

Public Hearing July 18, 1967

My name is Blanche Hersh, I live at 9439 Kildare. I am speaking for myself only, and I am speaking for the proposed fair housing ordinance. I would prefer an ordinance which covers homeowners as well as real estate agents, but I can and do support this as a practical measure at this time.

My husband and I have been interested in furthering fair housing in Skokie since the first Negro family moved into our neighborhood six years ago. We were pleased at that time by the responsible leadership shown by our village government: first by making it quite clear that the rights of all citizens would be protected; later, by adopting an ordinance establishing an official human relations commission.

As a regular observer to this commission over the years, I have watched them continue this responsible leadership by diligently working toward the solution of crises as they came up, and trying to mediate among different viewpoints in the community.

In August 1965, Skokie again became a leader among suburban communities when the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution declaring it official policy to welcome all people to the village as our next door neighbors. This was followed, as you all know, by the distribution of an excellent pamphlet explaining this policy, and by an unsuccessful effort to obtain the voluntary cooperation of the real estate industry in furthering fair housing in Skokie.

There seems to be little doubt at this point in our history that fair housing in our state, and in our country, will have to be enforced by laws, just as laws have been needed to insure voting rights, equal opportunities in employment, public accommodations, etc. The only important questions are: how soon effective laws will come into being, and who will take the initiative to bring them about. Our law-makers in Springfield, who were the logical ones to lead us, have deserted their responsibility and can no longer be counted on to do more than straggle in under the finish line. From now on, leadership must be exerted wherever it exists. The way to fair housing must be shown by all the communities in the state who have the will and the resources to do so.

I believe that Skokie does have both the will and the resources to set an example for neighboring communities and be a leader on the North Shore, as it has been in the past. My experience with people and groups in the community these last ten years convinces me that there is support for an enlightened approach, and that the majority of our citizens are willing to do the right thing when given the opportunity to do so. The proposed ordinance is a step in the right direction by removing one of the obstacles to achieving an open market. While there is not now, nor will there be, a large number of Negro families anxious to move to Skokie, the few who may wish to do so will, under this ordinance, hopefully have the same chance to be shown housing by real estate agents as white families do. This is the way it should be, and I hope we can move quickly toward this goal.