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STATEMENT TO THE SKOKIE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION BY

MRS. IRVING ADLER

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Since 1965, the Skokie village government has been made aware that Skokie is a closed community. During this two-year period, the Human Relations Commission has been asked to take action in order to stop discrimination by realtors. The major part of their efforts has been a community education program which, however, did not deal with realtor discrimination. Even that might have dealt more directly with the problem if it had brought to public attention the ways in which realtors have repeatedly discriminated against people. In restricting this hearing to people who either live or work in Skokie, thereby excluding from testifying the very people against whom Skokie realtors have discriminated, the Commission has missed another opportunity to educate the community about the seriousness of the problem. As a member of the Skokie Fair Housing Committee, I have become familiar with many facts about realtor discrimination in Skokie, some of which I would like to share with the community. Even if I were to relate everything I know about discrimination in Skokie,

we would not know about all the individual lives which have been affected by our closed system.

In the summer of 1965, Mrs. W., who was looking for a house, came to the office of a Skokie realtor. Her husband, an army major, was being transferred to this vicinity. They sought the services of a Skokie realtor, and he refused to serve them. Major and Mrs. W. are Negroes. One year later, Mrs. W., still without housing, returned to the same agency, and although she asked to see homes in the \$30,000 price range, she was offered the inspection of one \$75,000 home. All others were closed to her. Is it surprising that she did not go to see that \$75,000 house?

Two days later, Mrs. P. called on the same realtor. She asked to see homes in the \$30,000 price range. She left with a list of seven homes. Mrs. P. is white. These experiences have been reported to the Human Relations Commission.

Mr. H. is a Negro; he is a teacher at a state college and had been trying to find a house in Skokie. When he was refused service by one Skokie realtor, he called on another one and was refused service again. A complaint was filed with the Human Relations Commission after each experience. The first couple of experiences might be interpreted as reflections of prejudice on the part of one or two brokers. But Mr. H. eventually had contact with six different realtors and found that while their reactions to him as a Negro varied, their service was always the same--discriminatory. Six such experiences suggest a consistent pattern of discriminatory real estate practices. Mr. H. went to a village board meeting and told the Mayor and the Board of Trustees about his experiences in looking for housing in Skokie. The Mayor thanked him for coming and referred the matter back to the Human Relations Commission.

Mrs. M., a white woman, called on a Skokie realtor and told the salesperson that her children in New York had mentioned that they were considering moving into the Chicago area in the near future.

Mrs. M. emphasized that she was not a prospective customer but was only looking around to see what was available, and there was nothing definite. The salesperson spent a half-hour showing her listings and point^{ing} out the advantages and disadvantages of each house they were considering. She left with nine listings covering a wide price range. Mrs. M., a white person, had made it clear she was not looking for a home, was not going to buy, and yet she was given prompt and courteous service.

When Negro people come into a real estate office in Skokie, looking for a home, ready to buy, salespeople talk to them like this:

"We have no homes under \$40,000" (this, despite advertising to the contrary)

"There is no one here to help you. I'm only renting office space here."

"We don't have three-bedroom homes in Skokie."

"I can't show you the house; the owner isn't home, and I can't get the key."

"You have to bring your wife to qualify as a buyer."

"How much money do you have in the bank? Don't lie to me-- I can check your credit."

All of these instances of discrimination have been reported to the Human Relations Commission.

Nothing has been done about them. The Commission has said that they cannot do anything without legislation. They have said that if they concluded that brokers were not cooperating with the Skokie Plan, they would propose legislation to regulate the brokers. They have also said that if the state of Illinois did not pass fair housing legislation, they would propose fair housing legislation.

Skokie is still a closed community just as it was in 1965. When the Commission proposes effective fair housing legislation, it will have taken the first step toward making Skokie an open community.