

O. Irva Cochran (July 18, 1967)

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Tonight I must express mystification over the Human Relations Counsel's sinister method of holding a public meeting. This is the first time in sixteen years residency/^{here}that I have had to write a statement and copy it sixteen times in order to be heard at a public meeting.

This evening I must express my disappointment with the Human Relations Commission who in its veil of secrecy has continually tried to impose unjust legislation on the Real Estate brokers of this community.

Civil Rights is the most explosive controversial issue of our times and will be for years to come. The problem of equal housing and integrating the negro at all levels of community life is relatively new.

Real estate brokers for many years have been aware of this acute problem and in general have done little in instituting a program whereby the negro may have equal housing opportunity. This is due to the following reasons:

1. The real estate broker by his very employment is engaged by the individual property owner. The property owner lays down the terms of the agreement and is the final authority on the possession date, term of agreement, price, possible financing, and in some cases the type of purchaser. The real estate broker is engaged by the seller. His job is to sell the real estate, and I might add he is always looking out for the best interest of the seller.

2. The real estate broker knows his community. He knows from experience that people usually segregate themselves by their own actions. We know that people generally tend to gather together through the bonds of general faith, common ethnic background, and in some cases seek their environment among a comparable intellectual neighborhood. Also let us not forget the greatest segregating element is the almighty dollar and all that goes with it. The real estate broker has generally gone along with these ideas. The broker has always believed that people have the right to do as they please.

3. The real estate broker knows the problems of building, health, law enforcement, taxation, economics, human relations, and what constitutes good citizenship. The broker also knows what constitutes good government. We see changes take place every four years and we know that each year it gets worse. We know that each time a new body of officials gets in office, we can see more entanglements. Most of us are not welcome on any local board. This Human Relations Commission is a good example of the absence of real estate brokers. We also know

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that many leaders in the Civil Rights movement have used us as their villain or as the fall guy. Is it any wonder the real estate broker retires and watches this human comedy from the background.

This evening we are here discussing a law that is a product of misguided political thought, making it mandatory for the real estate broker to solve the Civil Rights problems. Well, let me say this loud and clear. I do not believe the village government of Skokie or the Human Relations Commission are sincere in their desire to see our

community change in any noticeable way. It is my opinion that this law is being tossed to the colored people as a token of appeasement. Its only purpose will be to aggrandize the Human Relations Commission for another year, and it will place undue hardships on the real estate profession. I say this law will only serve to hide the truth and get the Human Relations Commission off the hook so they may swim back to the calm waters from whence they came.

I believe that the only way to have good government is to abide in the truth. I would love to know the real answer to this problem. I would love to know how the citizens of this community actually feel. I want to know the truth about this matter. The only way that I know to find the truth is through a public referendum on open housing. Let us be men enough to face the truth. Let us find out if we are the Village of Vision or whether we are the Village of Hypocrisy. Let us have this public vote; and after the vote is counted, we will know what path to follow.

If the Village would seek this truth as they should, and if we found out that the answer was on the negative side, would we stop there? Would we feel better that we publicly were seeing ourselves as we are? I say the public would be taking a positive step toward truthfulness.

I am quite sure that if the truth were known we would not pick out one profession and say that they were the culprits. No, I don't think the real estate profession could be placed in the exalted position of having control of all of the people. I am inclined to believe the other professional people would be a little jealous.

I think any measure of success in making this a cosmopolitan community must come from the combined efforts of free men -- those who are in government, the real estate brokers and developers, the educational men, the clergy and religious bodies.

The first step would be for the government to allow the community to expand. Whether we like it or not, we all stand on holy ground and it should be used as such. As long as the government keeps the lid on zoning, expansion is impossible and they don't have to be unduly concerned about the community having any noticeable change. If we don't want to be hypocrites, take the lid off.

The second step would be for men in Finance and Real Estate to plan certain developments that would be fair to all. If the real estate developer has the freedom of action, it might be possible for him to get a 3% loan from the Federal Government. In getting his Federal financing he would have to cater to people under the \$6000 per year income bracket. He would have to keep his rents low for a period of fifteen years. The developer would have to abide in fair housing or he might lose his building.

I could give many more ideas on this subject, but I know there are people in Skokie that would adopt the Chicago licensing act for real estate brokers, but if you mention adopting the Chicago zoning code they would flip their lid. But as long as we have a lid on zoning we don't have to worry much about change, and it doesn't do any good to dream dreams of a dynamic society.

The third step for equal housing must come from our people in education. The citizenry must know the reason and logic of Civil Rights.

The fourth step in this problem must come from the clergy and religious institutions. I have heard people say on the Civil Rights issue that they reason one way and feel another way. I believe that the only way people can ever live together as brothers is through a loving desire to do so. The men of the Clergy have this as their main job, and I believe it to be their biggest. Their job is to propagate the idea of love so it sinks into the hearts of every man. This job can never be done by legislation. Love is freely given and there is is the job that men of God must do.

Finally, Commission members, and ladies and gentlemen of the audience, do you sincerely in your hearts believe that licensing of real estate brokers is going to solve any Civil Rights problem? Let's get on with the business of living together as human beings without making some of us the scapegoats for all of our inadequacies.