

# OPINION OF OTHER PAPERS

## Freedom Of Choice

*Des Moines Register*

Chicago is still far from an "Open City" in the sense of equal opportunity for all races to buy or rent the homes they like and could afford—though on Aug. 26 a host of official and nonofficial agencies promised to make it so. These promises and the state and city laws on the subject have not yet been able to change entrenched habits. Chicago remains an extreme example of a metropolis where Negroes are concentrated in crowded slums.

The suburb of Skokie wants to be different, at least its official leaders do.

For months now the Human Relations Commission in Skokie has been trying to get local real estate men to co-operate in an approach based upon the real estate men's slogan of freedom of choice—but with the choice really free. They got unanimous backing from the Skokie Village Trustees and a promise to comply from 22 of the 26 real estate brokers in the highly urban "village."

The commission has been mailing a booklet on fair housing with a covering letter from the mayor to the owner of every house offered for sale in Skokie. "Remember, the choice is yours, not your broker's," the mayor says. "If you choose to provide equal housing opportunity, you will be taking a big step toward insuring a

stable future for Skokie and the metropolitan area—a step of which you can be justifiably proud."

The mayor does say the owner can "place discriminatory restrictions on the sale" if he chooses—but to do so, he must instruct his broker in writing, and should send a copy to the Human Relations Commission in Village Hall.

Otherwise, on paper anyway, Skokie is an "open city." It is a higher-income suburb than Cicero or the Chicago neighborhoods where mere talk of open housing set off riots. But even in Skokie, it took courage for mayor and council to take such a stand.

## Skokie Open Housing

As mayor of the Village of Skokie, I was pleased when I was shown on Jan. 8 a copy of a Des Moines Register editorial complimenting Skokie's citizens and board of trustees as well as its realtors, on their co-operative approach to open housing. On Jan. 11 I was surprised to find in the story "Wheaton Area Lauds Realtors' Stand," by Jerry DeMuth that the Wheaton and Glen Ellyn realtors "are the only organization that has taken such an action to open up the market" according to James Strenski, chairman of the Wheaton Human Relations Commission.

Since that agreement was based upon the Skokie Plan, it occurred to me that the record should be set straight. Of Skokie's 26 realtors 22 have agreed to co-operate in the Skokie Plan and they deserve to be commended.

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2016.003.079  
SUN-TIMES  
1/20/67