is pertinent for the Skokie Human Relations Commission to comment on one particularly prominent bill.

It has been alledged that House Bill 675, which allows a homeowner to discriminate in the sale of his home by so instructing his realtor, is patterned after the Skokie Plan for voluntary fair housing. In view of this the Commission must make two points crystal clear.

(1) The Skokie Plan, in extending this feature to the homeowner, simply recognized a legal right that existed, or at least was not specifically prohibited by any state or national law or court decision. We oppose this feature as a part of state law as it legitimatizes an act of discrimination which we believe to be morally wrong and contrary to the best interests of all citizens of this state.

(2) We take serious exception to the extravagant claims we understand are being circulated in Springfield as to the success of our plan. Such claims could not originate from anyone in Skokie who is knowledgeable.

I would like to be able to report that the Skokie Plan has been unequivocally successful, but I cannot. We believe that it has had great value in making fair housing official village policy and as the basis for education in the continuing discussion on the need for fair housing generated by the publication and mailing to every homeowner in Skokie, this booklet, "Your Home And Skokie's Future". But to say that our plan has opened up our village or that we have fair housing is simply not true.

Having completed the first year of our experiment in voluntary fair housing, we would recommend the educational phase of the plan to all Illinois communities. Our records indicate an unmistakeable trend in Skokie homeowner attitudes toward selling on an open basis or at least away from selling on an discriminatory basis. Regretably, during this same period of changing homeowner attitudes, not one home in Skokie was sold to a Negro by a Realtor.

In view of this experience, the Commission believes that while voluntary plans have educational value, they cannot, by themselves, bring about open housing. They require the support of law, on as wide a geographical basis as possible. The Skokie Human Relations Commission, by unanimous vote, recommends enactment of a comprehensive state fair housing law with enforcement provisions. We feel that Senate Bill 155 contains the features such a law should embody.

I think it important to point out that the Commission is representative of our village. Several members are Republicans, long active in local community affairs. Three of those are precinct captains, two of which, including myself, were area chairmen for Senator Goldwater in 1964. A few of the fifteen members might be portrayed as active integrationists, but all of us are practical men who recognize the need for change.

Many of us have opposed fair housing laws in the belief that the individual should have the right to dispose of his property as he saw fit, within the confines of public health, safety and welfare. But we realize now that the real abridgement of this right is not in the law itself but in the absence of law. We do not find that it is the seller who fears fair housing legislation. It is the one who is staying that fears it. In the absence of law, he joins with others, including many real estate brokers, to coerce the seller to do his bidding. A viable, workable law will eliminate this abuse of freedom and permit both buyer and seller to exercise their God-given right to acquire, hold or sell real property in a fully free manner.