

June 29, 1966

STATEMENT TO N. J. COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee--

We always welcome an opportunity to discuss the public housing program of the Newark Housing Authority because we are proud of our accomplishments in this field. The development and management of public housing for low-income families is a complex and difficult undertaking in which the Authority has achieved considerable success and a degree of leadership among the housing authorities throughout the country.

Newark is 30th in size among the cities of the country. Of the 29 larger cities, only Boston and New York are older than Newark. Even in 1960, Newark still had the highest percentage of substandard housing of any of these 30 cities. At that time, one-third of the dwellings in Newark were deteriorating, dilapidated or lacking in sanitary facilities.

Newark has the largest public housing program per capita of any of these 30 large cities. Newark's urban renewal program also is the largest in the 30 cities in proportion to city population. In terms of sums of money committed to urban renewal, the Newark program is fifth in size and is surpassed only by New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston.

These relationships result from a costly and long sustained effort by Newark to lift itself by its boot-straps. For many years, through the most drastic changes of all kinds, political, social and economic, the City has persisted in its efforts to clear slums and to rebuild.

The Newark Housing Authority has developed 14 public housing projects containing 10,759 low-rent dwellings. Two thousand dwellings for the elderly are now being developed. When the projects were surveyed early this year, they were occupied by 10,531 families containing 37,605 persons which is about 9% of the population of the City. About 40% of the tenant families are white and 60% are non-white. In the 4 Central Ward Projects, only 5% of the tenants are white and 95% are non-white. Statistics on the 1966 composition and characteristics of tenant families is given in Exhibit 1.

The Housing Authority has always been sensitive with respect to Civil Rights. Twenty-six years ago, whites and Negroes occupied the first projects in different buildings. This arrangement was pioneering in its time. In 1950, all projects were integrated with whites and Negroes occupying the same buildings. How integration was achieved without undue friction is explained in detail in Exhibit 1, "Integration of Racial Minorities".

Employment by the Housing Authority is under the supervision of the N.J. State Civil Service Commission. Permanent appointments are made from Civil Service lists resulting from competitive examinations. The staff of the Housing Authority is integrated both at the administrative and at the maintenance level. Detailed statistics on employees by race and position are given in Exhibit 1.

According to the newspapers, members of this Committee have used the term "Ghetto" with reference to the Central Ward of Newark. Many people of the same race or nation do not make a ghetto. Israel now has many Jews but it is not a ghetto. Nigeria has many Negroes but it is not a ghetto. Utah has many Mormons but it is not a ghetto. The South Ward of Newark has many Jews but it is not a ghetto. The North Ward has many Italians but it is not a ghetto. The Central Ward has many Negroes but it is not a ghetto.

According to the 1960 U. S. Census, 34% of the population of Newark was Negro. At that time, 60% of the residents of the Central Ward were Negroes. However, Negroes lived in 97 of the 101 Census Tracts in the City. The Housing Authority has made two maps which show for 1950 and for 1960 the percentage of Negro families by blocks. There is no containment in the Central Ward.

Webster's Dictionary defines "Ghetto" as "a quarter of a City in which members of a racial group are segregated". There are no ghettos in Newark. There is no segregation in the public housing projects of the Newark Housing Authority.

On the application for an apartment in a public housing project, the applicant indicates his choice of project. To the extent that suitable vacancies permit, the applicant is assigned to the project of his choice. There is no penalty on the applicant who chooses to wait until there is a suitable apartment available in the project of his choice. Some applicants cannot or do not choose to wait for the most desired vacancy. Some applicants have no preference and indicate "Any project" on the application.

A recent tabulation shows that out of 4,572 families in the 4 Central Ward Projects, 3,793 families, or 83%, indicated a preference for a Central Ward Project or requested "Any Project" on their applications. Insofar as possible, the Housing Authority has complied with the applicant's expressed preference. To have done otherwise, might have been very disadvantageous to the applicant. It might even have been discriminatory. Details of this tabulation are given in Exhibit 1.

As the most deteriorated section of the City with the lowest rents, the Central Ward has been the refuge of immigrants and in-migrants for decades that go back into the last century. The Germans predominated at one time and then it was a Jewish community before the Negroes became the predominant residents. Recent increase in the concentration of Negroes in this area, however, has been as much the result of natural causes as of in-migration. The median age of Negroes in the City is 25 years compared to 35 years for the whites. For Negroes, the current birth rate is 40 or 50 percent higher than the birth rate for whites. This sort of increase necessarily increases the Negro population where the parents live.

It is very natural for immigrants and in-migrants to form clusters with others of the same racial or nationality group. The Germans and the Jews who preceded the Negroes in the Central Ward did the same thing. People want to be near their friends. Perhaps there is a grandmother who will baby-sit or there may be church ties or a job situation. It happens in the projects, it happens elsewhere in the City and it happens in Cities all over the Country. Moreover,

there is no guarantee that Negroes will continue to concentrate in the Central Ward. As we have shown, many have already moved outward and many others have migrated out of the City.

The Negro population of the Central Ward has not been adversely affected by what has happened to them there in one respect. Between 1950 and 1960, the median annual income of Negro families in the Central Ward generally has risen from \$2,274 to \$4,117, in 1960 dollars, an increase of 81 percent. During the same period, the corresponding figures on income for all families in the City increased only 35 percent.

The public housing program has always been basically a slum clearance program. Until very recently, equivalent elimination has been a specific requirement of the Law, that is, one substandard dwelling had to be demolished for every new public housing dwelling built. In practical effect, this meant that public housing sites had to be selected in slum areas. In Newark, the 1947 Master Plan designated "for immediate clearance" sections of the Old Third Ward in which these four projects are located and sections of the Old First Ward where Columbus Homes and the Colonnade Apartments are now located. In the selection of these sites, the Housing Authority gave primary consideration to the recommendations of the Master Plan, which had been prepared for the City by Harland Bartholomew Associates of St. Louis at a cost of half a million dollars.

The selection of sites for public housing projects is a cooperative undertaking involving many considerations. Essentially, existing conditions in the City determine site selection. With this information, technicians of the Housing Authority must consult many other agencies at all levels of government, but especially, the staff of the Central Planning Board, the Board of Education and the Department of Public Works of the City and the U. S. Public Housing Administration. When general agreement is reached by the technicians, a formal proposal is submitted for official approval at public meetings by the Newark Housing Authority, the Central Planning Board and the Mayor and Council before submission to the federal Public Housing Administration for approval and financing.

The necessity of using these Central Ward locations for public housing is more apparent when we consider the alternatives. There would be no justification for not clearing the worst slum area in the City. There would be no justification for not providing public housing for the low-income Negro families whose housing need was greatest.

Most of the accommodations in public housing in Newark are in high-rise apartments. For some time, there was a federal limit on the development cost of public housing. Such a limit was imposed because of active opposition in Congress to the entire program. In Newark, however, this limit compelled the construction of high-rise apartments, if there was to be any slum clearance and public housing at all.

In the typical project, the cost of the land and the slum dwellings which are demolished amounts to about \$3,000 per new dwelling if the site is rebuilt at 90 dwellings per acre in high-rise apartments. Under the cost limit, this left enough for new construction so that it was possible to build to minimum standards with available funds.

If the number of apartments were to be reduced to 45 or less per acre, as would be the case in low-rise construction, the slum clearance cost per dwelling would be doubled, amounting to \$6,000 per new dwelling. Under the cost limit, this would not leave enough money for new construction to make it possible to build public housing in Newark.

In recent years, high-rise apartments have become the conventional form of rental housing in cities, even for the highest income groups. Actually, in private developments, it is usual to charge higher rents on higher floors. In slum clearance, high-rise apartments have major advantages that justify the use of this type of construction in all the Authority's projects built in the last 15 years. First, of course, is the fact that decent, safe and sanitary housing is provided for many more low-income families who would otherwise live in slum dwellings. (All consideration of housing as a problem begins with the need for increased supply.) Second, with only 15% of the land covered by buildings, the blighted area is opened up as cannot be done by low-rise buildings covering 35 or 45 percent of the land and facing existing structures across dreary streets. Third, more project land is available for play space, sitting areas, parking, etc. Many other advantages might be listed but this is a complex and technical matter.

The management of public housing is its most difficult operation. All tenant families have the problems of low income. Many families have no income except public welfare or social security. Broken families comprise 20 percent of the project tenants. Many families are large; many are elderly. Minors make up 55 percent of the project population compared to 35 percent in the City.

Some tenant families have rural backgrounds and simply do not know how to live in the City. Other families, both rural and urban, do not know how to live in good housing (high or low rise) because they have never before had the opportunity to do so. Some families do not know how to discipline their children or themselves. However, almost all these families can learn and the Authority makes it possible for them to have a chance to be instructed. A very small number, perhaps 1%, who are unwilling or unable to learn fail to improve and have to be evicted for the sake of the health, safety and reasonable comfort of the other tenants.

Families with problems generally are ignorant of the agencies, organizations and institutions in the community which are available to help them solve their problems. To fill this need, the Housing Authority established a Tenant Relations Division. Whenever a Manager learns of a family with a problem, he notifies the Tenant Relations Division to send a social worker to help the family. If necessary, the family is referred by the social worker to the appropriate social agency for whatever help is needed. This program has been remarkably successful. For details, see Exhibit 2.

The Tenant Relations Division of the Authority was established in the 1950s. When huge highway and urban renewal programs and many other public works were undertaken, Congress granted to families to be displaced absolute priority for occupancy in public housing. To some extent, this eliminated the screening that had been done in Tenant Selection. Displaced families were accepted as tenants regardless of prior police records, credit ratings or social agency experience. Families were to be evaluated solely on the basis of their behavior in the housing projects.

Because these circumstances had affected the operations of public housing all over the country, there was widespread interest in the prompt action that had been taken here which became known as 'The Newark Story'. It was recounted many times and requests for copies of the statement were received from all parts of the country.

An intensive campaign of tenant relations activity was carried on in 1960, using Hayes Homes, as the object of attention. More than 20 social welfare organizations and agencies cooperated in bringing help or remedies to the families in this Project which was the most difficult in the public housing program at that time. Significant improvement was attained throughout the entire Project. Obstacles were identified and procedures were developed for use in the continuous Tenant Relations Program. See Exhibit 3.

In addition to staff help, there is available to all tenants a large number of health, educational and recreational facilities, located in project buildings, such as Baby-Keep-Well Stations and Dental Clinics, Americanization, Adult Education and Pre-school classes; Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, clubs for the elderly, etc. Comprehensive details about these activities are given in Exhibit 4.

The Housing Authority has established a Maintenance Training Center in the Columbus Homes Project. Courses are given for Boiler Attendants, Maintenance Repairmen, Maintenance Workers, Laborers, Supervisors and Foremen. All employees in these jobs are required to take the pertinent course. In fact, the federal Public Housing Administration has authorized employees of Housing Authorities within 25 miles of Newark to attend these courses. A description of the courses and training manuals used are contained in Exhibit 5.

In 1963, the Housing Authority participated in an intensive, national survey of the design of public housing undertaken by the federal Public Housing Administration. The report on the survey was a large volume of discussion and suggestions covering all aspects of project design, operation and maintenance. However, in addition to the survey report, the Public Housing Administration sent to all its Regional Offices a copy of the recommendations made by the Newark management and maintenance staffs. See Exhibit 6.

There is crime in the projects. There is crime in the City just as there is crime in cities and suburbs and rural areas all over the country. Nevertheless, the crime rate in the projects is low in comparison with the rate for the City as a whole.

In 1962, the Newark Police Department analyzed crime in the public housing projects by type of offense and by project. The rate for the entire City was 5 times as high as the rate for the housing projects. The City rate was $3\frac{1}{2}$ times as high as the rate in the project having the highest rate of any project. Copies of the Police Department reports are included in Exhibit 7, "Police and Crime Statistics". We believe that conditions in the projects now are better than at the time of the Police Department study.

Basic principles of police deployment, by location in relation to places where crimes are committed, do not justify more than average policing of projects. Nevertheless, the Housing Authority spends more than \$100,000 per year for additional special police, trained and supervised by the Newark Police Department. As a result, the tenants of public housing have more police protection than many other places in the City.

Most of the tenants of public housing seem to be satisfied with the accommodations and services that they receive. In Newark, as elsewhere, many families move every year. The turnover in all rental housing in the City is 23 percent per year. The turnover in the public housing projects is 13 percent per year. Eight percent of all families make involuntary moves due to elemental causes such as death, births and marital and employment changes. The rest of the moves are voluntary. On this basis, the voluntary moves in the City as a whole are 3 times as numerous as the voluntary moves from public housing.

The conditions under which these families lived before being moved into public housing were similar to the conditions in the sites of the Central Ward projects. Ninety percent of the dwellings were substandard. Typical substandard conditions were that 8% had no private toilet; 63% had no bathtub or shower; 37% had no hot water; 30% were overcrowded; 85% had no heat or no central heat in multifamily frame structures. Many dwellings had a number of deficiencies. Statistics on these conditions are set forth in a brief report on Relocation of Site Residents included in Exhibit 10.

The Housing Authority has expended considerable effort to bring to low-income tenant families remedial care in the form of manpower training. In cooperation with the Joint Paint Trade Council and the U.S. Department of Labor, the Authority has sponsored a course in pre-apprentice training of painters. The trainees are mainly young men with the background of a broken family, school drop-outs, juvenile delinquents, etc. They are given instruction and enabled to learn by doing in the Authority's projects. Seventeen graduates of the course have been placed as apprentices with business concerns in the City. They are paid \$2.27 per hour with semi-annual increases to journeyman painters at \$4.80 per hour plus \$.50 per hour in fringe benefits. The course is being continued.

The Authority sponsored a similar program under the U.S. Department of Labor in the Neighborhood Youth Corps. This program provided temporary summer work experience for in-school youths from housing projects and urban renewal areas as aides in clerical, nursery, maintenance and operating jobs in the housing projects.

A third undertaking in manpower training is called the Housing Employment Learning Program (HELP). Under this program, unemployed members of project families are assisted to increase their employability. In addition to work experience, their aptitudes are tested, they receive personal counseling, vocational guidance and job placement services. Descriptions of these manpower training courses are given in Exhibit 8.

In the Exhibits that have been made available to the Committee, Number 9 contains reproductions of newspaper clippings and other material about the activities of the Newark Housing Authority including a number of commendations.

The topics that have been mentioned deal generally with the entire public housing program. To the Housing Authority, the Central Ward is special only because it is an extremely deteriorated section of the City. For this reason, it has received intensive treatment by the Authority in public housing and in urban renewal. This is also true of other City agencies such as the Board of Education.

To illustrate this point, we have prepared an estimate of recent, actual expenditures and of amounts to be expended in the near future in the Central Ward. The estimate for the future is relatively firm. It covers only work in progress, work for which funds have been reserved and planned re-building on land for which acquisition and clearance funds are presently available.

The total of this estimate is \$247 million dollars, almost a quarter of a billion dollars. It includes the public housing projects which cost \$71 million dollars. It includes all or parts of 6 urban renewal projects, costing \$82 million dollars; private re-building of urban renewal sites, costing \$50 million dollars; schools and playgrounds, costing \$20 million dollars; other public and semi-public building, costing \$24 million dollars. Specific details of this estimate are included in Exhibit 10.

As the result of many years of experience, we have found that the problems in the four Central Ward Projects are no different from the problems to be found in any of the other projects. Indeed, similar problems are discussed at national housing conferences as being found everywhere in the country.

We have on file 4,296 current applications of eligible families seeking admission mainly to our Central Ward Projects. Among other things, these families know that there is no rent gouging in public housing; that there has not been one death by fire in public housing; that every family obtains, on initial occupancy, the number of rooms its family composition requires; that there is a refrigerator and a gas range in every apartment; that there is hot and cold running water and a complete bathroom with toilet facilities in every apartment and in addition there is central heat. These 4,296 families return over and over again desperately seeking admission to public housing as an escape from a devastating slum environment.

The folders marked Exhibits 1 to 10, which we have distributed to your committee as part of the record of these proceedings, contain much more material than I have referred to in the foregoing statement. The total content of these exhibits will clearly demonstrate the tremendous efforts made by the Housing Authority to cope with the problems of public housing.

This is a nation of laws and not of men. The Housing Authority operates under laws which specify its powers and functions. In what I have said I have tried to show that we have fully and diligently lived up to the spirit and letter of those laws.

We have made excellent progress toward accomplishing the purposes of the housing legislation which are to clear slums, to provide decent, safe and sanitary housing for low-income families and ultimately to achieve the goal of a good home in a good neighborhood for every American family.

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