

Niles Township Human Relations Council

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YO 5-6087

January 16, 1967

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Dear Member:

Subject: THE SKOKIE PLAN

A leading purpose of the NILES TOWNSHIP HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL is a continuing education program toward acceptance of the principles of open housing. Open housing opportunities and equal service for all people, regardless of race, creed or national origin, are goals to which the Council is totally committed.

In this, we share common goals with the Skokie Human Relations Commission (the Village government appointed body), the Skokie Fair Housing Committee, and other north suburban organizations. At the State level, Governor Kerner is providing leadership toward achievement of open housing opportunities. The privilege of freedom in our American society is endangered by the denial of the right of one citizen to be treated like any other citizen by agencies licensed to serve the public.

A year ago, the Council enthusiastically welcomed the proposal of the Village of Skokie and the Skokie Human Relations Commission to develop a plan designed to bring about open housing opportunities in Skokie. Of particular interest was the following objective, which is in accord with the Council's own educational goals:

"To acquaint residents with the advantages of a policy of non-discriminatory sale of homes -- a policy formally endorsed by the Skokie Board of Trustees -- and of the undesirable consequences of restrictive sales."

The booklet "Your Home and Skokie's Future", which is a major part of the SKOKIE PLAN, was issued in April of 1966. The Human Relations Commission and the Village Board of Trustees agreed to test this voluntary Plan until April 30, 1967.

The Board of Directors of the Niles Township Human Relations Council has been giving the Skokie Plan considerable study, and finds itself in full support of the above-stated objective. However, the Council must express its urgent opposition to the remaining two basic objectives of the Plan.

These objectives, as stated in the Skokie Plan, are:

- #2. "To secure broad voluntary acceptance and practice of the policy that every home offered for sale is automatically considered available to buyers of any race, creed or

January 16, 1967

national origin, unless the owner specifically instructs the broker otherwise in writing." (our emphasis) - and:

- #3. "To place the decision as to the manner of sale with the home-owner and minimize the influence of the broker, so that the latter can serve truly and solely as the agent of the seller."

The Council's opposition to objective #2 is based on what at first glance seems to be a workable arrangement, but in actuality means that the Village of Skokie is officially recommending a method for carrying out discrimination in real estate transactions.

Rather than encouraging open occupancy, this method does, in fact, assume the right of property owners to discriminate in the sale of property, on the basis of race, creed or national origin. It, in effect, puts official Village approval on a form of discrimination; that discrimination which the home-seller is willing to put in writing.

But is it not morally and ethically wrong to discriminate...in any fashion? The Council strongly believes it is. So believing, we must state our urgent opposition to this part of the Skokie Plan.

This suggested technique for stipulating discrimination does, in fact, aid in setting up barriers to both buying and selling real estate in Skokie. By making written instructions to discriminate acceptable, the Village of Skokie has made itself a party to, and a supporter of, discrimination.

In developing the Skokie Plan, it was the hope of the Human Relations Commission that, by stipulating that home-owner's instructions to discriminate be in writing, evidence could be developed to help ascertain whether there is a need for Open Occupancy legislation. This same evidence would also help prove either the guilt or innocence of the Real Estate industry of the often-made charge of deliberate discrimination in the sale of homes.

Our opposition to objective #3 is that this provides the Real Estate industry with the opportunity to evade their responsibility to equally serve the home-seeker as well as the home-seller, and actually ignores the necessary goal of equal service for all home-seekers.

We wish to point out that, in November of 1966, the Human Relations Commission reported to the Skokie Village Board of Trustees what it felt to be definite progress, based on an investigation of realty transactions in Skokie. The Commission reported, and was quoted in the local newspapers, that "the Negro home-seeker will be shown some homes, but only 1/5th as many as the White buyer".

However, it is important to understand the basis on which this statement was made. The Commission's investigation showed that, during a period of about two weeks, of nine homes actually on the market, two were non-discriminatory listings and were shown or offered to be shown to Negroes. Two out of nine; thus 1/5th! Obviously, two out of nine during a 2-week period cannot, and should not, be considered as a proper statistical sampling of the real condition of the community.

In view of the foregoing, the Board of Directors of the Council has come to the following conclusions and is, with this letter, communicating them to the Skokie Human Relations Commission and the Village Board of Trustees:-

January 16, 1967

1. There are great problem areas in the Skokie Plan. The Plan sets up opportunities to discriminate. Any review of the Plan by the Human Relations Commission, with the thought of amending the Plan, must bear this in mind.
2. In order to achieve the goal of equal service for all home-seekers, we feel that the Real Estate industry must be made responsible for showing and offering all listings to all home-seekers, without discrimination because of race, creed or national origin.
3. That part of the Plan involving education of the community toward equal opportunities in housing has our complete support. The booklet explicitly expresses the reasons - moral, practical and economic - why discrimination in housing must be ended. The Council hopes that the Human Relations Commission will continue, and indeed step up, its educational efforts.
4. The Council believes that the Plan should be given the opportunity to live out its allotted trial year, until April 30, 1967. However, the Council urges that very specific standards of judgment be established by the Human Relations Commission.

The Commission must establish these criteria now, and measure their judgment against them in May after the voluntary Plan has run its year, rather than deciding then what the criteria are to be. Certainly, more reliable and conclusive evidence must be gathered in determining the results of the Plan, than what was recently presented to the Skokie Board of Trustees.

5. The Council urges the Human Relations Commission to stress, on every occasion, the test nature of the voluntary Plan; to emphasize the fact that it is too soon to know whether it has failed or succeeded; and to avoid with all care any implications of success in achieving equal opportunities in housing through the voluntary Plan.
6. The Council offers its help in assisting the Human Relations Commission in its educational efforts, and in arriving at an accurate evaluation of the Skokie Plan.

One of the tests of the Plan can be done on a continuing basis. Escorts are needed to accompany Negro home-seekers to realtors. YOUR help is needed. Volunteer now to play a vital, interesting and rewarding role in this effort to bring true equality to Skokie and to Niles Township.

If you are interested in learning more about the Escort service, call Mrs. Jean Martin, at YO 5-6087.

Your Board of Directors hopes that the above has been of interest and value to you. We would be most interested in any comments or questions you might have about the Skokie Plan. Address your letters to: Chairman, 6637 Maple Avenue, Morton Grove, Illinois.

Sincerely,

Lawrence M. Martin
Chairman