

ALB

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*Samuel*

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On July 12, 1965, the Skokie Board of Trustees resolved that it is morally wrong to deny equal housing opportunity when based on race, creed, color or national origin, and in November of the same year, directed the Human Relations Commission to make this policy a working reality. One might assume that this meeting, two years later, is a step toward implementing that policy. But is it?

The Commission stated that if the state legislature failed to pass a fair housing ordinance, Skokie would propose a local ordinance. Prior to this meeting, it was announced in the local press that this meeting would be called to discuss whether there should be a proposed fair housing ordinance. I would like to be assured by the Commission that it is not holding this public hearing tonight in order to get a majority vote either for or against fair housing.

The Commission also announced, in a notice of this meeting, that an open hearing would be held on a proposed village ordinance

which would prohibit real estate brokers licensed by the village from discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin, and the local newspaper announced that the Commission would publish the proposed ordinance a week before this meeting so that citizens could comment and make suggestions. Where is that proposal? How can any of us come here tonight to give you our thinking regarding your intentions when these intentions are not made available for citizen examination? It has also been announced that any proposed ordinance would be patterned after the Chicago ordinance, parts of which were published in the local press. Does "patterned after" mean "exactly the same as," or does it mean "altered from?" If there are deviations, from the Chicago ordinance, what are they? Am I expected to comment on the Chicago ordinance without knowing its relevance to a possible Skokie ordinance? What is the reason for this lack of clarity?

One issue on which the Commission has been clear is that of a separate proposed anti-block-busting ordinance. Why is the Commission isolating the problem of block-busting from the policy of fair housing? As things stand now, brokers manipulate the housing market. Block-busting

is only one kind of manipulation. Refusal to give equal service is another kind. One is as devastating to the community as the other, but the effects of the former are easier to see by people who are afraid of differences. The fact that the Commission has proposed that the village pass an anti-block-busting ordinance prior to and separate from fair housing legislation has created confusion about the Commission's goals. Do they intend to direct their efforts only toward preventing obvious negative change? Or do they intend to direct their efforts toward creating positive change? Making the policy resolution of the village a reality requires positive change.

Are the requirements for testifying at the meeting called here tonight directed to creating a positive change? People who live or work in Skokie were invited to testify. It is only reasonable to assume that many people who neither live nor work in Skokie are legitimately interested in what happens here. Among this group of people are those whom the real estate system has excluded from living or working here. The Commission has, in effect, excluded these same people from attending tonight. This does not implement the government's policy of welcoming all people to this village.

I have raised the issue as to whether this meeting is a step in implementing the government policy. I think not. The proposal of a meaningful ordinance prohibiting brokers from discriminating on the basis of race, religion or national origin would be a step towards this goal. The behavior which I have described creates doubt and confusion as to the Commission's intentions. It is the Commission's responsibility to act in such a clear and unequivocal manner that there is no doubt as to their position.

When they open the door of this meeting to all people who may want to help formulate the kind of legislation that will create positive change, the Commission may then be ready to open the door of the community.