

WBKB-TV

ABC
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TO
FROM
DATE October 11, 1967
SUBJECT Harry Homewood Commentary

In 1965 the Wisconsin Legislature passed an open housing law. It is not a strong law. Father Groppi is trying to get Milwaukee to pass a much stronger open housing law. But at least the Wisconsin Legislature was sensitive to the wishes of the people it represents.

Back in the early 1840's Gov. Thomas Ford of Illinois said the Illinois Legislature was so swelled up with its own importance that it paid little attention to the wishes of the people.

The Illinois Legislature is still highly conscious of its own importance. It still doesn't pay a whole lot of attention to the wishes of the people it represents.

There are some forward-looking members of the Illinois Legislature--a few. They have fought hard to get Illinois to enact open housing laws. The Legislature has beaten back every one of their efforts.

Oddly enough--more than half the people living in urban communities in Illinois are covered by open housing laws enacted by their own communities. This week Skokie became the 16th Illinois community to enact open housing. The Skokie ordinance follows the outlines of the Chicago ordinance--which bars discrimination by brokers in the sale or rental of housing. Another Illinois community--Aurora--tabled a proposed open housing ordinance because it was too weak to do the job.

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Most of the opposition to open housing is founded in the fear that once such laws are passed the community will be flooded with shiftless minority groups. Obviously--16 Illinois communities do not share that fear--and rightly so. The harsh laws of economics--of being able to pay for what you want--works against such mass migrations.

There is--of course--a practical reason for passing open housing laws. It is--quite simply--good for business. Smaller communities need a growing supply of labor if they are to attract new business and industry. In the opinion of many economists--the community--or state--that continues to resist open housing laws risks its economic future.

The Illinois Legislature continues to resist the passage of open housing laws.

More than 120 years ago Governor Ford deplored the fact that the Illinois Legislature was blind to the needs of its state. Governor Ford would feel right at home in today's Illinois Legislature...

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